

Legislative Council Panel on Welfare Services

Medium and Long-term Social Welfare Planning

Purpose

At the special meeting of Legislative Council Panel on Welfare Services held on 26 March 2013, Members requested the Administration to report on the progress regarding medium to long-term social welfare planning and that priority should be accorded to sites and manpower planning, elderly as well as rehabilitation services. This paper sets out the progress in these areas.

Enhancement of planning mechanism

2. As mentioned at the special meeting, the Labour and Welfare Bureau (LWB) has, since 2012, implemented the enhanced mechanism as proposed by the Social Welfare Advisory Committee (SWAC) after consultation with the social welfare sector. The mechanism provides an annual platform for consultation and planning for the future development and delivery of welfare services at district level, central level, and advisory committees level on a regular basis. The working meeting between the Social Welfare Department (SWD) and the Hong Kong Council of Social Service (HKCSS) with its member organisations was held on 6 June this year to discuss and exchange views on the priorities of welfare services for the coming year. The Secretary for Labour and Welfare attended the working meeting and answered questions from the floor. More than 60 Government officials from LWB and SWD attended the working meeting as well and discussed various issues with over 300 representatives from the social welfare sector in the group sessions.

3. According to the mechanism recommended by SWAC, LWB will consult relevant committees, including the Elderly Commission (EC), the Rehabilitation Advisory Committee and SWAC after consolidating all views collected through the multi-tier consultation so as to ensure that all committees can review the planning and provision of welfare services from holistic and strategic levels. The Administration will take into account views from all committees in formulating policies and measures (including preparation for next year's Policy Address) and seek support of resources as appropriate. Although this is an annual mechanism, the policies and measures concerned are not to be implemented for one year only. Rather, they are mostly meant for long-term implementation on an ongoing basis and complement the Administration's medium or even long-term planning.

Sites planning

4. The Administration has been adopting a multi-pronged approach to identify suitable sites to meet the needs of various welfare services. Apart from maintaining close dialogue with other Government bureau and departments to identify suitable sites for social welfare facilities, we are also exploring the possibility of reserving land or premises in new development projects or redevelopment projects, "Government, institution or community" and public rental housing development projects, as well as Urban Renewal Authority (URA) and Comprehensive Development Area projects for setting up social welfare facilities with a view to accommodating the service needs of the community.

5. On medium-term planning, we will closely monitor the availability of Government buildings, school premises and vacant public housing units left vacant after service re-engineering for the provision of social welfare services. On short-term planning, we will purchase places from private residential care homes through enhanced bought place schemes and make better use of space in subvented homes.

6. The Chief Executive mentioned in the 2013 Policy Address that LWB has been discussing with HKCSS and social welfare organisations on how to make better use of the land owned by the non-governmental organisations (NGOs), through in-situ expansion or redevelopment, to

provide diversified social welfare facilities to meet the needs of welfare services. Our focus is on the increase in supply of elderly and rehabilitation services facilities. We will proactively consider using the Lotteries Fund more flexibly and work out ways to provide targeted assistance to land owners during the planning or development process. We are actively undertaking relevant preparatory work.

Manpower planning of welfare sector

7. The Administration has always been concerned about the manpower demand and supply of the welfare sector. To this end, we have adopted sustainable planning strategy and implemented suitable measures to address the situation. Regarding the demand and supply of social workers and paramedical staff, throughout the process of the University Grants Committee (UGC)'s Academic Development Proposals exercise, SWD has carried out a series of data collection and analysis on manpower resources for social workers and paramedical staff (including nurses, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, speech therapists and clinical psychologists), which include obtaining information from NGOs about their manpower requirements, making reference to other relevant surveys and views in the community, considering the manpower requirements arising from the planned new initiatives/ projects of SWD. The overall manpower projections will be provided to the UGC through the Education Bureau for reference by various institutions in drawing up their academic development proposals and determining the allocation of student places. We have also taken the following measures to cope with the manpower shortage for paramedical and frontline care staff in the welfare sector –

- (a) **Enrolled Nurse (EN)** – To alleviate the shortage of ENs in the welfare sector, SWD, in collaboration with the Hospital Authority (HA), has launched 12 classes under the EN Training Programme for the Welfare Sector (the Training Programme) since 2006, providing a total of about 1 500 training places. The training fee is fully sponsored by SWD and all trainees have to sign an undertaking to work for the welfare sector for at least two years after satisfactory completion of the training. In 2013-14, we have earmarked new resources to launch 10 new classes in the coming five years to meet the manpower demand.

