

For information

Legislative Council
Panel on Home Affairs, Panel on Health Services and
Panel on Welfare Services

Amendments to Po Leung Kuk Ordinance (Cap. 1040)

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on the proposal to amend the Schedule to the Po Leung Kuk Ordinance (Cap. 1040) to enable Po Leung Kuk (“PLK”) to provide medical and health services for the Hong Kong community.

Proposal

2. PLK has been providing a variety of welfare, educational, recreational and cultural services since its establishment in 1878. In view of the aging population and the community’s increasing need for health care services, PLK proposes to expand its scope of services to medical and health services for the general public.

3. In recent years, PLK has been providing medical and health services for the users of its social service units, including Chinese medical services for its elderly users, dental services for users with mental deficiency, as well as general out-patient services, health

assessment services, physiotherapy services and speech therapy services for targeted service recipients of PLK's social service units through its Integrated Health Centre in Prince Edward. In view of the positive comments received, PLK proposes to make these services available to the general public. As a start, PLK intends to expand its services in its Integrated Health Centre in Prince Edward and Chinese medical and dental services in its social services units, and to establish more Integrated Health Centres, in order to serve a wider sector of the public. As PLK gains more experience in the medical and health field, it will explore the feasibility of further expanding its scope of services, with due regard to the availability of resources and expertise. PLK's detailed plan is at Annex.

4. PLK's proposal to provide medical and health services to the general public has the in-principle policy support of the Food and Health Bureau. It is in line with the Government's policy in welcoming the private and non-governmental sector to develop and increase the supply of medical and related services to meet the increasing demand and needs of the community. In providing any specific medical or health services, PLK is required to comply with all applicable statutory requirements, as well as the relevant land lease conditions.

Resources Implications

5. The plan of PLK is to provide medical and health services at low costs to the general public and for free to the underprivileged. PLK has undertaken not to seek additional Government funding for this self-financing new initiative, and that none of its existing services will be affected. The medical and health services will be financed by the

service charges, the fund raised from the “PLK Medical Assistance Fund Raising Programme” and PLK’s general reserve, and will not be cross-subsidised by any Government subvention provided for its education and social services. PLK may seek financial support from suitable trust funds if necessary.

Legislative Proposal

6. The Schedule to the PLK Ordinance stipulates the objects and powers of PLK. To enable PLK to provide medical and health services to the general public, amendments to the Schedule need to be made by way of a resolution by PLK’s Board of Directors and subject to negative vetting by the Legislative Council (LegCo). We aim to table it as subsidiary legislation in the LegCo for negative vetting around February 2014, for commencement on 1 June 2014.

7. Members are invited to note the proposal set out above.

Home Affairs Department

January 2014

Po Leung Kuk Medical and Health Services Development

Mission

With the mission of “protecting the young and the innocent”, Po Leung Kuk strives to provide professional, quality and multi-facet services for the community under modern and highly cost-effective management.

Objective

As one of the largest and most well-established social services organizations in Hong Kong, Po Leung Kuk strives for excellence, professionalism and perfection through provision of diversified and comprehensive care to the people in need in the society by expanding into medical and health service.

Current provision of services to existing Po Leung Kuk Service Users

One of the core businesses of Po Leung Kuk is to provide social services to the underprivileged groups, including children, youth, elderly and disabled. It has always been our aim to strive for continuous improvement for the best interest of our service recipients.

Aging is a challenge in Hong Kong which should be accorded priority to tackle, and there is a great need of the elderly for medical and health services. At present, "medical and health services" is not covered in the Objects of the Po Leung Kuk Ordinance (Cap. 1040). This hinders the Kuk's provision of comprehensive services to meet the needs of the community, particularly the elderly. It is therefore necessary to amend the Po Leung Kuk Ordinance to include medical and health services so as to allow the Kuk to better meet needs of the community by providing diversified and comprehensive services.

Po Leung Kuk has all along been providing medical and health services to its service users. For example, The Mrs Margaret Wong Children Medical Centre at the Kuk's Headquarters provides health care services for our residential children. The Kuk's elderly homes and rehabilitation centres also procure regular doctor visiting services.

From 2011 and 2012 onward, Po Leung Kuk provides Chinese medical service and dental service to the elderly and the mentally disabled respectively in two self-financed premises.

Chinese medical service

From September 2011, Po Leung Kuk provides free Chinese medical consultation to the elderly in a self-financed elderly centre - Mrs Maria Cheung Lifelong Learning Institute for the Senior. Patients only need to pay for half of the charge for Chinese herbs whereas the other half is covered by Po Leung Kuk. For people living on Comprehensive Social Security Allowance, Chinese herbs are provided free of charge. This service is supported by pro bono service by experienced Chinese medical practitioners.

