

For information
on 10 June 2013

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
PANEL ON WELFARE SERVICES**

Rehabilitation Services for Pre-school Children

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on the rehabilitation services for pre-school children provided by the Government.

Policy Objectives

2. The policy objective of the Government in respect of the provision of pre-school rehabilitation services is to provide children, from birth to six years old, with disabilities or at risk of becoming disabled with early intervention to enhance their physical, psychological and social developments, thereby improving their opportunities for participating in ordinary schools and daily life activities and helping their families meet their special needs.

Identification and Assessment Mechanism

3. The Government has all along strived to achieve early identification and assessment for children with developmental disorders through various measures. Apart from the Developmental Surveillance Scheme implemented at the Maternal and Child Health Centres (MCHCs) of the Department of Health (DH) for newborn to children aged five, DH, the Hospital Authority (HA), Education Bureau, Social Welfare Department (SWD) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) jointly launched the Comprehensive Child Development Service (CCDS) by phases since 2005 to enhance and seek early identification pre-primary

children with developmental problems. CCDS makes use of MCHCs of DH and other service units as platforms to identify at-risk pregnant women, mothers with postnatal depression, families with psychosocial needs and pre-primary children with health, developmental or behavioural problems. Children in need and their family members will be referred to the appropriate health and welfare service units for follow up. Pre-primary institution teachers can also refer children in need to the MCHC of the district for assessment and appropriate treatment. Under CCDS, a referral and reply system has been developed and implemented in all pre-primary institutions since 2008. In addition, a “Pre-primary Children Development and Behaviour Management - Teacher Resource Kit” was prepared by the DH in collaboration with EDB and SWD to enable kindergarten teachers to have a better understanding about the CCDS operation and referral system, and enhance their knowledge in common pre-school developmental and behavioural problems to facilitate early identification and referral of children in need for assessment and treatment.

4. The Child Assessment Service (CAS) of DH provides comprehensive multidisciplinary team assessment for children who are under 12 years of age with developmental disorders, and arrange rehabilitation services for them as necessary. The assessment team comprises multidisciplinary professionals such as paediatricians, clinical psychologists, medical social workers, audiologists, speech therapists, optometrists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, public health nurses and other auxiliary personnel. They collaborate to provide children suspected with these developmental difficulties with assessment and diagnosis. The assessment team will refer children concerned according to their individual needs to HA (for example: the Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Specialist Outpatient Clinics or Speech Therapy Department) for further diagnosis and treatment as necessary. Subject to the consent of the parents, CAS of DH will refer preschool children in need to receive preschool rehabilitation services under SWD’s subvented programmes.

5. The multi-disciplinary professional teams of HA comprising healthcare practitioners in various disciplines, including child psychiatrists, paediatricians, clinical psychologists, nurses, speech

therapists and occupational therapists, provide early identification, assessment and treatment services for needy children. In 2011-12, an additional 48 members of the teams including doctors, nurses and allied health professionals had been recruited to the multi-disciplinary teams to provide the service.

6. The SWD's medical social workers stationed at CAS of DH and the psychiatric wards and clinics of HA also collaborates with the team of medical professionals to jointly develop children's rehabilitation plan and assist in the provision of the above-mentioned services.

Rehabilitation Services

Existing Services

7. At present, the Government provides a wide range of pre-school services for children with special needs. These include:

- (a) Early Education and Training Centre (EETC) which provides services for children with disabilities from birth to two years old as well as those aged between two and six who need EETC service or those who are on waiting list for other pre-school services. The objective of these services is to maximise the developmental functioning of children with disabilities by enabling their parents, through support and assistance, to accept, understand, care for and train their children with disabilities;
- (b) Special Child Care Centre (SCCC) which provides services for children with moderate and severe disabilities aged between two and six. The objective of these services is to develop these children's fundamental developmental skills and intellectual ability, as well as the perceptual-motor, cognitive, communication, social and self-care skills to facilitate their smooth transition from pre-school education to primary education. Residential facilities are also available in some SCCC's to cater for the needs of children with disabilities who

are homeless, abandoned or dwelling in abject living conditions or family environment;