- (b) **Occupational Therapists (OT) and Physiotherapists (PT)** – With the support of UGC, the student intakes of Bachelor of Science (Hons) OT and Bachelor of Science (Hons) PT programmes have been increased by 44 places (i.e. from 46 to 90 places) and 40 places (i.e. from 70 to 110 places) per cohort respectively in the 2012-15 triennium. The Hong Kong Polytechnic University has also implemented a two-year entry level Master in Occupational Therapy (MOT) programme and a two-year entry level Master in Physiotherapy (MPT) programme in January 2012 on a self-financing basis. To encourage graduates from the MOT and MPT programmes to join the welfare sector, SWD has implemented the Training Sponsorship Scheme through providing funding support for NGOs so that the NGOs can sponsor a total of 59 students enrolled in these two programmes. These 59 students have undertaken to serve the sponsoring NGOs for no less than two consecutive years immediately after graduation.
- (c) **Paramedical Staff** – To alleviate the difficulties over the recruitment and retention of paramedical staff faced by NGOs and Enhanced Bought Place Scheme (EBPS) EA1 homes, SWD sought an additional provision of \$285 million for providing additional funding for three years from 2009-10 to 2011-12 to enable NGOs and EBPS EA1 homes to offer more competitive salaries for recruitment and retention of paramedical staff or hire of such services. Additional funding of \$356 million was secured for a further period of three years from 2012-13 to 2014-15 to continue such support to the sector. The unit subsidy of EA1 homes was raised in 2011-12 for the homes to employ staff or hire professional service to provide physiotherapy training and rehabilitation service to frail elders.
- (d) **Health Worker (HW)** – Training courses for HWs are being offered by different training bodies in Hong Kong. All these courses have been approved by the Director of Social Welfare in accordance with the requirement under the Residential Care Homes (Elderly Persons) Regulation (Cap. 459A) or the Residential Care Homes (Persons with Disabilities) Regulation

(Cap. 613A) with standardised training content, training hours and format of assessment. As at end-March 2013, there were 31 training bodies, including NGOs and tertiary institutions, organising 54 approved training courses for HWs for residential care homes for the elderly (RCHEs). More than 1 500 HWs are trained by these training bodies annually to meet the manpower demand of the RCHE sector.

- (e) **Care Workers (CW)** – Although there is no compulsory training for CWs required by law, CWs are encouraged to receive training relevant to their duties. In practice, SWD requires EBPS homes to ensure that 75% of their CWs have received relevant training with a view to upgrading the service standards of these private homes. Various training bodies provide training courses or topical training courses on elderly care for CWs. For instance, SWD and the Department of Health have been jointly providing training for RCHE care staff including CWs on a regular basis. About 2 100 care staff of RCHEs attended such training annually.

8. Regarding long-term manpower planning, the Administration has also undertaken to implement the following measures –

- (a) **Development of the Qualifications Framework (QF) for the elderly services sector:** the Education Bureau has assisted the elderly care service sector to set up an Industry Training Advisory Committee (ITAC) in February 2012 to implement QF in the sector. QF will help establish an accessible articulation pathway to promote lifelong learning with a view to enhancing the quality of the local workforce. Specifically, ITAC will draw up Specifications of Competency Standards for the sector, setting out the skills, knowledge and outcome standards required of employees in different functional areas, and providing a basis for course providers to design training courses to meet the needs of the sector. With QF in place, a clear career path with prospect could be mapped out. This would help attract more people, in particular the younger generation, to join the sector; and

- (b) **Setting up of the Steering Committee on Strategic Review on Healthcare Manpower Planning and Professional Development (the Steering Committee):** the Steering Committee, chaired by the Secretary for Food and Health, is conducting a strategic review of healthcare manpower planning and professional development in Hong Kong. It will put forward recommendations on how to cope with anticipated demand for healthcare manpower, strengthen professional training and facilitate professional development having regard to the findings of the strategic review.

Elderly Services

9. The average life expectancy of Hong Kong people has continued to increase. In 2012, the number of elderly people aged 65 and above was about one million, representing 14% of our population. According to the latest projection, the number of elderly people will increase to 2.56 million by 2041, representing 30% of our population. The increasing ageing population will inevitably call for more services for the elderly. We have set out a clear mission of elderly services – to enable our elderly citizens to live in dignity and to provide necessary support for them to promote their sense of belonging, sense of security and sense of worthiness. We also implement in a timely manner a variety of initiatives on a continuous or pilot basis in response to calls from society.

