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Panel on Welfare Services

**Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat
for the meeting on 10 December 2012**

**Vocational rehabilitation services and residential services
for persons with disabilities**

Purpose

This paper provides a brief account of the discussions of the Panel on Welfare Services ("the Panel") regarding the provision of integrated vocational rehabilitation services and residential services for persons with disabilities ("PWDs").

Background

2. According to the Administration, the overall objective of the rehabilitation policy is to support the full integration of PWDs into the community. A series of rehabilitation services, community support and training are provided to facilitate PWDs to live independently, and/or to live with their families and friends in the community. For those who cannot live on their own and cannot be adequately cared for by their families, a three-pronged approach has been adopted in accordance with the 2007 Rehabilitation Programme Plan to implement the following measures –

- (a) to regulate the residential care homes for PWDs so as to ensure their service quality on the one hand while helping the market to develop residential care homes of different types and operational modes on the other;
- (b) to support non-governmental organizations to develop self-financing homes; and

- (c) to continue to steadily increase the number of subsidized residential care home places.

According to the Administration, the Social Welfare Department ("SWD") has adopted as far as possible an integrated service mode for the provision of day and residential services for PWDs in an attempt to steadily increasing the number of subsidized residential care home places.

Deliberations of the Panel

Waitlisting situation of residential care services for PWDs

3. At the Panel meetings on 11 May 2009 and 14 March 2011, members expressed grave concern about the long waiting time for residential care services for PWDs. Noting that the average waiting time for the hostels for severely mentally handicapped persons ("HSMHs") in 2009-2010 was 68.4 months, members expressed concern about the long-term strategy in place to increase the provision of residential care services for PWDs. They were of the view that the Administration should consider earmarking sites and identifying suitable premises for setting up residential care homes for persons with disabilities ("RCHDs").

4. The Administration advised that it was gravely concerned about the waitlisting situation and had accorded priority to the provision of new subvented residential care places for PWDs. It planned to purchase about 150 to 230 private RCHD places in 2011-2012 and had been continuously increasing the provision of subsidized residential care places in recent years. Over the past three years, the Administration had provided 1 015 additional subsidized places in RCHDs. A total of 1 046 additional subsidized RCHD places would be provided in 2010-2011 and 2011-2012. It was estimated that there would be over 1 100 additional subsidized residential care places for PWDs in the next five years, with priority given to the severely disabled persons. A one-off funding of \$163 million had been sought under the Lotteries Fund ("LF") for implementing the three-year Pilot Scheme on Home Care Services for Persons with Severe Disabilities on 1 March 2011. The Pilot Scheme would provide persons with severe disabilities, who were living in the community and on the waiting lists for subsidized residential care services at HSMHs, hostels for severely physically handicapped persons and care and attention home for severely disabled persons, with a package of home-based support services to meet their care and rehabilitation needs.

5. Members were of the view that the additional subsidized residential care places for PWDs to be provided in the next five years were far from adequate to

meet the demand of PWDs on the waiting list for HSMHs, not to mention meeting new demands. The Administration should formulate long-term plan for increasing the supply of residential care places and set specific pledges for allocating different types of residential care places to the waitlistees. Potential suitable sites should be earmarked at the planning stage of new development or redevelopment projects.

6. The Administration explained that the provision of additional RCHDs would depend on the availability of suitable sites/premises. Nevertheless, the Administration would continue its efforts to bid for more resources to increase the supply of subvented residential care places for PWDs and identify suitable sites for setting up new RCHDs. Apart from converting vacant government premises into RCHDs, the Administration had earmarked sites in new development projects including public housing estate development projects for the setting up of RCHDs as appropriate. According to the Administration, while it endeavoured to increase the supply of subsidized residential care places, it would be difficult to set specific targets for the allocation of residential care places as the waiting time would depend on the availability of new RCHDs in individual districts and the waitlistees' preference for specific RCHDs. Moreover, the turnover rates of subvented residential care places were low as a result of the longer life expectancy and improved healthcare services. The Administration assured members that it had accorded top priority to the provision of new subvented residential care places for PWDs.

Measures to increase the provision of residential care places for PWDs

7. Members considered that notwithstanding the difficulties in identifying suitable sites for new RCHDs, the Administration should come up with a plan on the target number of additional residential places for PWDs to be provided each year. To address the shortage of suitable premises, the Administration should include the provision of residential care services for PWDs in its town planning.

8. The Administration explained that attempts had been made by SWD to turn vacant premises in public housing estates into residential homes for PWDs, but such proposals were often met with local opposition. As such, SWD had to look for idle properties, such as unused schools and staff quarters, located in remote areas for constructing homes for PWDs.

9. To increase the provision of residential care places for PWDs, members made a number of suggestions such as converting vacant Government premises and deserted schools into subvented RCHDs, buying places from private RCHDs, setting up large-scale RCHDs in the coming years, etc. Members strongly urged the Administration to critically examine the land use of certain

welfare premises and set up a task force under SWD to follow up social welfare land use planning.

10. The Administration advised that consideration would be given to buying places from private RCHDs to shorten the waiting time for subvented RCHDs after introduction of the licensing scheme for RCHDs. The Administration would continue to identify suitable premises in vacant Government buildings and public housing estates for conversion into the provision of residential care services. For longer term planning, SWD would continue to put in bids for premises in new development projects as appropriate.

Latest development

11. At its meeting on 10 December 2012, the Panel will be consulted on the Administration's proposal to seek funding from LF in 2012-2013 to meet the fitting-out cost as well as the furniture and equipment cost for the setting up of a new integrated rehabilitation services centre at Shek Kip Mei Estate in Sham Shui Po and a new day activity centre cum HSMH at Tin Ching Estate in Tin Shui Wai. The Administration aims to submit the proposal to the Finance Committee for approval in the first quarter of 2013.

Relevant papers

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

Appendix

Relevant papers on vocational rehabilitation services and residential services for persons with disabilities

Committee	Date of meeting	Papers
Panel on Welfare Services	10 February 2003 (Item IV)	Agenda Minutes
	5 January 2004 (Item II)	Agenda Minutes
	14 June 2004 (Item III)	Agenda Minutes
	21 March 2006 (Items IV & V)	Agenda Minutes
	9 July 2007 (Item II)	Agenda Minutes
	12 November 2007 (Item V)	Agenda Minutes
	11 May 2009 (Item V)	Agenda Minutes
	14 March 2011 (Item V)	Agenda Minutes