

**Legislative Council Panel on Welfare Services
Policy Initiatives of the Labour and Welfare Bureau for 2010-11**

Purpose

The Chief Executive delivered his 2010-11 Policy Address on 13 October 2010. This paper sets out the key welfare initiatives in the 2010-11 Policy Address and Policy Agenda.

New Initiatives

Relaxing the permissible limit of absence from Hong Kong under the Social Security Allowance Scheme

2. To provide our elderly citizens with greater flexibility in travelling out of Hong Kong for various reasons, we propose to substantially relax the limit of absence from Hong Kong for Old Age Allowance (OAA) under the Social Security Allowance (SSA) Scheme from the present 240 days to 305 days a year, thus enabling elderly recipients to receive a full-year allowance as long as they have resided in Hong Kong for 60 days in that year. The new arrangement will also apply to recipients of Disability Allowance which forms part of the SSA Scheme.

3. The new arrangement will help streamline the operation of the SSA Scheme. All 630 000 elders and persons with disabilities (PWDs) now under the SSA Scheme can benefit. The arrangement will be particularly user-friendly to some 40 000 existing OAA recipients who are residing on the Mainland for a considerable period⁽¹⁾ and other OAA recipients who will travel outside Hong Kong. Those who now stay in Hong Kong for only 60 days in a payment year will be able to receive an additional payment of \$10,027⁽²⁾. The new arrangement accords with

⁽¹⁾ According to a survey conducted by the Census and Statistics Department in 2007, there were 39 700 OAA recipients who resided substantially on the Mainland in a year (i.e. residing for at least one month during the six months before the reference time-point of the survey).

⁽²⁾ At present, a recipient who resides in Hong Kong for 60 days in a payment year

the definition of “Mobile Resident” captured in the “Hong Kong Resident Population” compiled by the Census and Statistics Department⁽³⁾.

4. As regards the proposal that there should be a maintenance allowance for our senior citizens who choose to retire on the Mainland, this requires a detailed examination of the legal, financial and technical implications involved. We will study the feasibility of such a proposal.

Strengthening elderly care services

5. In respect of elderly care services, we will adhere to the policy objective of “ageing in place as the core, institutional care as back-up” and further enhance the services for the elderly. There are five new initiatives this year.

Fully implement the Integrated Discharge Support Programme for the Elderly and strengthen community care services for the elderly

6. The Government introduced the Integrated Discharge Support Programme for the Elderly (IDSP) in 2008 to provide “one-stop” services for elders discharged from hospitals. Services include pre-discharge planning, post-discharge transitional rehabilitation exercise and home care services. IDSP was launched in three districts (i.e. Kwun Tong, Kwai Tsing and Tuen Mun) on a pilot basis. According to the initial data collected by the Hospital Authority (HA), IDSP can effectively improve elders’ physical functioning and reduce the rate of unplanned re-admission to hospitals which, in the long run, should help promote ageing in place. IDSP is well received by users, the health and social welfare sectors and members of the Legislative Council alike. We

can only receive an allowance of \$1,973 (60 x \$12,000/365), but will be able to receive a full-year allowance of \$12,000 under the new arrangement. The difference in payment amounts to \$10,027.

(3) The “Hong Kong Resident Population” concept has been adopted by Census and Statistics Department in compiling Hong Kong population estimates/statistics since August 2000. Under this enumeration approach, the Hong Kong population comprises “Usual Residents” and “Mobile Residents”. “Usual Residents” refers to two categories of people: (a) Hong Kong Permanent Residents who had stayed in Hong Kong for at least three months during the six months before or after the reference time point; and (b) Hong Kong Non-permanent Residents who were in Hong Kong at the reference time point. As for “Mobile Residents”, they are Hong Kong Permanent Residents who had stayed in Hong Kong for at least one month but less than three months during the six months before or after the reference time point, regardless of whether or not they were in Hong Kong at the reference time point.

will make it a regular, territory-wide service in the next two years.

