

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)825/12-13(02)

Ref : CB2/PS/1/12

Panel on Welfare Services and Panel on Health Services

Joint Subcommittee on Long-term Care Policy

**Updated background brief prepared by the Legislative Council
Secretariat for the meeting on 26 March 2013**

Community care services for the elderly

Purpose

This paper provides a brief account of the discussions at meetings of the Council and its committees on the provision of community care services for the elderly ("CCS").

Background

2. According to the Administration, "ageing in the community" is an underlying principle of the Government's elderly policy. This is in line with most elders' wish as they cherish the support from their families and the sense of belonging that a familiar community offers. To this end, the Government provides a range of subsidized supporting services, including centre-based day care services and home-based services. 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 subsidized residential care places.

Deliberations by members

Existing provision of community care and support services

3. While supporting the Government's elderly care policy of ageing in place, members of the Panel on Welfare Services ("the Panel") and many

deputations expressed concern about the inadequate provision of both residential care services for the elderly ("RCS") and CCS to meet the increasing demand arising from the ageing population. Members considered it necessary for the Administration to step up its efforts in enhancing the services and relieving the waitlisting situation. The Administration should also formulate a long-term strategy for the provision of CCS according to the users' needs and ensure that the community care services should be allocated to those who were most in need of the services.

4. At the Council meeting on 8 June 2011, a motion on "Setting out a five-year plan for elderly services" was carried, under which the Government was urged to, among others, establish a five-year plan and service pledges in respect of both RCS and CCS, and strive to increase the respective number of places for these two services.

5. In the view of the Administration, elders with long-term care needs did not necessarily age in residential care homes for the elderly. Further development of community care services would encourage elders to age in place and thus avoid premature and unnecessary institutionalisation. Therefore, a range of subsidised community care services was provided in parallel to facilitate elders to age in the community. These included –

- (a) centre-based day care services to frail elders who had long-term care needs and could not be taken care of by their family members during daytime through the 60 Day Care Centres/Units for the Elderly in the territory; and
- (b) home-based Enhanced Home and Community Care Service and Integrated Home Care Services for frail elders.

6. The Administration stressed that while ageing in place was the Government's policy objective, residential care places would continue to be provided to elders who were in need of such services. Elderly who were staying at home while waiting for subsidized residential care places were receiving subsidized home-based community care services or day care services.

7. The Panel and the Subcommittee on Residential and Community Care Services for Persons with Disabilities and the Elderly ("the Subcommittee") of the Fourth Legislative Council discussed at several meetings the new initiatives to enhance support for the frail elders to live in the community. These included the Pilot Scheme on Home Care Services for Frail Elders, District-based Scheme on Carer Training and Integrated Discharge Support Trial Programme for Elderly Patients.

(a) Pilot Scheme on Home Care Services for Frail Elders

8. Members were advised that a three-year pilot scheme would be launched to provide a new package of intensive and tailor-made home care services for 510 frail elders residing in Wong Tai Sin, Sai Kung, Kwun Tong, Yau Tsim Mong, Kowloon City and Sham Shui Po districts who were on the waiting list for subsidized places in nursing homes. 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 or 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.

9. The Administration clarified that the impairment level and care needs of elders who were on the waiting list for subsidized residential care services were assessed under the Standardised Care Need Assessment Mechanism for Elderly Services which was widely used internationally. Under the pilot scheme, personalized 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 non-governmental organizations ("NGOs") or social enterprises ("SEs") with experience in elderly care and established service networks in the districts concerned, and would be subsidized by the Government according to a fee-charging scale to be set by the Social Welfare Department ("SWD"). Elders who joined the pilot scheme would remain on the waiting list for subsidized residential care services.

10. Some members remained concerned about the long-term commitment of the Government in providing the enhanced home care services given that only one-off funding was provided for the services. They took note that 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.

(b) District-based Scheme on Carer Training

11. Under the District-based Scheme on Carer Training, District Elderly Community Centres would partner with community organisations in the

districts in organising carer trainer programmes. The Scheme aimed to enhance carers' capability through training so as to alleviate their stress resulting from taking care of elders. Carers who had completed the training would be recruited as carer-helpers, providing care service for elders at the district level. Members noted the extension of the Scheme to Neighbourhood Elderly Centres since April 2010 in the light of the positive response.

(c) *Integrated Discharge Support Trial Programme for Elderly Patients*

12. The Subcommittee was informed that on the advice of the Elderly Commission ("EC"), the Administration had in collaboration with the Hospital Authority launched the three-year Integrated Discharge Support Trial Programme for Elderly Persons in Kwun Tong, Kwai Tsing and Tuen Mun in March and August 2008 and July 2009 respectively. The Programme aimed to provide timely support to elderly hospital discharges and their carers so as to help the elders recuperate at home. The entire programme was expected to serve a total of 20 000 elders and 7 000 carers.

13. According to the Administration, the Trial Programme demonstrated how comprehensive and continuous care might be provided to elderly patients through better coordination of medical and welfare services. In view of the positive response to the Programme, the Administration decided to allocate additional recurrent funding of \$148 million to make it a regular service and extend its coverage from the current three districts to all districts within 2011-2012. The number of elders to be served each year was expected to increase from 8 000 to 33 000.

14. Some members questioned the need for introducing various pilot schemes for providing care services to frail elders to support them to age in the community. These members considered that the Administration should provide such services to all frail elders across the territory without the need to try out the services under different pilot schemes.

