

**For information
on 11 March 2013**

Legislative Council Panel on Welfare Services

Promoting Active Ageing

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on the Administration's initiatives relating to the promotion of active ageing.

Background

2. The Administration has all along been striving to improve the quality of life of the elderly so as to promote a sense of security, belonging and worthiness among them. In fact, most of the elderly people are able to take care of themselves. They also participate actively in community affairs. Hence the Administration has been actively building an age-friendly community environment and promoting the message of active ageing.

3. The Labour and Welfare Bureau (LWB) and the Elderly Commission (EC) have jointly carried out a series of projects to promote active ageing, which include the Elder Academy Scheme (EA Scheme) and the Neighbourhood Active-Ageing Project (NAAP). Through the Opportunities for the Elderly Project (OEP) and 200-odd elderly centres, the Social Welfare Department (SWD) has also been promoting a sense of worthiness among the elderly and promoting the concept of a caring community for them.

EA Scheme

4. The LWB (the then Health, Welfare and Food Bureau) and the EC have been promoting the EA Scheme since 2007. Schools at both primary and secondary levels are encouraged to set up Elder Academies (EAs) in collaboration with social welfare agencies to provide a school setting for the elderly to pursue learning. Through continuous learning under the EA Scheme, the elderly may gain knowledge and acquire new skills so as to keep up with the times and lead a healthy and fulfilled life. Besides, students are recruited as volunteers to help run the EAs under the scheme, which help encourage more regular contact

and dialogues between the youth and the elderly, thereby promoting inter-generational harmony. The EAs offer a wide range of courses, having regard to the interests and demand of the elderly in the local communities. Courses range from those concerning healthy living to academic ones such as computer application, English language, astronomy and fine arts, etc. Since there are some elderly who aspire to take courses in universities, the EA Scheme has subsequently been expanded to tertiary institutions to allow elderly persons to take part in in-depth academic studies. In the 2012-13 academic year, there are altogether 110 EAs in primary, secondary and tertiary institutions throughout the territory.

5. To sustain future development of the EA Scheme, the Government allocated, in 2009, \$10 million to set up the Elder Academy Development Foundation. Apart from supporting the setting up of EAs, the Foundation also allocated funds to support promotional activities for the EA Scheme, curriculum development and extra-curricular activities under the Scheme.

6. It is hoped that through the learning experience at the EAs, the elderly can identify new life goals. With a greater sense of achievement and self-confidence, they may be better placed to face the changes in daily life. Through the learning activities, the elderly may also expand their social network and lead an active retired life.

7. It is widely recognised that the EA Scheme provides a platform for the elderly to pursue lifelong learning and for promoting inter-generational harmony. Since the scheme has already been in place for six years, we are reviewing its effectiveness and setting its future direction. We would consider introducing enhancements to the scheme, such as working with tertiary institutions to develop courses that will deepen the knowledge of the elderly; training tertiary students and retired professionals to be tutors for courses at district level so as to improve penetration of the courses; and collaborating with the mass media in launching courses so that they could reach a wider audience.

NAAP

8. The NAAP was launched by the LWB and the EC in early 2008. The elderly play a leading role in NAAP projects. Through cross-sectoral collaboration, the NAAP mobilises different organisations and individuals who are interested in serving the community to develop caring and support networks at the community level, thus promoting the message of active ageing and caring for the elderly. A total of 75 district projects have been completed.

9. In early 2012, LWB and EC launched a new phase of the NAAP in conjunction with the “Love and Respect Thy Elders” Campaign under the Family Council. A total of 69 district projects are being carried out throughout the territory.

10. There are two themes under this phase of the NAAP. First is enhancing neighbourhood support networks. Participating organisations are encouraged to mobilise owners corporations, owners committees, management companies and other residents’ organisations to assist in recruiting volunteers in organising activities to promote family core values of love and care, and foster mutual help at community level.

11. The other theme is promotion of harmonious family relations. Family members are invited to accompany the elderly in activities promoting mutual understanding among the elderly, family members and their neighbours. These activities send a message across the community that caring for the elderly by their family and neighbourhood is an integral part of active ageing.

OEP

12. From 1998-1999, the SWD launched the OEP to promote a sense of worthiness among the elderly and a spirit of caring through a series of activities organised by subvented social service agencies, district organisations, schools and volunteer groups.