- (c) Integrated Programme in Kindergarten-cum-Child Care Centre (IP in KG-cum-CCC) which provides training and care to children aged between two and six with mild disabilities with a view to facilitating their full integration into normal pre-school setting as far as possible so that they will stand a better chance of future integration into the mainstream education;
- (d) provision of occupational therapy (OT), physiotherapy (PT) and speech therapy (ST) which aim to enhance self-reliance of children with disabilities in daily living, correct deformities and prevent deterioration in health. At present, centre-based OT, PT and ST services are available in EETCs and SCCCs. For IP in KG-cum-CCC, OT and PT services are provided by the Central Para-medical Support Service Unit of the SWD whilst ST service by district-based speech therapist teams;
- (e) clinical psychology services provided by the centre-based clinical psychologists (CP) or CPs from SWD to EETCs, SCCCs and IP in KG-cum-CCC. These include assessment of psychological and intellectual functioning of children with disabilities, and devising training programmes to stimulate their normal emotional and behavioural development;
- (f) Parents/Relatives Resource Centre which provides a wide range of support services for parents and relatives of children with disabilities;
- (g) respite service for children with disabilities which provides parents and carers with a safe place for temporarily placing their children with disabilities so that they can have a short break to handle important personal business;
- (h) Children Gateway Clubs which provide social and recreational activities for children with disabilities to facilitate them to integrate into the community; and

- (i) support and education services for hearing impaired pre-schoolers, including following up on children issued with free hearing aids, parent counselling and professional consultation.

8. The current provision, the number of children on the waiting list and the average waiting time in respect of EETC, SCCC and IP services are tabulated at **Annex A**.

Measures of service enhancement

9. The Government has been continuously increasing the provision of pre-school rehabilitation places. Over the past six years, the Government has allocated funding to provide about 1 500 additional places, representing an increase of nearly 30%. There are currently a total of 6 230 pre-school rehabilitation places. SWD anticipates that about 607 additional places will come on stream in 2013-14. In addition, SWD has reserved sites for providing 1 200 additional places in the coming five years (i.e. from 2013-14 to 2017-18). We will continue to actively identify additional sites for provision of more places to meet the demand.

10. Apart from increasing the number of pre-school rehabilitation places, SWD has since December 2006 implemented a host of measures, including enhancing the computer system, simplifying application procedures and avoiding duplicate applications etc., with a view to streamlining the waiting arrangement.

11. Furthermore, the Community Care Fund (CCF) has since December 2011 launched an assistance programme to provide training subsidy for pre-school children from low-income families who are in need of rehabilitation services, thereby enabling them to receive self-financing services operated by NGOs while waiting for subvented pre-school rehabilitation services and facilitating their learning and development. In view of the effectiveness of the programme and service demand, the Steering Committee on the CCF has endorsed the extension of the programme up to March 2014 so that the children in need may

continue to receive appropriate training as early as possible. Starting from May 2013, the ceiling of monthly subsidy has been increased from \$2,500 to \$2,615. SWD is considering incorporation of the programme into its regular subvented services and reviewing the operation mode of the pre-school rehabilitation services. Consultation with the stakeholders will be conducted to ensure optimal use of resources and that the service will meet the needs of service users.

Advice Sought

12. Members are invited to note the content of this paper.

Labour and Welfare Bureau
May 2013

Annex A

**Provision, Waiting List and Average Waiting Time
For Pre-school Rehabilitation Services**

Type of Service	Number of Places (as at April 2013)	Number of Applicants (as at April 2013)	Average Waiting Time (2012-13) (in months)
Early Education and Training Centre	2 613	3 936	15.2
Special Child Care Centre	1 757	1 462	16.9
Integrated Programme in Kindergarten-cum-Child Care Centre	1 860	1 851	12.7
Total	6 230	7 249	-