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Panel on Welfare Services and Panel on Health Services

Joint Subcommittee on Long-term Care Policy

**Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat
for the meeting on 29 January 2013**

**Provision of subsidized residential care places for the elderly and
persons with disabilities**

Purpose

This paper gives a brief account of past discussions at meetings of the Council and its committees on the provision of subsidized residential care places for the elderly and persons with disabilities ("PWDs").

Background

Residential care services ("RCS") for the elderly

2. At present, there are about 76 000 RCS places in Hong Kong (including about 26 000 subsidized places), serving about 61 000 elders. Subsidized residential care places are provided in subvented residential care homes for the elderly ("RCHEs") run by non-governmental organizations ("NGOs"), contract RCHEs and private RCHEs participating in the Enhanced Bought Place Scheme ("EBPS") as well as self-financing nursing homes ("NHs") under the Nursing Home Place Purchase Scheme ("NHPPS").

3. Since 2001, the Social Welfare Department ("SWD") has awarded contracts through open tender to NGOs or private operators to operate 20 purpose-built RCHEs. These contract RCHEs are providing a total of 1 552 subsidized places (about 76% are nursing home ("NH") places and 24% care-and-attention ("C&A") places) and 1 105 non-subsidized places. From 2013-2014 to 2014-2015, four new contract RCHEs / RCHEs with day care

units will commence service. They will provide an additional 266 subsidized RCS places, of which 90% are NH places and 10% are C&A places, and 177 non-subsidized ones.

4. Given that subsidized residential care places are in huge demand, since November 2003, access to subsidized RCHE places is subject to care need assessments under the Standardised Care Need Assessment Mechanism for Elderly Services ("SCNAMES"). However, there is no means test for subsidized residential care places. Eligible elders will be put on the Central Waiting List ("CWL") for subsidized C&A places and nursing home ("NH") places.

RCS for PWDs

5. Similarly, in order to identify PWDs with genuine need for residential services and to match them with appropriate types of services, a Standardized Assessment Tool for Residential Services for People with Disabilities was implemented with effect from 1 January 2005. All applicants for subvented residential services for PWDs must be assessed by the Tool to ascertain their residential services needs before they are put on CWL or admitted to their required service units.

6. According to the Administration, various kinds of subsidized RCS are provided to those who cannot live independently or cannot be adequately cared for by their families. These services include –

- (a) Hostel for Severely Mentally Handicapped Persons ("HSMH");
- (b) Hostel for Moderately Mentally Handicapped Persons ("HMMH");
- (c) Supported Hostel;
- (d) Care and Attention Homes for Severely Disabled Persons;
- (e) Hostel for Severely Physically Handicapped Persons ("HSPH");
- (f) Long Stay Care Home;
- (g) Halfway House;
- (h) Care and Attention Home for the Aged Blind;

- (i) Small Group Home for Mildly Mentally Handicapped Children/Integrated Small Group Home;
- (j) Residential Special Child Care Centre; and
- (k) Integrated Vocational Training Centre (Residential Service).

In line with the strategic directions enshrined in the Hong Kong Rehabilitation Programme Plan ("RPP"), the Government has introduced a statutory licensing scheme for RCHDs to regulate their standards and operation since November 2011. As a complementary measure, the Government has also launched a pilot Bought Place Scheme ("BPS") for private RCHDs since October 2011 with a view to encouraging private operators of RCHDs to upgrade the service standard, shortening the waiting time for services by increasing the overall supply of subsidized residential care places, and helping the market develop more service options. As at end-October 2012, SWD purchased 245 residential care places for PWDs under the pilot BPS. In tandem, the Government continues to steadily increase the provision of subsidized residential care places. As at end-October 2012, there were 11 975 subsidized residential care places for PWDs, representing an increase of about 87% since 1997. In 2012-2013 and 2013-2014, a total of 694 additional residential care places will be provided.

Members' deliberations

Supply of residential care places for the elderly

7. The Panel on Welfare Services ("WS Panel"), the Subcommittee on Elderly Services and the Subcommittee on Residential and Community Care Services for Persons with Disabilities and Elderly had discussed residential care services for the elderly at a number of meetings. Members were gravely concerned about the large number of waitlistees and the long waiting times for RCHE. Noting that as at end-April 2012, the overall average waiting times for subsidized C&A and NH places were 22 months and 36 months respectively, members of the WS Panel stressed the need to set specific targets for admission to and shortening the waiting time for various types of residential care places in particular the provision of NH places. Members strongly called on the Administration to project the demand for long-term care places for the elderly population so as to better plan for the additional number of residential care places to be provided in the coming years.