Promoting Active Ageing

10. Whilst some frail elderly people may require long-term care services, the majority are healthy and capable of leading an active and independent life. The Administration has all along been striving to improve the quality of life of the elderly and build an age-friendly community environment and promoting the message of active ageing.

11. LWB and EC have jointly carried out a series of projects to promote active ageing, which include the Elder Academy (EA) Scheme and the Neighbourhood Active-Ageing Project (NAAP). Since 2007, EAs have been offering a wide range of courses to pursue lifelong 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. In the 2012-13 academic year, there are altogether 110 EAs in primary, secondary and tertiary institutions throughout the territory.

12. Launched in 2008, NAAP promotes active ageing and develops support networks at the community level. NAAP also provides an opportunity for elderly persons to act as volunteers and use their talents to serve the community. A total of 75 district projects have been completed from 2008 to 2011. In early 2012, LWB and EC launched a new phase of NAAP and a total of 69 district projects are being carried out throughout the territory from 2012 to 2014.

13. From 1998-1999, SWD launched the Opportunities for the Elderly Project 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. A total of 239 activities have been funded by the Project in 2012-13.

14. The Administration also implements various measures to encourage the elderly to participate more in community activities and widen their social network with a view to complementing the concept of “sense of worthiness”. The Public Transport Fare Concession Scheme for the Elderly and Eligible Persons with Disabilities enables elderly people aged 65 or above to travel on the Mass Transit Railway, buses and ferries any time at a concessionary fare of \$2 per trip. The Scheme aims to help build a caring and inclusive society by encouraging the elderly people to participate more in community activities. SWD has also secured \$900 million in 2012-13 from the Lotteries Fund for implementing the Improvement Programme of Elderly Centres. The Programme aims to improve the physical settings and facilities of 237 elderly centres over the territory with a view to encouraging more active participation of the elderly in social activities and volunteer services.

Elderly care services

15. For frail elderly people with long term care (LTC) needs, we strive to provide quality and cost-effective LTC services in line with the

policy of promoting “ageing in place as the core, institutional care as back-up”. Given the ageing population and limited public resources, elderly citizens who are most in need should have priority in using subsidised elderly care services.

16. Through the provision of a wide spectrum of subsidised community care services (CCS) and residential care services (RCS) to the elderly citizens with proven needs as assessed by the Social Welfare Department (SWD)’s Standardised Care Needs Assessment Mechanism for Elderly Services (SCNAMES), we aim to promote the well-being of these frail elderly in all aspects of life to enable them to remain living in the community for as long as possible, or to be taken care of in licensed RCHEs.

17. In the 2013-14 financial year, the estimated expenditure on elderly care services in the social welfare policy areas amounts to \$5.58 billion, representing an increase of 12% when compared with the revised estimate of last year. The Administration will continue to allocate additional resources to increase the number of subsidised residential and community care places for the elderly.

CCS

18. We understand that ageing in place is the common wish of most elderly citizens, as most of them prefer ageing in an environment with which they are familiar. To this end, the Administration provides a range of subsidised CCS and carer support services to assist our elderly citizens to age in the community.

19. Subsidised CCS include day care places (which are provided at day care centres for the elderly (DEs) and day care units (DCUs)) and home care places. As at end-March 2013, there were altogether 65 DEs and DCUs offering 2 669 subsidised day care places. At the same time, the Integrated Home Care Services (IHCS) (Frail Cases) and Enhanced Home and Community Care Services (EHCCS) were providing 6 699 places to serve the frail elderly. In 2013-14, an additional 182 day care places will be provided. We have also earmarked resources to provide a further 100 day care places and extend the service hours of four new DEs/DCUs starting from 2014-15 onwards.

20. Apart from the above-mentioned subsidised CCS under the conventional funding mode, SWD will roll out the First Phase of the Pilot Scheme on Community Care Service Voucher for the Elderly in September 2013. It will adopt a new funding mode, i.e. “money-follows-the-user” approach. Eligible elderly may choose the services that suit their individual needs with the use of service vouchers with a view to promoting the diversity and development of elderly services as well as introducing new service providers and social enterprises. The First Phase of the Pilot Scheme (which will last for two years) will be launched in eight selected districts. A total of 1 200 vouchers will be issued.

21. In supporting our elderly citizens to age in the community, their carers play an important role. We have been providing support services to carers of the elderly through elderly centres, home care services teams and DEs/ DCUs throughout the territory, including the provision of information, training and counseling, assistance in forming carers’ mutual-assistance groups, establishment of resource centre, demonstration and loan of rehabilitation equipment, etc..

