

立法會
Legislative Council

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Panel on Welfare Services

**Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat
for the meeting on 11 March 2013**

Promoting active ageing

Purpose

This paper gives a brief account of Members' past discussions on the Government's measures on promoting active ageing.

Background

2. According to the Administration, in the face of a growing aging population, the Government has been promoting a sense of worthiness and active ageing among the elderly through a range of programmes including the Elder Academy Scheme, the Neighbourhood Active Ageing Project ("NAAP"), and the Opportunities for the Elderly Project to encourage elders to pursue continuous learning, to expand their networks and actively take part in community affairs and make good use of their expertise and ample experience in life to further their contribution to society.

3. In addition, the Government has been offering concessions to elders to encourage them to achieve active ageing through more participation in community activities. Examples include concessions for the use of public recreational facilities and the \$2 transport fare concession scheme.

Deliberations by members

Different minimum age requirements

4. While welcoming the Administration's initiatives to enrich the elders'

life, some Members were concerned about the different minimum age requirements for the various concession schemes. For instance, the age requirements for the concessionary rate of the admission fee for public swimming pools, the \$2 transport fare concession scheme as well as the vaccination subsidy scheme for the elderly, and the elderly health care vouchers were 60, 65 and 70 respectively. They suggested that the Administration should review the age requirements for these schemes and standardize them at the age of 60. The Administration advised that the Government's overall objective was to provide appropriate assistance and concessions to meet the needs of citizens, and ensure the proper use of public resources. Since the nature, aim and target recipients might vary across various assistance and concession schemes, different age requirements and eligibility criteria might apply. The Administration had no plan to standardize the age requirements under the various schemes.

Employment support

5. Noting that retired elders, who were below the age of 65 and no longer had any income, were not eligible for most of the current welfare measures, Members wondered whether the Administration would formulate a policy for assisting the re-employment of these elders, such as providing subsidies or tax concessions to private enterprises and public organizations employing the elderly.

6. The Administration advised that the Labour Department ("LD") had all along been providing a comprehensive range of employment services free of charge to help job seekers, who included elders, find work. Special counters had been set up in all job centres of LD to provide priority registration and referral service for job seekers aged 50 or above. At the same time, LD had implemented the Employment Programme for the Middle-aged to encourage employers to employ job seekers aged 40 or above. Participating employers would be given a training allowance at \$2,000 per month for each employee for a period of three to six months if they employed these job seekers and provided them with on-the-job training. Meanwhile, according to the Inland Revenue Ordinance (Cap. 112), all outgoings and expenses including expenditure incurred on the employment of labour, to the extent to which they had been incurred by the taxpayer in the production of chargeable profits, were all allowed as deductions in calculating the taxpayer's assessable profits.

Lifelong learning and participation in volunteer work

7. Members asked about elders' participation in the Elder Academy

Scheme, which was jointly implemented by the Labour and Welfare Bureau and the Elderly Commission, and the Government's measures to encourage lifelong learning and participation in volunteer work among the elderly.

8. The Administration advised that -

- (a) since its launch in 2007, the Elder Academy Scheme had provided about 54 000 learning places for elders in total. In 2009, the Government allocated \$10 million to set up the Elder Academy Development Foundation for the sustainable development of the Elder Academy Scheme. Apart from subsidizing the establishment of elder academies, the Foundation had also allocated funds to support the promotion, curriculum development and extra-curricular activities of the Elder Academy Scheme;
- (b) the Government had been providing one-stop information service on elderly services and products, and encouraging the elderly to keep pace with times and enrich their social life through the elderly-friendly internet portal, "eElderly"; and
- (c) since its inception in 2008, NAAP had been encouraging people of different ages to serve as volunteers to care for elders. In addition to reaching out to hidden elders and promoting the message of care and love for the elderly, NAAP provided an opportunity for elders to act as volunteers and use their talents to serve the community. A new phase of NAAP was launched in April 2012, and 69 district projects were being carried out in different parts of the territory. The new phase aimed at fostering harmonious family relations and enhancing neighbourhood support networks, which tied in with the "Love and Respect Thy Elders" Campaign of the Family Council.

Barrier-free environment

9. The promotion of active ageing was also discussed in a wider context of developing an elderly-friendly policy. 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, among others, to implement the elderly-friendly policy in all public places, effectively enforce the requirements of barrier-free facilities, and provide various types of facilities for elderly persons to facilitate their entry and exit. Members were advised that the Housing Authority had devised a retrofitting

programme to improve the accessibility of 233 premises/facilities under its management (covering public housing estates, commercial centres, carparks and factory buildings). Most of the improvement works would be completed by 30 June 2012.

Latest Development

10. During its briefing on the 2013 Policy Address at the special meeting of the Panel on Welfare Services on 21 January 2013, the Administration advised that it would continue its policy in promoting a sense of worthiness among the elderly, enhancing harmony across generations and encouraging lifelong learning. The Administration will brief the Panel on the various initiatives relating to the promotion of active ageing and an age-friendly community at its meeting on 11 March 2013.

Relevant papers

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

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
5 March 2013

Appendix

Relevant papers on promoting active ageing

Committee	Date of meeting	Papers
Panel on Welfare Services	22 October 2009 (Item I)	Agenda Minutes
Panel on Welfare Services	20 October 2010 (Item I)	Agenda Minutes
Legislative Council	8 June 2011	Official Record of Proceedings Pages 243 – 331 Progress Report
Panel on Manpower	16 February 2012 (Item V)	Agenda Minutes
Legislative Council	5 December 2012	Official Record of Proceedings Pages 21 – 32
Panel on Welfare Services	21 January 2013 (Item I)	Agenda

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