8. The Administration advised that to meet the demand for subsidized residential care places, SWD had been increasing the supply of subsidized

residential care places from about 16 000 in 1997 to about 26 176 in end-July 2012. The Administration had also secured resources for about 1 700 additional RCS places which would commence operation from 2012-2013 to 2014-2015 and earmarked sites in 11 development projects for the construction of new contract RCHEs. It would continue to identify suitable sites for this purpose.

9. Notwithstanding the provision of additional subsidized residential care places, members considered that the measures put in place by the Administration were inadequate to meet the strong demand for subsidized residential care places arising from the ageing population. Although the average waiting time for subsidized C&A places in private RCHEs participating in EBPS was shorter than that for C&A places in subvented/contract RCHEs, members noted that some elders preferred to wait for subsidized C&A places in subvented/contract RCHEs. They considered that the waitlisting situation was primarily due to the worry about the quality of life in private RCHEs. The Administration should take this into account and examine critically the reasons why elders preferred to wait for subsidized RCHE places.

10. Members considered that it was the Government's responsibility to provide adequate residential care places for those elders who had long-term care ("LTC") needs. In this regard, members strongly urged the Administration to draw up a specific timetable and long-term plan to increase the number of and shorten the waiting time for subsidized residential care places. The Administration should make a pledge for the allocation of subsidized residential care places. To target subsidized residential care services at elders most in need, some members considered that the Administration should spell out the specific impairment level under which elders would be classified as having imminent LTC needs for admission to subsidized RCHEs.

11. The Administration stressed that it fully recognised the huge demand for subsidized RCS for the elderly as a result of the ageing population. It would continue to bid for additional resources to increase the supply of subsidized RCHEs. However, increasing continuously the supply of subsidized residential care places alone would not be sufficient to meet the growing needs due to a number of contributing factors, and the Administration would encourage a balanced mix of public and private elderly care services to widen the choices for quality self-financing and private residential care places providing different services. As there were many factors affecting the number of elders on CWL, the Administration was unable to give a pledge on the waiting time for the allocation of subsidized residential care places. Nevertheless, it would monitor the waitlisting situation closely. It would also consider the long-term planning of the provision of RCS for the elderly in consultation with the Elderly Commission ("EC") and work with EC to explore

how to promote further development of quality self-financing/private residential care services in meeting the LTC needs of elderly.

12. Taking into consideration the lead time required for implementing changes to the present arrangements on the provision and allocation of residential care places for the elderly, members urged the Administration to put in place interim measures to shorten the waiting time of the elderly currently on CWL for various types of subsidized residential care places. In view of an inadequate supply of subsidized RCHEs and the waitlisting situation, some members suggested that the Administration should categorize RCHEs in accordance with their quality and fees and introduce a means test mechanism for the allocation of subsidized residential care places. Reference could be made to the mechanism for allocation of public rental housing units and Home Ownership Scheme flats. To increase the supply of residential care places, the Administration should designate land use for the construction of purpose-built RCHE premises, relax the building requirements for operating RCHEs and convert vacant Government properties for the purpose. Furthermore, consideration could be given to increasing the number of purchased places in private RCHEs under EBPS.

13. In response to members' grave concern about the waitlisting situation of and the long-term planning on the provision of subsidized residential care places for the elderly, the Administration advised that, to meet the growing care needs of elders, the Government had been increasing the supply of subsidized residential care places through the construction of contract RCHEs, which provided both C&A and NH places. The Government would continue to identify suitable sites for the construction of new contract RCHEs and explore with existing contract RCHEs to convert some of the C&A places into NH places so as to shorten the waiting time for NH places. The Administration further advised that while SWD had from time to time liaised with relevant government departments to identify suitable sites for the construction of new contract RCHEs or convert vacant government premises/school sites into RCHEs, most of the vacant sites were available for temporary use only and were not suitable for development of RCHEs. Moreover, as stipulated under the Residential Care Homes (Elderly Persons) Ordinance (Cap. 459), no part of an RCHE should be situated at a height more than 24 metres above the ground floor owing to fire safety considerations. This imposed restrictions on site selection and the capacity of RCHEs.

14. The WS Panel was consulted on the proposal for constructing a contract residential care home for the elderly cum day care unit and a day care centre for the elderly at its meeting on 12 November 2012. Noting that of the additional 266 subsidized RCS places to be provided from 2013-2014 to 2014-2015, 90% were NH places and 10% were C&A places, members expressed concern about

the imbalance provision of NH places and C&A places. Members urged the Administration to adopt long-term plans to rectify the disproportionate provision and formulate policies on setting a proper proportion of these two types of places.