22. We are examining the feasibility of implementing a pilot scheme on allowance for carers of elderly person under the Community Care Fund (CCF) Task Force of the Commission on Poverty (CoP).

RCS

23. Despite their wish, some frail elderly persons would need institutional care for health or family reasons. SWD has offered subsidised residential care places (i.e. nursing home (NH) places and care-and-attention (C&A) places) through subvented RCHEs, contract RCHEs, private RCHEs which participate in EBPS, and self-financing NHs under the Nursing Home Place Purchase Scheme. As at end-March 2013, there were 127 subvented RCHEs, 20 contract RCHEs, 40 self-financing RCHEs/ NHs, and 566 private RCHEs (including 137 EBPS homes) in the territory, offering a total of 75 553 residential care places, of which about 26 000 were subsidised places.

24. In view of the ageing population and the acute demand for subsidised residential care places, we have been taking a multi-pronged approach to increase the provision. From now till 2015-16, some 1 200 new subsidised places will be provided. We will continue to increase the supply by purchasing places from private RCHEs through EBPS and building new contract RCHEs. We will also continue to identify suitable sites for construction/ in-situ expansion/ redevelopment of new homes. For details, please refer to paragraphs 4 to 6 above.

25. Health deteriorates with age. To enable elderly residents to stay in the same RCHE even when their health conditions have deteriorated, the Administration has been promoting a continuum of care (COC) in subsidised RCS. To this end, SWD launched a conversion programme in June 2005 to convert, in phases, residential care places in 75 subvented RCHEs which did not have an LTC element to C&A places providing COC. In 2013-14, we have allocated additional recurrent funding of \$164 million to increase the subvention for 7 000 C&A places with COC, so that RCHEs can provide more targeted services for the elderly residents, and to upgrade the remaining 7 850 C&A places without COC in subvented RCHEs to places with COC.

Rehabilitation Services

26. As enshrined in the Hong Kong Rehabilitation Programme Plan (RPP), the overall objective of the rehabilitation policy in Hong Kong is to prevent disabilities; to help persons with disabilities develop their physical and mental capabilities as well as their ability to integrate into the community; and to create a barrier-free physical environment through a comprehensive range of effective measures, with a view to ensuring that persons with disabilities can participate in full and enjoy equal opportunities both in terms of their social life and personal growth. These are also the spirit and core values enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (the Convention). Promotion and implementation of the Convention is an ongoing initiative. It is also the direction of continued development of rehabilitation services in Hong Kong.

27. RPP, formulated by the Government in 1976 and reviewed in 1999 and 2007, proposes the way forward with long-term and short-term goals for rehabilitation service development, as well as specific measures for achieving various short and long-term goals.

Residential Care Service

28. With an ageing population, the demand of persons with disabilities for residential care services will increase progressively. Moreover, it is envisaged that drastic changes in social environment and increase in work pressure will also lead to a rise in the number of persons with mental illness and their demand for residential care services. In this connection, we have adopted a three-pronged approach to encourage participation from different sectors in providing diversified residential care services for persons with disabilities, namely regulating all residential care homes for persons with disabilities (RCHDs); supporting NGOs in developing self-financing homes; and continuing to increase the number of subsidised residential care home places.

29. Regarding the regulation of RCHDs, the Government has introduced since November 2011 a statutory licensing scheme under the Residential Care Homes (Persons with Disabilities) Ordinance to regulate the standards and operation of RCHDs. In tandem with the licensing scheme, SWD has introduced suitable complementary measures. These include providing private RCHDs with subsidies for improvement works in compliance with the licensing requirements in building and fire safety through the Financial Assistance Scheme for Private RCHDs; and implementing a Pilot Bought Place Scheme (BPS) for Private RCHDs to encourage private RCHDs to upgrade their service standards. SWD will conduct an overall review of the Pilot BPS for Private RCHDs before its expiry to assess its long-term feasibility in terms of the contract price, home fees, amount of government subsidies and the number of places to be bought. The overall service quality and performance of the operators of the private RCHDs will also be reviewed.