7. Besides, we will continue to strengthen subsidised community care services. In particular, we will increase substantially the provision of Enhanced Home and Community Care Support Service places as well as day care service places. The “Pilot Scheme on Home Care Services for Frail Elders”, which caters for elders waiting for nursing home places, will be implemented early next year. We expect the scheme to provide tailor-made service packages for 510 elders in three years.

8. The above measures can help elders continue ageing at home and avoid pre-mature or unnecessary institutionalisation owing to the lack of care.

Increase the provision of subsidised residential care places for the elderly

9. In view of the long waiting time for subsidised nursing home places, a series of new measures were announced in last year’s Policy Address to increase the provision of residential care places which provide nursing and a continuum of care. The Social Welfare Department (SWD) is pressing ahead with these new initiatives at full steam. In the coming year, we will continue to allocate additional resources to increase the provision of subsidised residential care places through the construction of new residential care homes for the elderly (RCHEs) and making use of available space in existing subvented RCHEs.

Purchase additional higher-quality subsidised places under the Enhanced Bought Place Scheme

10. The Enhanced Bought Place Scheme (EBPS) is effective in increasing the provision of subsidised residential care places within a short time, reducing the waiting time and upgrading the service quality of private RCHEs. Since the introduction of EBPS in 1998, 141 private RCHEs have joined the scheme, providing currently a total of 7 229 subsidised places. We intend to increase substantially the supply of higher-quality (i.e. EA1) places to encourage more quality homes to participate in the scheme, thereby enhancing the overall quality of private RCHEs.

Enhance support for demented elders

11. Since 1999, SWD has been providing a Dementia

Supplement (DS) to subvented RCHEs which take care of demented elders, so that they can engage additional manpower and/or relevant professional service to care for those elders. SWD has extended DS to private RCHEs participating in EBPS since 2009. We will increase the amount of DS, and for the first time, provide DS to day care centers to enhance their support for the patients.

Enhancing rehabilitation services for PWDs

Provide additional places for rehabilitation services for PWDs

12. To meet the diverse needs of PWDs in different stages of their lives, we will continue to enhance rehabilitation services to strengthen the capabilities of PWDs and facilitate their full integration into society. We will continue to provide additional places for pre-school, day and residential rehabilitation services, in accordance with the directions set out in the 2007 Hong Kong Rehabilitation Programme Plan.

Provide additional places for pre-school rehabilitation services and strengthen medical social services for autistic children

13. We strive to provide children with disabilities, including autistic children, with early intervention to enhance their physical, psychological and social developments, thereby improving their opportunities for attending ordinary schools and participating in daily life activities, and helping their families meet their special needs. We will continue to increase the number of places for pre-school rehabilitation services so that autistic children will be provided with early intervention service and training as soon as possible. SWD's medical social services will also be strengthened to dovetail with the services delivered by HA for autistic children and their families.

Enhancing mental health social rehabilitation services

14. The new district-based and one-stop service delivery mode of the Integrated Community Centres for Mental Wellness (ICCMWs) has been rolled out across the territory since October 2010, providing integrated mental health community support services for persons with mental health problem, their families and local residents. To meet the varying needs of service users, services provided range from early prevention to risk management through public education, day training, counselling, outreaching visits and, where required, direct liaison with

HA for urgent medical consultation. We will strengthen the manpower of these centres so that they can provide comprehensive and accessible services for more persons in need, and dovetail with HA's Case Management Programme to provide timely and appropriate support to persons with severe mental illness living in the community.

15. At present, apart from the "Wellness Centre" which is operating at its permanent accommodation at Tin Chak Estate, Tin Shui Wai, SWD has reached consensus with the operating non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to convert the five Training and Activity Centres for Ex-mentally Ill Persons into ICCMWs. For other ICCMWs, operating NGOs have made use of their existing service buildings or district facilities flexibly, e.g. half-way houses and other rehabilitation service units, as service points to provide services or organising activities. We are making active efforts to help service operators secure suitable permanent accommodation, including earmarking sites in new development or redevelopment projects. We call upon district leaders and residents to show support to the services of ICCMWs and setting up of these centres in the community so that comprehensive and accessible mental health services and support will be provided for ex-mentally ill persons and local residents.