Consultancy study on residential care services for the elderly

15. The WS Panel also discussed the findings and recommendations of the consultancy study initiated by EC on the long-term planning for subsidized RCS for the elderly. At its meeting on 11 January 2010, the WS Panel was briefed on the study report in which three recommendations were proposed for EC's consideration -

- (a) to consider putting in place a proper means-test mechanism to target subsidized residential care services at elders who had genuine financial need;
- (b) to consider the introduction of a mandatory trial period for community care services for those who offered a "dual option" under SCNAMES (i.e. either residential or community care services); and
- (c) to consider expanding the scope and coverage of community care services with the participation of social enterprises and the private sector which should be the prerequisite for the introduction of any voucher scheme for LTC services.

16. While raising no objection to the policy direction of "ageing in place" and the introduction of a means test mechanism to shorten the waiting time for subsidized RCS, members took the view that the criteria for assessing the financial means of CWL applicants should not be too stringent to ensure that the limited public resources would be allocated to those elderly most in need of LTC services. Members also agreed with the consultant's recommendations that the introduction of a mandatory trial period of requiring "dual option" holders to use community care services before choosing RCS should be taken forward until the community care services were enhanced to such an extent that they became a viable alternative to residential care. The WS Panel held a special meeting on 6 February 2010 to receive views from 24 organizations on the recommendations of the consultancy study.

17. Members also took a strong view that the promotion of "ageing in place" and the provision of additional subsidized RCHE places were not mutually exclusive. They strongly urged the Administration to increase the provision of subsidized RCHE places having regard to the ever-growing

demand from an ageing population and the public impression that subvented RCHEs were better than private RCHEs.

18. EC advised that it agreed in principle with the policy options put forward by the consultant. However, in view of the consultant's recommendation to further develop community care services, EC decided to conduct a more in-depth study on possible service enhancement, including a more flexible and diverse mode of service delivery, e.g. by involving private or social enterprises as service providers, with a view to further encouraging elders to age in place and thus avoid premature and unnecessary institutionalization. The Administration also advised that it had yet to form a position on the consultant's findings and recommendations.

Motion on elderly services passed by the Council

19. At its meeting on 8 June 2011, the Council passed a motion on "Setting out a five-year plan for elderly services", under which the Government was urged, inter alia, to take the following measures -

- (a) to establish a five-year plan and service pledges in respect of RCS for the elderly, and strive to increase the number of residential care places for the elderly; to review SCNAMES; to provide elderly services subsidies for elderly persons by making reference to the mode of the existing education voucher scheme; and to enhance complementary measures for the elderly policy of "ageing in place"; and
- (b) focusing on the varying quality of private residential care homes for the elderly at present, to take the operating conditions of the sector seriously, and study providing the market with venues which were suitable for operating private residential care homes for the elderly by perfecting the land planning and housing policy; at the same time, to ensure that purchase prices were able to meet the costs of providing quality services; and to promote the voluntary accreditation system for private residential care homes for the elderly, so as to encourage the sector to upgrade its quality.

Measures to increase the supply of residential care places for PWDs

20. In discussing the 2007 RPP which set out the strategic directions and key suggestions in each programme area of rehabilitation services at the WS Panel meeting on 9 July 2007, members generally expressed disappointment at the absence of concrete implementation details about the RPP recommendations.

They requested the Administration to map out concrete measures to enhance the rehabilitation services for PWDs, including residential care services. The Administration advised that in accordance with the 2007 RPP, the Government has adopted a three-pronged approach to encourage participation from different sectors in providing diversified RCS for PWDs, viz -

- (a) regulating RCHDs through a statutory licensing scheme, so as to ensure their service quality on one hand and help the market develop residential care homes of different types and operational modes on the other;
- (b) supporting NGOs to develop self-financing homes; and
- (c) continuing to steadily increase the number of subsidized residential care home places.

21. According to the Administration, it would continue its efforts to bid for more resources to increase the supply of subvented residential places for PWDs. However, the provision of additional RCHDs would depend on the availability of suitable sites/premises.

22. Members generally considered that notwithstanding the difficulty of identifying suitable sites for new RCHDs, the Administration should come up with a plan on the target number of additional residential places for PWDs to be provided each year. A pledge of providing subsidized residential places to eligible PWDs should be made so as to shorten the waiting time. To address the shortage of suitable premises, the Administration should include the provision of residential services for PWDs in its town planning.

23. The Administration explained that attempts had been made by SWD to turn vacant premises in public housing estates into residential homes for PWDs, but such proposals were often met with local opposition. As such, SWD had to look for idle properties, such as unused schools and staff quarters, located in the remote areas for constructing homes for PWDs.

