

**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 10 June 2013**

**Pre-school rehabilitation services**

**Purpose**

This paper summarizes members' past discussions relating to pre-school rehabilitation services.

**Background**

2. According to the Administration, the Government strives to provide children with disabilities with early intervention through pre-school rehabilitation services, including Early Education and Training Centres ("EETCs"), Special Child Care Centres ("SCCCs") and Integrated Programme in Kindergarten-cum-Child Care Centres ("IP"), to enhance their physical, psychological and social development, thereby improving their opportunities for attending ordinary schools and participating in daily life activities and helping their families to meet their special needs.

3. The Administration has pointed out that the service provided by EETCs is designed mainly for disabled children from birth to the age of two, providing them with early intervention programmes with particular emphasis on the role of the disabled child's family. Disabled children aged two to under six can also receive the service if they are not concurrently receiving other pre-school rehabilitation services, which will facilitate their integration into the mainstream education system. SCCC provide special training and care for moderately and severely disabled children to facilitate their growth and development, helping them prepare for primary education. IP provides training and care to mildly disabled pre-schoolers in an ordinary kindergarten-cum-child care centre with a view to facilitating their future integration into the mainstream education as well as in the society.

4. According to the Administration, apart from the above three services, pre-school rehabilitation services also include -

- (a) service provided by residential special child care centre, which provides residential care to disabled children with a special need in order to protect and promote their health and well-being, and nurture their growth and development with regard to their physical, social, emotional and intellectual needs. It also forms part of the pre-school service for disabled children as a continuum of training in day special child care centres; and
- (b) occasional child care service which provides a safe venue for parents or carers to place their children for temporary care so as to enable them to attend to personal or urgent matters.

## Members' deliberations

### Inadequate provision of services

5. Pointing out that some children with disabilities had been waiting for SCCCs and IP for over one year, members were concerned that the provision of the two services was inadequate.

6. The numbers of places, numbers of children on the waiting lists and average waiting time for SCCCs and IP in the past five years, provided by the Administration, were in **Appendix I**. The Administration pointed out that as of September 2012, the numbers of children on the waiting list for SCCCs and IP were 1 136 and 1 104 respectively. The service targets of SCCCs and IP were children with disabilities aged between two and six. From July 2010 to September 2012, the numbers of children who left the waiting queue for SCCC and IP upon reaching the age of six were as follows<sup>1</sup> -

<u>Service Type</u>	<u>7/2010-12/2010</u>	<u>1/2011-12/2011</u>	<u>1/2012-9/2012</u>
SCCC	1	6	3
IP	5	22	24

7. In view of the inadequate provision of SCCCs and IP and the resulting long waiting time for provision of the services, members called on the

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<sup>1</sup> According to the Administration, the Central Referral System for Rehabilitation Services – Subsystem for Disabled Pre-schoolers of Social Welfare Department ("SWD") merged with a newly implemented "Client Information System" in mid June 2010. As the merged system has not retained previous information, SWD could only provide the required figures starting from July 2010.

Administration to implement measures such as increasing the places for SCCCs and IP.

8. According to the Administration, the number of pre-school rehabilitation places had been increased steadily. Over the past five years (from the 2007-2008 to 2011-2012 financial years), the Administration had allocated funding to provide a total of 1 393 additional places, representing an increase of 26%. There were currently a total of 6 230 pre-school rehabilitation places. The Administration anticipated that about 607 additional places would come on stream in the coming two years, representing approximately 11% of the number of children with disabilities currently on the waiting list of pre-school rehabilitation services.

#### Rehabilitation services for autistic children

9. Members said that according to some experts, symptoms such as obstinate behaviour, impairments in social interaction and slow language development would manifest in autistic children and would impede their learning and psychological development. Early intervention could greatly increase their chances of rehabilitation. In this connection, members asked about -

- (a) the number of autistic children between two and six between 2007 and 2011; and
- (b) the Administration's assessment of the effect of early intervention on the rehabilitation progress of autistic children.