16. In addition, we will continue to enhance our psychiatric medical social services to provide assistance to persons with mental health problems and their families.

Enhancing services for children

Regularise and extend the Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project

17. To support parents who are unable to take care of their children temporarily because of work or other reasons, the Government subsidises NGOs to provide a wide range of child care services and strives to increase the flexibility of the services.

18. In October 2008, SWD launched the three-year Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project (NSCCP) on a pilot basis. 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 NSCCP is able to achieve the dual objectives of providing needy parents with more flexible child care service and promoting mutual assistance in the neighbourhood. Feedback from service users has also been positive. We have therefore decided to regularise the NSCCP and extend its

geographical coverage from 11 districts at present to all 18 districts so as to benefit more needy families.

Extend the Comprehensive Child Development Service

19. 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 enables the early identification of pregnant women, mothers and children in need, and their referral to suitable health or welfare service units for 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.

Enhancing support for youth

Extend temporary work opportunities for one year

20. As a special measure introduced during the economic downturn, 3 000 temporary work opportunities were created for young people aged between 15 and 29 and allocated to the subvented welfare NGOs in April 2008 for three years for the purpose of enhancing the employability of young people through providing working opportunities. These work opportunities also serve as a stepping stone for the incumbents to seek open employment after gaining working experience. With the gradual recovery of the economy, the Government has decided to extend the 3 000 temporary work opportunities for one year so that young people may have more time to equip and prepare themselves for joining the labour market for open employment before the cessation of the scheme.

Launch a pilot Cyber Youth Outreaching Project

21. In view of the changing lifestyle and service needs of young people, SWD will subsidise NGOs to implement a pilot Cyber Youth Outreaching Project with funding support from the Lotteries Fund. Under the project, 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 project will be implemented for three years from 2011 to 2014. SWD will 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.

Injecting funds into the Trust Fund for Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome

22. The Trust Fund for Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) (the Trust Fund) was established in 2003 to provide special ex-gratia financial assistance, on compassionate grounds, to families of deceased SARS patients, recovered and suspected SARS patients⁽⁴⁾. The Government will inject additional funds into the Trust Fund to provide continued financial assistance to incumbent recipients who would likely suffer from permanent SARS-related dysfunctions.

Progress of Ongoing Initiatives

Poverty alleviation

Co-ordinating efforts through the Task Force on Poverty

23. The Task Force on Poverty (TFP), led by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, will continue to co-ordinate efforts across the Government in tackling poverty related issues and follow up the recommendations of the former Commission on Poverty (CoP). Most of the CoP's recommendations have been or are being implemented. The TFP will closely monitor the poverty situation in Hong Kong and explore initiatives/measures which can help the disadvantaged and people in need.

Implementing short-term food assistance service

24. We will continue to provide short-term food assistance for those who have difficulties coping with daily food expenditures. By the end of August 2010, short-term food assistance service projects had already served over 35 700 people. It is expected that the service will ultimately benefit at least 50 000 people. We will continue to closely monitor the service demand and implementation of the service.

⁽⁴⁾ Suspected SARS patients refer to those who were clinically diagnosed as having SARS on admission, treated with medication for SARS, but turned out subsequently not to have SARS

Implementing Child Development Fund projects

25. Since its establishment, the Child Development Fund (CDF) has received overwhelming support from the community and its projects have been running smoothly. So far, two batches of 22 projects have been rolled out, benefiting 2 270 children aged between 10 and 16. Taking into account the experience of the first two batches of projects, we will work out the schedule for launching the next batch of projects. We expect the CDF to ultimately benefit 13 600 children.

Welfare planning

Continuing with the study on long-term social welfare planning

26. We undertook to study the long-term social welfare planning in Hong Kong through the Social Welfare Advisory Committee (SWAC). SWAC issued a consultation paper in April this year to consult the welfare sector and stakeholders on the major issues and factors affecting the provision of social welfare, the mission and values of social welfare, the guiding principles for social welfare planning, and the strategic directions for planning and provision of welfare services. The consultation period ended on 31 July 2010. SWAC is now studying and analysing the views and comments received and will prepare a report for consideration by the Government.