24. In the light of members' grave concern about the long waiting time for subvented RCHD places, the WS Panel decided at its meeting on 12 November 2007 to write to the Chief Secretary for Administration ("CS") and the Financial Secretary requesting the Administration to formulate a long-term plan and set specific targets for the provision of RCS for PWDs, and to allocate additional resources for the purpose. In his reply, CS advised that the Administration adopted a three-pronged approach, as set out in the 2007 RPP, to expedite the waiting time for residential services and day services for PWDs. An additional \$33 million had been allocated for providing 490 additional residential places in

2007-2008 and SWD was actively identifying suitable premises for such places, including vacant schools.

25. Members of the Subcommittee on Residential and Community Care Services for Persons with Disabilities and the Elderly raised concern about the Administration's specific plan in place to support NGOs to develop self-financing homes. According to the Administration, it would provide assistance to NGOs in identifying suitable premises, rendering support for concessionary rental and funding for fitting out cost in setting up the welfare facilities. As at 31 March 2011, 376 residential care places for PWDs were operated on self-financing basis.

26. The WS Panel was consulted on the proposals of setting up two new integrated rehabilitation services centres and two rehabilitation service facilities for PWDs at its meetings on 11 May 2009 and 10 December 2012 respectively. Members noted with grave concern about the long waiting time for HSPH and HMMH (the average waiting time for HSPH in 2008 was as long as 106.8 months and that for HMMH was 84.4 months in 2011-12). The WS Panel held a strong view that the provision of subvented RCS for PWDs should be expedited to shorten the average waiting time to a reasonable time frame. Members considered that the Administration should seriously consider providing residential care homes and hostels for mentally handicapped persons in Government premises such as public housing blocks or Government Office Buildings. Members reiterated the need for the Administration to formulate long-term plan and set targets for the provision of residential care homes for PWDs.

27. The Administration assured members that it had endeavoured to increase the number of and shorten the waiting time for residential care places for PWDs. Notably, it would continue to liaise with other authorities in town planning to strive for suitable long-term venues for RCHDs as well as study the viability of turning vacant premises into RCHDs. At its meeting on 11 May 2009, the WS Panel decided to write to the Secretary for Education ("SED") and the Government Property Administrator to enlist their support in identifying suitable vacant premises for conversion into RCHDs. In his reply, SED advised that the Education Bureau ("EDB") had started to share with other bureaux and departments the list of vacant school premises not suitable for school or other educational uses. EDB was prepared to assist the Labour and Welfare Bureau and SWD to identify vacant school premises which were no longer required for school or other educational uses for supporting initiatives under their purview where necessary.

Relevant papers

28. A list of relevant papers on the Legislative Council website is in the **Appendix**.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
24 January 2013

Appendix

Relevant papers on provision of subsidized residential care places for the elderly and persons with disabilities

Committee	Date of meeting	Papers
Panel on Welfare Services	12 November 2007 (Item V)	Agenda Minutes Letter of the Panel Chairman dated 16 November 2007 and the reply from the Chief Secretary for the Administration dated 11 January 2008 LC Paper No. CB(2)863/07-08(01)
Subcommittee on Elderly Services	22 January 2008 (Item I)	Agenda Minutes
Subcommittee on Elderly Services	19 February 2008 (Item I)	Agenda Minutes
Subcommittee on Elderly Services	11 April 2008 (Item I)	Agenda Minutes
Subcommittee on Poverty Alleviation	6 April 2009 (Item III)	Agenda Minutes
Panel on Welfare Services	11 May 2009 (Item V)	Agenda Minutes Reply from the Secretary for Education to the Panel Chairman dated 5 June 2009 LC Paper No. CB(2)1862/08-09(03)
Panel on Welfare Services	22 October 2009 (Item I)	Agenda Minutes
Panel on Welfare Services	14 December 2009 (Item IV)	Agenda Minutes
Panel on Welfare Services	11 January 2010 (Item IV)	Agenda Minutes

Committee	Date of meeting	Papers
Panel on Welfare Services	6 February 2010 (Item I)	Agenda Minutes
Panel on Welfare Services	8 February 2010 (Item IV)	Agenda Minutes
Legislative Council	8 June 2011	Official Record of Proceedings Pages 242 - 331 Progress Report
Subcommittee on Residential and Community Care Services for Persons with Disabilities and the Elderly	-	Report (LC Paper No. CB(2)2046/10-11)
Panel on Welfare Services	12 November 2012 (Item IV)	Agenda Minutes
Panel on Welfare Services	10 December 2012 (Item IV)	Agenda

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