30. As regards increasing the number of subsidised residential care home places, according to the present planning, SWD has earmarked 14 sites in development projects for construction of new subvented RCHDs

for the period from 2013-14 to 2017-18. We estimate that these new developments, together with some in-site expansions, will provide an additional 2 713 residential care places. SWD is studying the feasibility of redeveloping the former sites of Siu Lam Hospital in Tuen Mun and Kai Nang Sheltered Workshop and Hostel in Kwun Tong with a view to constructing integrated rehabilitation services centres at the two sites. Subject to the findings of the technical feasibility study, these two projects can provide a total of about 2 000 places of day training and residential care services for persons with disabilities, which will help relieve the shortage of such places.

31. Besides, we have earmarked additional recurrent funding of \$62.73 million for 2013-14 to increase the manpower of RCHDs so as to meet the needs of ageing service users. The funding aims to facilitate homes for persons with intellectual and/ or physically disabilities to provide additional nursing staff. NGOs operating RCHDs may flexibly deploy the additional funding to arrange for suitable staffing to ensure service quality and meet service needs.

Day Care and Community Support

32. The Government strives to take forward a range of services and measures, such as Day Activity Centre, District Support Centres for Persons with Disabilities, Integrated Community Centres for Mental Wellness (ICCMWs), Community Rehabilitation Day Centre, Transitional Care and Support Service, Transitional Care and Support Centre for Tetraplegic Patients, Pilot Scheme on Home Care Service for Persons with Severe Disabilities, comprehensive rehabilitation training programme and library service for visually impaired persons, multi-service centres for hearing impaired persons, Home-based Training and Support Service, holiday care service, home respite service, day care service for persons with severe disabilities, special support programme for autistic persons and persons with intellectual disabilities who have challenging behaviour, support for newly blind person scheme, home-based rehabilitation training, Junior Gateway Club, Community Rehabilitation Network, Social and Recreational Centre for the Disabled, and Parents/ Relatives Resource Centre.

33. We will continue to develop the day care and community support services, with special efforts dedicated to enhancing people-oriented service programmes, support for carers, community mutual help networks and multi-disciplinary support, etc. with a view to helping persons with disabilities integrate fully into the community; and promoting tripartite collaboration among the community, business sector and the Government with a view to exploring and utilising social resources to provide support and services for persons with disabilities in an innovative manner.

34. In the short run, we are committed to strengthening the existing day care and community-based services to cater effectively for the needs of persons with disabilities; enhancing the appropriate support services for persons with severe disabilities who live in the community; mapping out the development strategies for community-based support services; and providing support for carers and improve their caring capacity. In the long run, we aim at intensifying mental health education in the community, and giving holistic care to persons with disabilities in order to cater for their needs in different development stages.

35. In this connection, SWD regularised the Transitional Care and Support Centre for Tetraplegic Patients in March 2013 to provide continued service for those in need and help relieve the stress of carers.

36. As the Pilot Scheme on Home Care Service for Persons with Severe Disabilities has achieved its intended objective and received positive response, SWD will allocate an annual provision of \$203 million to regularise the service upon the expiry of the three-year pilot project in March 2014. The service will be extended to persons with severe disabilities in all districts in Hong Kong and to those not on the waiting list for residential care services. The aim is to continuously provide integrated home care service for persons with severe disabilities and relieve the pressure of their families/carers.

37. Besides, the CCF launched in 2011-12 the Special Care Subsidy for the Severely Disabled, an assistance programme which provides persons with severe disabilities aged below 60 who are from low-income families and not receiving CSSA with a monthly special care subsidy of \$2,000. The CCF also launched a programme for Provision of Special

Subsidy to Persons with Severe Physical Disabilities for Renting Respiratory Support Medical Equipment in January 2013. This programme provides persons with severe physical disabilities who live in the community, come from families with financial difficulties and do not receive CSSA payment with a monthly special subsidy of \$2,000 or \$2,500 for renting the necessary respiratory support medical equipment.

38. SWD and HA are studying the feasibility of introducing a case management-oriented service programme to support persons with severe physical disabilities who are in need of constant nursing care and are not receiving CSSA payment. This programme is designed to enable them to live in the community by relieving their financial burden of paying for medical equipment, consumables and care services.

39. Furthermore, SWD provided in 2011-12 and 2012-13 additional funding of about \$48 million for the ICCMWs to strengthen their manpower to dovetail with the Case Management Programme of HA and provide services for more persons in need. In 2013-14, we have earmarked \$12.5 million to enhance the existing manpower of the ICCMWs to cater for the extension of the Case Management Programme to three more districts, and to provide community mental health support services for more persons in need. SWD will continue to seek additional resources for the ICCMWs to dovetail with the development of this programme of HA.