Tackling domestic violence

Implementing the Victim Support Programme for Victims of Family Violence

27. The Government is committed to combating domestic violence. Further to the announcement in last year's Policy Address, SWD has launched the Victim Support Programme for Victims of Family Violence (VSP) in June 2010. The VSP, which is run by an NGO with funding provided by SWD, aims to enhance support services to victims of domestic violence, including those undergoing the judicial process. Through the VSP, the victims will be provided with information on the relevant legal proceedings and community resources (such as legal aid service, accommodation, treatment and childcare support, etc.) that are available to them. They will also be provided with emotional support and company in going through the judicial process to alleviate their fear

and helplessness. Through close collaboration with case workers, it is expected that the victims will be empowered and supported to resume normal life and functioning.

Monitoring the implementation of the Domestic and Cohabitation Relationships Violence Ordinance

28. In June 2009, we introduced the Domestic Violence (Amendment) Bill 2009 (the DV Bill) into the Legislative Council to extend the protection provided under the former Domestic Violence Ordinance (DVO) to same-sex cohabitants. Following the passage of the DV Bill in December 2009, the amended DVO, which has been renamed as the Domestic and Cohabitation Relationships Violence Ordinance (DCRVO), came into effect on 1 January 2010. We will continue to monitor the implementation of the DCRVO.

Implementing the batterer intervention programme and anti-violence programme for abusers

29. Upon completion of the two-year pilot project on batterer intervention programme (BIP) in March 2008, SWD has continued to implement the BIP for suitable abusers mainly involved in spouse battering as a component of their counselling service. Besides, SWD will further develop suitable treatment models to cater for different types of batterers, such as BIP for women batterers.

30. Separately, SWD launched an anti-violence programme (AVP) in August 2008 as provided for under the Domestic Violence (Amendment) Ordinance 2008⁽⁵⁾, which seeks to change the abusers' attitude and behaviour. The AVP is psycho-educational in nature and is suitable for all types of domestic violence abusers. NGOs have been engaged in delivering the AVP. With the enactment of DCRVO, the AVP has been extended to same-sex cohabitants involved in violence cases since January 2010.

Enhancing public education and training for professionals

31. SWD will continue to launch publicity campaign and public education initiatives to enhance public awareness of the problem of

⁽⁵⁾ Under the amended DVO, the court may, in granting a non-molestation order, require the abuser to attend a programme approved by the Director of Social Welfare that seeks to change the attitude and behaviour of the abuser.

domestic violence, build up social capital and create a caring and resilient community. To enhance the frontline professionals' knowledge and skills in handling different types of domestic violence and further promote multi-disciplinary collaboration, SWD will continue to strengthen the training programmes for the relevant professionals.

Implementing the pilot Child Fatality Review Mechanism

32. SWD launched a pilot project to review cases of children who died of non-natural causes in February 2008. The objective of the review is to examine the relevant child death cases with a view to identifying patterns and trends for formulation of prevention strategies and promoting multi-disciplinary and inter-agency cooperation in the prevention of child death.

33. A Review Panel has been set up by SWD to review child death cases handled by the Coroners' Court in 2006 and 2007. Subsequently, the Review Panel extended the scope of the review to cover also children who died of natural causes. After reviewing the child death cases that occurred in 2006, the Review Panel published its first report in early 2010 with initial findings and recommendations. As reported to the Legislative Council Panel on Welfare Services on 12 July 2010, the Review Panel is conducting an evaluation on the pilot mechanism. The review of child death cases that occurred in 2007 as well as the evaluation results will be set out in the final report of the Review Panel to be issued in the first quarter of 2011.

