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Panel on Welfare Services and Panel on Health Services

Joint Subcommittee on Long-term Care Policy

**Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat for
the meeting on 25 October 2013**

Respite service for the elderly and persons with disabilities

Purpose

This paper provides a brief account of the past discussions at meetings of the Council and its committees on the provision of respite service for the elderly and persons with disabilities ("PWDs").

Background

2. The Government provides respite service for the elderly and PWDs in need so that their families or carers may take a short break and take care of personal matters. This also helps to temporarily relieve the families or carers from their caring duties and alleviate their stress.

3. According to the Administration, there are two kinds of respite service for the elderly, namely Day Respite Service for Elders (temporary day care service) and Residential Respite Service (short-term residential service for the elderly). The service aims at providing support to carers, relieving their stress and allowing them to take a short break when necessary, thereby encouraging and assisting elderly people to age in the community as long as possible. Day Respite Service for Elders is being provided by 65 subvented day care centres/units for the elderly ("DEs/DCUs") across the territory. As of 31 March 2013, the Social Welfare Department ("SWD") designated 118 day respite places at these DEs/DCUs. Individual DEs/DCUs can also make use of any casual vacancy to provide respite service. SWD will continue to designate day respite places in the newly established subvented DEs/DCUs. As regards Residential Respite Service, in addition to the 11 designated residential

respite places provided by subvented residential care homes for the elderly ("RCHEs"), SWD also utilizes the casual vacancies of the subsidized places in all subvented nursing homes and care-and-attention homes, as well as contract homes to provide Residential Respite Service.

4. Residential respite service for PWDs is attached to subvented residential care homes for persons with disabilities ("RCHDs"), providing short-term residential care for persons with disabilities aged 15 or above so that their families or carers may, with advance planning, take a short break or attend to personal affairs. Starting from April 2008, SWD has extended the service in some of the RCHDs to cover children with disabilities aged six to 14.

Deliberations by Members

Respite service for the elderly

5. Members were concerned about the acute shortage of respite service for the elderly persons who had long-term care needs but were not offered subvented RCHE places. They called on the Administration to increase respite service places for shortening the waiting time for Residential Respite Service for Elders and to provide counselling service for the carers suffering from inadequate rest and mental stress because they had to take care of these elderly persons. Some members enquired whether the Administration had provided private RCHEs with subsidies as incentives for offering residential respite service so that more service places could be provided for the elderly persons.

6. The Administration advised that apart from subvented RCHEs which provided 11 residential respite places designated by SWD, every subvented nursing home, RCHE and contract RCHE had been utilizing its subsidized places which were casually vacant to provide residential respite service. Starting from March 2012, SWD had also made use of the subsidized places which were casually vacant in private RCHEs under the Enhanced Bought Place Scheme to provide additional residential respite places, and all of these were subsidized places.

7. In reply to a Member's written question raised at the Council meeting on 4 July 2012 regarding the average waiting time for the respite service for the elderly, the Administration advised that as applications for day and residential respite services were made directly to the service units, or referred to other units, they did not come under the central waiting mechanism of SWD. As a result, SWD did not have the number of people waiting for such services nor information about the waiting time.

Nevertheless, SWD checked with the service providers from time to time about the usage of respite services as service planning reference. In addition, if carers of the elderly needed any counselling service, they could seek help from District Elderly Community Centres and Integrated Family Service Centres/Integrated Service Centres.

Residential respite service for children with disabilities

8. Apart from the shortage of respite service places, Members had expressed concern that residential respite services for children with disabilities aged below 15 might cease after March 2014, given the time-limited nature of the one-off grant from the Lotteries Fund for the service. They also suggested that the admission procedures for children seeking urgent respite services should be simplified.

9. The Administration advised that due to the time-limited nature of the one-off grant, some non-governmental organizations ("NGOs") operating the service had raised their concern about the difficulty in providing the extended residential respite service for children with disabilities aged below 15 with the lapse of the provision of the additional manpower by March 2014. It assured members that recurrent funding would be provided for the nine NGOs for the continuous provision of the service; and that respite places would also be reserved in newly constructed RCHDs for this purpose. Whilst fully recognizing the service need for residential respite for PWDs, SWD would review the service situation with NGOs and follow up as appropriate. Members' suggestion on admission procedures would also be relayed to the NGOs.

Relevant papers

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

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
22 October 2013

Appendix

Relevant papers on respite service for the elderly and persons with disabilities

Committee	Date of meeting	Paper
Legislative Council	4 July 2012	Official Record of Proceedings Pages 132 – 136
Joint Committee on Long-term Care Policy	26 March 2013 (Item I)	Agenda Minutes
Finance Committee	11 April 2013	Administration's replies to members' written questions in examining the Estimates of Expenditure 2013-2014 Pages 219-220
Joint Committee on Long-term Care Policy	23 April 2013 (Item I)	Agenda Minutes
Joint Committee on Long-term Care Policy	28 May 2013 (Item I)	Agenda
Joint Committee on Long-term Care Policy	2 July 2013 (Item I)	Agenda

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