40. In 2013-14, we have earmarked additional recurrent funding of \$5.18 million to increase the manpower of day training centres for persons with disabilities so as to meet the needs of ageing service users. Meanwhile, we have implemented the Public Transport Fare Concession Scheme for the Elderly and Eligible Persons with Disabilities mentioned in paragraph 14 to encourage persons with severe disabilities to participate more in community activities.

Employment and Vocational Rehabilitation

41. With a view to assisting persons with disabilities in attaining employment, apart from the enactment of the Disability Discrimination Ordinance to prevent disability discrimination in employment and at the workplace, the Government is committed to providing a wide range of

employment support and vocational rehabilitation services for persons with disabilities. These measures include providing vocational rehabilitation services; setting up the Marketing Consultancy Office (Rehabilitation); providing market-oriented vocational training/ retraining programmes; providing job-matching service for job seekers with disabilities and employers who plan to recruit persons with disabilities; and implementing a series of thematic programmes to assist persons with disabilities in finding employment and encourage employers to employ persons with disabilities. The Government, being an employer, will also continue to eliminate disabilities and other forms of discrimination in employment. We have put in place suitable policy and facilitating measures with a view to enabling candidates with disabilities to compete with able-bodied candidates on an equal footing, thereby allowing them, able-bodied or disabled alike, to have equal access to job opportunities in the Government.

42. In 2013-14, the Government will allocate additional recurrent funding of around \$35.6 million to provide 145 additional day training places to strengthen the care and necessary training for persons with disabilities. Coupled with the allocation already earmarked, a total of 426 day training and vocational rehabilitation places will come on stream in 2013-14. Under the current planning, we expect to provide an additional 1 540 day training and vocational rehabilitation places for the period from 2014-15 to 2017-18. We will continue to proactively identify other sites for use by rehabilitation services to meet demand.

43. To further promote the employment of persons with disabilities, SWD will allocate additional recurrent funding of \$4.8 million to enhance the “On the Job Training Programme for People with Disabilities” and the “Sunnyway – On the Job Training Programme for Young People with Disabilities” by increasing the job attachment allowance and job trial wage subsidy under both schemes in 2013-14. The job attachment allowance will be raised from \$1,250 to \$2,000 per month, and the cap of job trial wage subsidy from \$3,000 to \$4,000 per month with the maximum subsidy period extended from three months to six months.

44. In addition, since 1 June 2013, the Selective Placement Division of the Labour Department has put in place an enhanced Work Orientation and Placement Scheme (WOPS), which provides a two-month work

adaptation period. An employer who employs a person with disabilities with employment difficulties, and provides him/her with training, support and a mentor in the first two months of work adaptation period, is entitled to a maximum allowance of \$5,500 during the first two months of employment. After the aforesaid two-month work adaptation period, the employer can continue to receive an allowance offered under WOPS, which is equivalent to two-thirds of the monthly salary of the employee (subject to a ceiling of \$4,000 per month) for a maximum period of six months. Moreover, if the mentor appointed by the aforesaid employer has successfully assisted an employee with disabilities in continuing with the employment after the first two months, he/ she will be granted the Cash Award of \$500 for the second month as well (previously for the first month only), that is, a total of \$1,000. This enhancement measure will incur an additional expenditure of around \$7.1 million each year.

45. In respect of creation of employment opportunities, SWD provides seed money to NGOs to facilitate their establishment of small enterprises through the “Enhancing Employment of People with Disabilities through Small Enterprise” Project (3E’s Project). In view of the effectiveness of the 3E’s Project in achieving the Government’s policy objective of enhancing employment opportunities for persons with disabilities, the Government further injected \$100 million into the 3E’s Project in January 2012 to subsidise the setting up of more small enterprises by NGOs with a view to creating more employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. The Government has also enhanced the support for small enterprises under the 3E’s Project, including extension of the funding period from a maximum of two years to three years.

46. SWD has also launched the “Support Programme for Employees with Disabilities” since 3 June 2013 to provide subsidies to employers of persons with disabilities for procuring assistive devices and carrying out workplace modification works. This will enable persons with disabilities to secure employment and employees with disabilities to work more efficiently. An employer can receive a maximum subsidy of \$20,000 for each employee with disabilities. The recurrent expenditure on this programme is estimated to be \$8 million each year.

47. Apart from encouraging the employment of persons with disabilities through a variety of measures as mentioned above, the Special Needs Groups Task Force under the CoP is considering how to further promote the employment for persons with disabilities through other feasible and effective measures.

Advice sought

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

Labour and Welfare Bureau
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