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Panel on Welfare Services

**Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat for
the meeting on 9 June 2014**

Enhanced home and community care services

Purpose

This paper provides a brief account of the discussions at meetings of the Finance Committee ("FC") and the Panel on Welfare Services ("the Panel") on enhanced home and community care services ("EHCCS").

Background

2. Introduced in April 2001, EHCCS provides integrated services to enable frail elderly persons to receive nursing and care services in their familiar home and community environment and to maintain their maximum level of functioning. EHCCS also provides support for carers to strengthen family cohesion. Starting from April 2001, the Social Welfare Department has been granting subsidy to non-governmental organizations to provide EHCCS in the 18 District Council districts to enable frail elderly persons to continue living in the community. The scope of EHCCS is as follows –

- (a) care management;
- (b) basic and special nursing care;
- (c) personal care;
- (d) rehabilitation exercise;
- (e) day care services;

- (f) carer support services;
- (g) day respite service;
- (h) counselling services;
- (i) 24-hour emergency support;
- (j) environment risk assessment and home modifications;
- (k) home-making and meals delivery services; and
- (l) transportation and escort services.

According to the Administration, the scope and frequency of services will be designed by the EHCCS teams according to the needs of elderly persons. As at the end of January 2013, about 5 100 elderly persons were receiving EHCCS.

Members' deliberations

Provision of EHCCS

3. At the special FC meetings in April 2013 to examine the Estimates of Expenditure 2013-2014, some Members expressed concern that the geographical distribution and the number of EHCCS district teams did not seem to be proportionate with the demand for the services in individual districts. They suggested that more teams should be provided for districts such as Kwun Tong and Sha Tin to cater for the huge service demand there.

4. The Administration explained that from 2009-2010 to 2012-2013, the geographical distribution of the 24 EHCCS teams remained unchanged under the principle of one team serving one district. The number of service quotas and manpower provision for each individual district team were allotted according to the service demand in the district concerned.

5. Members were concerned about the waiting time for EHCCS. Noting the Administration's additional provision of 300 EHCCS places in 2012-2013, they enquired about the reduction in waiting time with the additional provision. The Administration advised that, as at the end of January 2013, there were 524 elderly persons waiting for EHCCS and/or integrated home care services for frail cases and the average waiting time was about two months. According to the Administration, the waiting time

for EHCCS was affected by a number of factors such as the applicants' preference on service providers, change in service demand and different turnover rates in various districts. It was therefore difficult to estimate the waiting time to be shortened with the increased provision. The Administration would continue to keep in view the demand for EHCCS and increase the provision to meet the service need of the elderly as appropriate.

6. As regards additional provision of EHCCS places in the 2014-2015 Budget, the Panel was advised, at its meeting on 10 March 2014, that some \$172 million was proposed for providing 1 500 additional EHCCS places from March 2015 onwards. The Administration would integrate the major service content of the Pilot Scheme on Home Care Services for Frail Elders into EHCCS and implement strengthened integrated home-based care services, so as to further enhance the support and care for frail elderly persons living at home.

Funding mode for EHCCS

7. At the aforesaid Panel meeting, concern was raised that the Administration might continue to adopt the competitive bidding approach in selecting suitable service providers for EHCCS upon the expiry of the existing contracts in February 2015 as well as for the additional 1 500 EHCCS places. There was also concern about the impact on the service users, the serving operators and their staff if the serving operators were unsuccessful in bidding the contracts. Pointing out that EHCCS had been implemented for many years, some Members took the view that the Administration should regularize the provision of EHCCS and review the funding mode. Given that the serving operators had been providing the services for a long time, they called on the Administration to abolish competitive bidding for EHCCS and provide the operators with recurrent funding for running the services.

Latest development

8. In its letter to the Panel Chairman dated 8 May 2014, The Hong Kong Council of Social Service ("HKCSS") raised the welfare sector's concerns about the adverse impact of competitive bidding for EHCCS on the service quality and the development of long-term care services. HKCSS requested the Panel to discuss the "Funding mode for EHCCS and matters relating to competitive bidding for such services" at its meeting scheduled for 9 June 2014. The Panel acceded to HKCSS's request.

Relevant papers

9. A list of the relevant papers on the Legislative Council Website is in the **Appendix**.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
3 June 2014

Appendix

Relevant papers on enhanced home and community care services

Committee	Date of meeting	Paper
Finance Committee	8, 9, 10, 11 & 12 April 2013	<u>Minutes</u>
	11 April 2013	<u>Administration's replies to members' written questions in examining the Estimates of Expenditure 2013-2014 (Page 561)</u>
Panel on Welfare Services	10 March 2014 (Item V)	<u>Agenda</u>

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