13. Over the past decade, the OEP has been promoting lifelong learning among the elderly such that they will keep up with the times and take an active part in community affairs. The elderly will also achieve a sense of worthiness through making good use of their rich life experience and expertise to contribute to the community and leading a rich retired life. The programme also encourages the elderly to establish a harmonious relationship with their family members by playing an active family role in enhancing family cohesion. At the community level, the programme promotes the messages of respecting and loving elderly persons, fostering inter-generational harmony, supporting carers, and extending support to and caring for frail, singleton elderly persons, as well as those living in residential care homes.

14. The theme for the OEP in 2012-14 is ‘Inspiring the Younger Generation with Valuable Experience in their Brilliant Old Age, Living in Harmony for the Betterment of Society’. Through the Project, the elderly persons are encouraged to pass on their lifelong wisdom and experience to the younger generation. To help foster social harmony and create a better living environment, the Project seeks to promote volunteer work by the elderly and encourage them to join hands with the others to promote the message of helping others. A

total of 239 activities have been funded by the Project in 2012-13. Meanwhile, the SWD extended, in 2012-13, the pilot School Promotion Project – “Encouraging a Sense of Worthiness among the Elders” to the whole territory to further promote the message at school level, thereby fostering social cohesion and reinforcing the message about respecting and caring for the elderly.

Improvement Programme of Elderly Centres (IPEC)

15. Apart from the schemes and projects mentioned above, elderly centres also played an important role in promoting active ageing and ageing in place at district level. The main service users of elderly centres are elderly people aged 60 or above and their carers. Many of these elderly people are active and fit. They would wish to enjoy new facilities in a modernised setting in elderly centres, such as computer equipment to facilitate lifelong learning and fitness exercise equipment.

16. In view of this, with an allocation of \$900 million under the Lotteries Fund, the SWD implemented the IPEC in April 2012 to enhance the physical setting and facilities of District Elderly Community Centres, Neighbourhood Elderly Centres and Social Centres for the Elderly.

17. Currently, a total of 237 elderly centres have joined the IPEC. The entire programme will be implemented in phases over a period of six years. As at December 2012, the Lotteries Fund Advisory Committee had approved 23 applications and allocated funding to the elderly centres concerned. Relevant works have commenced in succession. The first elderly centre to benefit from the IPEC was re-opened for service with a new look in February.

18. With a donation of \$110 million by the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust, the Jockey Club Elderly Facilities Modernisation Scheme (JCEFMS) is also launched to improve the facilities of those elderly centres that have joined the IPEC. Funding is provided to the centres to purchase non-standard furniture and equipment. Currently, a total of 192 elderly centres have joined both the IPEC and the JCEFMS.

19. Through the improvements, the elderly centres concerned could not only meet users’ changing needs, but also attract more elderly people and their carers to use the services, especially those elderly who are relatively healthy and energetic. They may take part in the voluntary services organised by the centres and make use of the facilities to organise various activities, thereby allowing them to actively partake in community activities and lead a

fulfilled life. The IPEC also helped enhance ancillary facilities in the community to support the policy of ageing in place.

Public Transport Fare Concession Scheme for the Elderly and Eligible Persons with Disabilities

20. To encourage the elderly to further participate in community activities, and hence help build a caring and inclusive society, the Administration has launched the Public Transport Fare Concession Scheme for the Elderly and Eligible Persons with Disabilities (the Scheme) to enable elderly people aged 65 or above to travel on the MTR, franchised buses and ferries any time at a concessionary fare of \$2 per trip. Following the launch of the Scheme on the MTR and four franchised bus companies in end-June and early-August 2012 respectively, the Administration extended the Scheme to ferries and the New Lantao Bus on 3 March 2013. By the end of December 2012, the average daily trips of beneficiaries exceeded 600 000.

Way Forward

21. The Administration will continue to promote the EA Scheme to encourage schools, to operate more EAs in collaboration with social welfare agencies, in order to provide more learning opportunities for the elderly. The Administration will also continue to promote active ageing and a sense of worthiness among the elderly through the NAAP and the OEP.

Advice sought

22. Members are invited to note the content of the paper.

Labour and Welfare Bureau

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