Dental service

The Kuk has set up a dental examination/treatment room in 2012 in a self-financed rehabilitation centre - Tin Ka Ping Rehabilitation Support Centre. Its services which include scaling, filling and extraction of teeth are intended for residents of the Kuk's rehabilitation homes and members of rehabilitation centres.

Integrated Health Centre

The Board of Po Leung Kuk set up an Integrated Health Centre in a commercial building in Prince Edward in 2012. Registering with the Department of Health as a medical clinic in November 2012, the Integrated Health Centre provides general out-patient consultation, health talk, simple health assessment and physiotherapy service. Po Leung Kuk aims to raise the awareness of the community on health issues as well as help service users in managing their health problems. In accordance with the Po Leung Kuk Ordinance, the medical services at the Integrated Health Centre are only provided to the service recipients of the Kuk's social service units. The out-patient service fee at Integrated Health Centre is \$45 (including 3 days' of basic medicine). For people aged 65 or above, recipients of Comprehensive Social Security Allowance/Disability Allowance and other low-income people, the service is provided free of charge.

In July 2013, the Department of Health announced that the Integrated Health Centre is among the nine organizations in the Elderly Health Assessment Pilot Programme. The Pilot Programme is a new 2-years initiative from the government. The Kuk will receive subvention to provide health screening service to 500 elderly aged 70 or above. The Pilot Programme is to promote healthy ageing and enhance primary care services for the elderly through a voluntary and protocol-based subsidized health assessment programme.

In September 2013, the Integrated Health Centre added speech therapy service. In October 2013, it launched health check-up schemes.

Future Development

Short Term

The Kuk will continue to promote Chinese medical service and dental service at Mrs Maria Cheung Lifelong Learning Institute for the Senior and Tin Ka Ping Rehabilitation Support Centre. As and when necessary, the number of service quotas will increase so as to benefit more service recipients. As regards the Integrated Health Centre, the plan is to launch in early 2014 specialist consultation including gynaecology and psychiatry. These two services are provided by volunteer specialists. In addition, health talks will be held regularly.

Medium Term

Following the amendment of the Po Leung Kuk Ordinance, the Kuk's medium term objective is to expand the existing services progressively in the next 5 years:

Chinese medical service

One new self-financed elderly centre will open in Kwun Tong in 2013/2014, and another one in Kwai Chung next financial year. Both centres will have Chinese medicine attached and we expect the scale to be similar to the existing centre. We will continue to solicit the assistance from experienced Chinese medical practitioners to provide pro bono services with an aim to expand the service in other districts, particularly those with higher concentration of elderly people.

Dental service

It is anticipated that in the coming 5 years, the utilization of the existing dental room will increase to meet the need of the other vulnerable groups such as the elderly. Subject to availability of resources and community need, new dental service will be provided at the new integrated health centre(s).

Integrated Health Centre

With the aim to serve the grassroots, the current Board of Directors has decided to search for premises in the relatively poor districts and/or areas with more Kuk's service to set up more integrated health centres to provide primary health care and health management to the underprivileged groups. The objective is to expand the community-based, free or low cost integrated health services.

In identifying suitable premises to set up integrated health centre(s), the Kuk would look for suitable premises of the Housing Authority, Housing Society and the Link.

Long Term

Following the amendment of the Po Leung Kuk Ordinance to cover medical and health services and the accumulation of experiences, the Kuk can raise its services to another level. Apart from out-patient consultation service, we may consider the possibility of provision of surgery under general anesthesia. But that is subject to the qualifications and experiences of the doctors and whether the Kuk's facilities are sufficient for the purpose. Po Leung Kuk is also prepared to explore the opportunity and feasibility of collaborating with suitable partner to expand into affordable private hospital services. It is premature to set specific timeframe to set up private hospital. The Kuk will have to review its service development after the amendment of PLK Ordinance, and assess the demands for services in the community as well as availability of the Kuk's resources.

Financial plan

For the above-mentioned service development, Po Leung Kuk has no plan to seek government funding. The current Board of Directors has set up a new campaign "Po Leung Kuk Medical Assistance Fund Raising Programme" to raise funds for the operation of the Integrated Health Centre and its future expansion as well as providing financial assistance to qualified patients in need of help. The Kuk may seek financial support from suitable trust funds if necessary. As regards the Integrated Health Centre, we plan to gradually expand into fee charging services such as weight management and charging health check-up to generate more revenue in support of the Centre.

Po Leung Kuk
January 2014