Rehabilitation services for PWDs

Implementing the Pilot Scheme on Home Care Service for Persons with Severe Disabilities

34. Persons with severe physical and/or intellectual disabilities require a higher level of care and support. The Government is mindful of their special care needs and the immense pressure faced by their family carers. We will launch the three-year pilot scheme in early 2011 to provide persons with severe disabilities who are living in the community and are on the waiting lists for subvented residential care services with a package of home-based support services, including personal care and escort service, occupational therapist/physiotherapist rehabilitation training service and nursing care service. The objective of the scheme is to facilitate home living of these PWDs while waiting for residential care services, and help relieve the stress of their family carers. To be tried

out in Tuen Mun and Kwun Tong which have the largest number of persons with severe disabilities waiting for residential care services, the pilot scheme is expected to serve about 540 persons with severe disabilities.

Continuing with the legislative exercise for the Residential Care Homes (Persons with Disabilities) Bill and implementation of relevant complementary measures

35. We have introduced the Residential Care Homes (Persons with Disabilities) Bill (the Bill) into the Legislative Council on 30 June 2010 for implementation of a licensing scheme for residential care homes for PWDs (RCHDs). The Legislative Council has set up a Bills Committee to examine the Bill.

36. In tandem with the licensing scheme, we have started rolling out a pilot Bought Place Scheme for private RCHDs in October 2010 to encourage operators of private RCHDs to upgrade the service standard of these homes, help the market develop more service options for PWDs, and increase the supply of subsidised residential care places. In addition, we plan to introduce a Financial Assistance Scheme for subsidised private RCHDs to carry out improvement works to meet the statutory licensing requirements after the passage of the Bill.

Enhancing transport services for PWDs

37. In keeping with the Government's on-going efforts to improve the accessibility of public transport for PWDs, Rehabus provides point-to-point scheduled and dial-a-ride transport services for PWDs who have difficulties in using public transport. Having regard to service demand, we will continue to enhance the Rehabus Fleet by adding new vehicles and replacing old ones.

Promoting the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

38. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (the Convention) has entered into force for the People's Republic of China, including the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, since 31 August 2008. To promote the spirit and core values enshrined in the Convention, the Government has substantially increased the allocation for public education activities since 2009-10. The Government has also strengthened training to enhance civil servants'

knowledge in the application of the spirit of the Convention in their daily work. Promotion of the Convention is an ongoing initiative. The Government will continue to promote the Convention in close collaboration with the Rehabilitation Advisory Committee, the rehabilitation sector, the District Councils and the community at large with a view to building an equal and barrier-free society.

Elderly care

Upgrading subsidised residential places without care element to provide long-term care

39. Under the Conversion Programme launched by SWD in 2005, 10 700 subsidised residential places for the elderly which do not have a care element or do not provide a continuum of care will be upgraded gradually to long-term care (LTC) places providing a continuum of care. At present, 65 subvented homes have participated in the Conversion Programme and are converting gradually 9 338 places into 5 189 LTC places providing a continuum of care.

Supporting singleton and hidden elders

40. We have allocated additional resources to the 158 elderly centres in the territory to strengthen their outreaching service so as to encourage hidden and singleton elders to develop social life and to provide referral, support and counselling services to those in need. At present, the elderly centres are handling a total of about 7 000 cases involving hidden or singleton elders.

Improving the home environment of elders

41. To help improve the living environment of elders who live in dilapidated homes, we introduced the “Home Environment Improvement Scheme for the Elderly” in 2008 to subsidise home renovation works and/or the purchase of essential fittings for eligible elderly households.

42. Response to the scheme has been very positive. By June this year, we had received altogether 25 000 applications. Work for 15 000 of them had been completed and that for 2 200 partially

completed. We expect the scheme to benefit a total of 40 000 elderly households.

Training enrolled nurses for the welfare sector

43. To alleviate the shortage of nurses in the welfare sector, SWD, in collaboration with HA, has been running a two-year full-time programme to train enrolled nurses particularly for the welfare sector since 2006. Six classes have been organised so far. Four more will be organised in the next two years. Together, the ten classes will provide 1 150 training places. The trainees of the first three classes have graduated. About 88% of them have joined the welfare sector.