15. The Administration explained that the various new initiatives in place sought to fill the service gap and complement each other. Specific home care services would be provided to frail elders having regard to their conditions and the level and intensity of care they required. An elderly-oriented case management service approach would be adopted, under which the responsible case manager and his/her multi-disciplinary team would draw up a personal care plan, including the types and number of hours of services, for each elder having regard to his/her actual conditions.

Consultancy Study initiated by EC

16. According to the Administration, EC commissioned a consultancy study on CCS in April 2010 to examine how to strengthen these services through a more flexible and diverse mode of financing and service delivery. The report of the study was released in June 2011. The Panel noted that the consultant had made a number of recommendations, which fell into the following three major areas, for EC's consideration –

- (a) Area 1: Improving the existing mode of service delivery and increasing the service volume;
- (b) Area 2: Introducing a community care service voucher based on affordability and shared responsibilities and equitable allocation of resources; and
- (c) Area 3: Creating an environment for further development of community care services.

17. Members agreed with the consultant's recommendations that the development of subsidised community care services should be further enhanced. However, members cautioned that the provision of community care services would by no means replace residential care services for the elderly. Members and deputations urged the Administration to continue to take concrete action to address the waitlisting situation for subsidised residential care places for the elderly.

18. In the view of members, the higher institutionalisation rate in Hong Kong was largely attributable to the congested living environment. To encourage the elderly to age at home, the Administration should enhance the support for family carers of frail elders, such as the provision of a carer allowance. According to the Administration, respite service and training had been providing to family carers of frail elders to relieve their pressure in taking care of the elders at home. This apart, a series of new initiatives had been put in place to further enhance the community care services for the elderly. For instance, the launch of the Integrated Discharge Support Trial Programme for Elderly Persons would provide timely support to elderly hospital dischargees and their carers so as to help the elders recuperate at home.

19. Some members and deputations were gravely concerned about the introduction of means-tested mechanism and the "users pay principle" for subsidised community care services. According to EC, the objective of the EC study was to examine ways to strengthen CCS through a more flexible approach and diverse mode of service delivery. The provision of community care service voucher would serve as an incentive to encourage eligible elders who were waiting for residential care services to opt for community care services under the dual option system, and they would remain on the waiting list for subsidised residential care places for the elderly while using the voucher. The recommendation of introducing community care service voucher based on the principles of affordability and shared responsibility might help to address the varying needs of different sectors of the older population and throw light on the discussion on the effective use of public resources. It was mindful of the controversies in the proposal. Should the Administration accept the directions put forward by the consultant, EC would then study the details of the proposal, and further public discussion would be necessary.

20. According to the Administration, it agreed in principle with the overall thrust of the EC report, but it would take time to study the recommendations in greater detail. It would revert to the Panel on its way forward for the recommendations.

21. In his Policy Address 2011-2012, the Chief Executive ("CE") announced that the Government would introduce a four-year pilot community care service voucher scheme. In his 2013 Policy Address, CE stated that the First Phase of the Pilot Scheme on the voucher would be rolled out in September 2013. The Pilot Scheme would adopt a new funding mode, i.e. "money-follows-the-user" approach. Eligible elderly might choose the services that suited their individual needs with use of service vouchers.

22. In response to the enquiry of the Joint Subcommittee on Long-term Care Policy about the implementation details of the Pilot Scheme, the Administration advised that SWD would invite NGOs and SEs to express their interest in the Pilot Scheme and submit proposals by the deadline in February 2013. It was expected that the selection process would be completed by April 2013 with a view to launching by September 2013.

23. In view of the concerns raised about the Scheme, the Joint Subcommittee agreed that, some time after its implementation, it would discuss with the Administration review of the Scheme.

Relevant papers

24. A list of the relevant papers on the Legislative Council Website is in the **Appendix**.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
20 March 2013

Appendix

Relevant papers on provision of community care services for the elderly

Committee	Date of meeting	Paper
Panel on Welfare Services	11 January 2010 (Item IV)	<u>Agenda</u> <u>Minutes</u>
Panel on Welfare Services	6 February 2010 (Item I)	<u>Agenda</u> <u>Minutes</u>
Panel on Welfare Services	8 March 2010 (Item IV)	<u>Agenda</u> <u>Minutes</u>
Subcommittee on Residential and Community Care Services for Persons with Disabilities and the Elderly	28 June 2010 (Item I)	<u>Agenda</u> <u>Minutes</u>
Panel on Welfare Services	12 July 2010 (Item III)	<u>Agenda</u> <u>Minutes</u>
Panel on Welfare Services	11 April 2011 (Item VI)	<u>Agenda</u> <u>Minutes</u> <u>CB(2)1907/10-11(01)</u>
Panel on Welfare Services	11 July 2011 (Item III)	<u>Agenda</u> <u>Minutes</u>
Panel on Welfare Services	22 August 2011 (Item I)	<u>Agenda</u>
Panel on Welfare Services	13 February 2012 (Item V)	<u>Agenda</u> <u>Minutes</u>
Panel on Welfare Services	27 April 2012 (Item I)	<u>Agenda</u> <u>Minutes</u>

Committee	Date of meeting	Paper
Joint Subcommittee on Long-term Care Policy	29 January 2013 (Item I)	Agenda Minutes
Joint Subcommittee on Long-term Care Policy	26 February 2013 (Item I)	Agenda

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