10. Regarding the number of autistic children in Hong Kong, the Administration advised that based on the findings of the survey on Persons with Disabilities and Chronic Diseases conducted by the Census and Statistics Department during 2006 and 2007, the estimated number of autistic persons aged below 15 was 2 500 at the time of enumeration. Owing to limited sample size of the survey, a breakdown of the number of autistic children aged between two and six was not available as the estimated figure would be subject to relatively large sampling error. According to the information collected by the Department of Health ("DH"), the numbers of new cases in which children aged between two and six were diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders in the six Child Assessment Centres ("CACs") of DH between 2007 and 2011 were as follows -

<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2011</u>
716	824	1 211	1 454	1 410

11. As regards early intervention, the Administration advised that, for most illnesses (including autism), early intervention enabled patients to receive timely treatment and care, which in turn enhanced rehabilitation progress of the patients. In this connection, the Administration aimed to provide children with autistic tendency or symptoms with the requisite support so as to ensure that they could obtain the proper treatment during their formative years. CACs of DH provided suspected autistic children with comprehensive integrated assessment services, and arranged rehabilitation services for them as necessary. After preliminary assessments at CACs, autistic children would be referred to the Paediatrics and Adolescent Medicine or Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Specialist Outpatient Clinics of the Hospital Authority ("HA") for further assessment and treatment. As a standing practice, both DH and HA closely monitored and reviewed the progress of autistic children during their diagnosis and treatment process, and provided the required support according to their individual clinical situation.

12. Members were concerned about the provision of pre-school rehabilitation services for autistic children and children with other disabilities. They raised specific concerns as follows -

- (a) how the Administration catered for the rehabilitation and training needs of autistic children and children with other disabilities who were waiting for SCCCs and IP;
- (b) whether the Administration would provide District Support Centres for Persons with Disabilities ("DSCs") with additional resources to increase the support and assistance for children with these disabilities; and
- (c) whether the Administration would provide cash allowance for them to purchase rehabilitation services provided in the private sector.

13. The Administration gave the following responses -

- (a) the Administration was mindful of timely provision of pre-school training for children with disabilities. The Social Welfare Department ("SWD") had all along been monitoring the waiting time for pre-school rehabilitation services and making full use of resources available to facilitate early provision of services for children in need. Apart from steadily increasing the number of pre-school rehabilitation places, SWD had since December 2006 implemented a basket of measures, including enhancing the computer system, simplifying application procedures and avoiding

duplicate applications, etc, with a view to streamlining the waiting arrangement;

- (b) starting from January 2009, an additional funding of about \$35 million had been allocated annually for setting up 16 DSCs through re-engineering the community support services. They provided district-based and one-stop support services for persons with disabilities, their family members and carers. DSCs adopted an activity-oriented approach to formulate appropriate training, care, social, psychological and personal development activities, etc, according to various needs of service users (including children with disabilities and their parents). DSCs also provided support and training services for carers of persons with disabilities to alleviate their burden and enhance their caring capacities; and
- (c) the Community Care Fund ("CCF") had since January 2012 started to provide training subsidy for not more than 12 months for children from low-income families who were on the waiting list of subvented pre-school rehabilitation services. Administered by SWD, this assistance scheme provided a maximum monthly subsidy of \$2,500 for each eligible child for receiving not less than four sessions of pre-school training and parent support services. These included services provided by special child care workers, psychologists or occupational therapists/physiotherapists/speech therapists. In view of the effectiveness of the scheme, SWD was considering incorporating it into its regular subvented services. Before the regularisation of the scheme, the Steering Committee on CCF had endorsed SWD's proposal to extend the assistance scheme.

### **Relevant papers**

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

**Provision, Waiting Lists and Average Waiting Time of  
Special Child Care Centre (SCCCs) and Integrated Programme in Kindergartens-cum-Child Care Centre (IP)<sup>1</sup>**

Service Type	Provision, Waiting Lists and Average Waiting Time														
	2007-08			2008-09			2009-10			2010-11			2011-12		
	Provision	Waiting List	Average Waiting Time (Months)	Provision	Waiting List	Average Waiting Time (Months)	Provision	Waiting List	Average Waiting Time (Months)	Provision	Waiting List	Average Waiting Time (Months)	Provision	Waiting List	Average Waiting Time (Months)
	(As at 31.3.2008)		(As at 31.3.2008)	(As at 31.3.2009)		(As at 31.3.2009)	(As at 31.3.2010)		(As at 31.3.2010)	(As at 31.3.2011)		(As at 31.3.2011)	(As at 31.3.2012)		(As at 31.3.2012)
SCCC	1 494	805		11.9	1 544		734	12.4		1 544	1 042		12.8	1 646	
IP	1 860	1 041	8.3	1 860	911	8.6	1 860	1 156	8.7	1 860	1 434	10	1 860	1 536	12.2

<sup>1</sup> Annex to the Administration's reply to Question No.20 raised at the Council meeting on 7 November 2012.

## Appendix II

### Relevant papers on Pre-school Rehabilitation Services

<b>Committee</b>	<b>Date of meeting</b>	<b>Paper</b>
Legislative Council	7 November 2012	<a href="#">Official Record of Proceedings Pages 133 – 138</a>
Panel on Welfare Services	21 May 2013 (Item I)	<a href="#">Agenda</a>

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