Working with the Elderly Commission to study how community care services can be enhanced

44. The Elderly Commission (EC) completed a consultancy study on residential care services for the elderly late last year and the consultant team put forward several recommendations to the EC. Arising from the consultant's recommendation that community care services in Hong Kong should be further improved, the EC has embarked on a consultancy study early this year to further study how to provide better community care services for the elderly through a more flexible and diverse mode of service delivery, with a view to achieving the policy objective of "ageing in place as the core, institutional care as back-up", and thereby encouraging social enterprises and the private market to develop home care services to strengthen the support for elders who age at home. The study is expected to be completed next year.

Implementing the Pilot Scheme on Visiting Pharmacist Service

45. Apart from maintaining the standard of RCHEs through regulation by legislation, the Government has been working through various measures to upgrade the care capability of elderly homes. In last year's Policy Address, it was announced that the Government would launch a three-year Pilot Scheme on Visiting Pharmacist Service to provide RCHEs with visiting pharmacist services, in order to enhance the drug management knowledge and capability of RCHEs and their staff. Early this year, we selected 26 RCHEs to participate in the first phase of

the scheme, and have been providing a 12-month visiting pharmacist service for those RCHEs in cooperation with the Hong Kong Pharmaceutical Care Foundation Limited since June. Depending on the response of the RCHEs, we plan to invite about 25 more RCHEs a year to participate in the scheme in the next two years. The whole scheme seeks to benefit about 70 to 80 RCHEs.

Implementing the “District-based Scheme on Carer Training”

46. We rolled out the “District-based Scheme on Carer Training” in October 2007 to provide seed money of \$50,000 to all participating District Elderly Community Centres for them to run carer training courses in collaboration with community organisations, so as to promote basic elderly care skills; and engage those who have completed training to provide carer services so as to relieve the stress of the carers. We have further extended the scheme since April this year to cover all Neighbourhood Elderly Centres in the territory. At present, there are a total of 114 elderly centres participating in the scheme. Over 2 400 carers have been trained so far, and another 4 000 are undergoing training.

Implementing the “Pilot Scheme on Home Care Services for Frail Elders”

47. As stated in paragraph 7 above, we will implement a new “Pilot Scheme on Home Care Services for Frail Elders” early next year to provide tailor-made service packages for elders waiting for nursing home places but are living at home. We have selected Kowloon (covering Kwun Tong, Wong Tai Sin, Sai Kung, Kowloon City, Yau Tsim Mong and Sham Shui Po), where there is a larger elderly population, as the test ground. We expect that a total of 510 elders will be served in three years. We will earmark funding of \$55 million from the Lotteries Fund to take forward this scheme.

48. SWD invited eligible organisations to submit formal service proposals this August, and will announce the results by the end of this year.

Continuing to develop elder academies and promote inter-generational integration

49. The Elder Academy Scheme was jointly launched by the EC and the Government in 2007. To ensure its sustainable development, the Government allocated in 2009-10 \$10 million to establish the Elder Academy Development Foundation. The Committee on Elder Academy Development Foundation (Committee on Elder Academy) was set up in November 2009 to tender advice on the fund's administration. We will continue to work closely with the EC and the Committee on Elder Academy to devise strategies and measures for promoting continuous learning for elders, active ageing and inter-generational harmony. In the 2010-11 school year, a total of 108 elder academies are operating in primary schools, secondary schools and tertiary institutions.

Social security

Helping Comprehensive Social Security Assistance recipients become self-reliant and integrate into the community

50. The Government will continue to implement various employment assistance projects under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme to help CSSA recipients become self-reliant. These include the Integrated Employment Assistance Scheme (IEAS) which provides ordinary and intensive employment assistance to help able-bodied unemployed CSSA recipients aged between 15 and 59 secure full-time paid employment, the Special Training and Enhancement Programme (My STEP) which provides counselling and structured motivational or disciplinary training for CSSA unemployed youths aged between 15 and 29, and the New Dawn Project under which single parents and child carers on CSSA with their youngest child aged between 12 and 14 are assisted to move towards self-reliance through engagement in paid employment. As at the end of June 2010, about 70 000 CSSA recipients had participated in the IEAS, 1 300 in My STEP and 20 400 in the New Dawn Project.