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Panel on Welfare Services

**Updated background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat
for the meeting on 11 November 2013**

**Community support services for the elderly and pre-school
rehabilitation services**

Purpose

This paper summarizes members' past discussions relating to community support services for the elderly and pre-school rehabilitation services.

Background

Community support services for the elderly

2. The Administration provides community support services to assist elderly people to age in the community for as long as possible. There are mainly two types of subsidized community support services for the elderly, namely: community care services ("CCS") and elderly centre services. CCS includes centre-based services (i.e. day care centres/units for the elderly ("DEs/DCUs")) and home-based services. DEs/DCUs provide personal care, nursing care, rehabilitation exercise and social activities for frail elderly people. Elderly centres provide facilities such as computers, recreational and fitness exercise equipment to encourage elderly people who are relatively active and fit to pursue lifelong learning and exercise more frequently. The main service users of elderly centres are elderly people aged 60 or above and their carers. According to the Administration, as at 31 December 2012, there were a total of 64 DEs/DCUs with 2 609 day care places in the territory, serving about 3 500 elderly people.¹ Additional resources would be provided in the

¹ This includes both full-time and part-time users. Service users with attendance of less than four days a week are classified as part-time users.

2013-2014 Budget to add 100 day care places and extend the service hours of new DE/DCUs. These new places were expected to commence service starting from 2014-2015 onwards.

Pre-school rehabilitation services

3. According to the Administration, the Government's policy objective in respect of the provision of pre-school rehabilitation services is to provide children, from birth to six years old, with disabilities or at risk of becoming disabled with early intervention to enhance their physical, psychological and social developments, thereby improving their opportunities for participating in ordinary schools and daily life activities and helping their families meet their special needs. Pre-school rehabilitation services are provided mainly through Early Education and Training Centres ("EETCs"), Special Child Care Centres ("SCCCs") and Integrated Programme in Kindergarten-cum-Child Care Centres ("IP").

4. The service provided by EETCs is designed mainly for disabled children from birth to the age of two, providing them with early intervention programmes with particular emphasis on the role of the disabled child's family. Disabled children aged two to under six can also receive the service if they are not concurrently receiving other pre-school rehabilitation services, which will facilitate their integration into the mainstream education system. SCCC provide special training and care for moderately and severely disabled children to facilitate their growth and development, helping them prepare for primary education. IP provides training and care to mildly disabled pre-schoolers in an ordinary kindergarten-cum-child care centre with a view to facilitating their future integration into the mainstream education as well as in the society. Apart from these three services, pre-school rehabilitation services also include service provided by residential special child care centre and occasional child care service.

Members' deliberations

Existing provision of community care and support services for the elderly

5. While supporting the Government's elderly care policy of ageing in place, members of the Panel on Welfare Services ("the Panel") and many deputations expressed concern about the inadequate provision of both residential care services for the elderly ("RCS") and CCS to meet the increasing demand arising from the ageing population. Members considered it necessary for the Administration to step up its efforts in enhancing the services and relieving the waitlisting situation. The

Administration should also formulate a long-term strategy for the provision of CCS according to the users' needs and ensure that CCS would be allocated to those who were most in need of the services.

6. At the Council meeting on 8 June 2011, Members passed a motion on "Setting out a five-year plan for elderly services" urging the Government to, among others, establish a five-year plan and service pledges in respect of both RCS and CCS, and strive to increase the respective number of places for these services.

7. In the view of the Administration, elders with long-term care needs did not necessarily age in residential care homes. Further development of CCS would encourage elders to age in place and thus avoid premature and unnecessary institutionalization. To help elders who had long-term care needs age in place, the Administration had set up service centres/units in the community to provide elders with day care services; and also commissioned service teams to provide them with home care services. An additional 185 day care service places for the elderly would be provided in the three years starting from 2012-2013, and Enhanced Home and Community Care Services places would be increased by 500 in the 2012-2013 financial year.

8. Some members of the Joint Subcommittee on Long-term Care Policy ("the Joint Subcommittee") held the view that the Administration should review and reintegrate CCS and RCS in terms of service mode and volume to address the genuine needs of elders. The Administration should also set benchmark indicators for various kinds of CCS. According to the Administration, the waiting time for subsidized CCS had been shortened. The average waiting time for home-based CCS places and day care places was some two months and nine months respectively. The Administration would continue to increase the provision of CCS places.

Elderly centre services

9. The Panel was advised that the Administration had set aside \$900 million under the Lotteries Fund ("LF") to implement the Improvement Programme of Elderly Centres ("IPEC") in phases starting from 2012-2013. According to the Administration, IPEC sought to enhance the physical setting and facilities of district elderly community centres, neighbourhood elderly centres and social centres for the elderly. It also helped enhance ancillary facilities in the community to support the policy of ageing in place. The Administration advised that a total of 237 elderly centres had joined IPEC and through the improvement works,

these elderly centres could not only meet users' changing needs, but also attract more elderly people (especially those who were relatively healthy and energetic) and their carers to use the services. The elderly people might take part in the voluntary services organized by the centres and make use of the facilities to organize various activities, thereby allowing them to actively partake in community activities and lead a fulfilled life.

10. Pointing out the significant change of the elderly profile in terms of education standard and energetic level over the years, some members were of the view that the resources allocated for the provision of elderly services were unable to effectively address the various needs of the different sectors of the elderly population. In view of the ageing population with about one million people aged 65 or above, they considered that the current provision of elderly services was inadequate. Given a longer life expectancy of the population, members urged the Administration to formulate long-term policies on life-long learning and leisure to enrich the retirement life of the elderly. Members considered that the Administration should increase the allocation of resources to the Elderly Commission which was tasked to, among others, co-ordinate the planning and development of various programmes and services for the elderly.

Inadequate provision of pre-school rehabilitation services

11. Members of the Panel expressed grave concern about the long waiting time and serious shortfall of pre-school rehabilitation services for children with disabilities. Since the waiting time for these services was one to three years, many children who were zero to two years old had missed the opportunity to receive suitable services. Even for urgent and serious cases, the children concerned had to wait for at least three months for a place in a SCCC. Members strongly urged the Administration to formulate concrete plans for the provision of pre-school rehabilitation services having regard to the great demand.

12. According to the Administration, it had been continuously increasing the provision of pre-school rehabilitation places. Over the past six years (from the 2007-2008 to 2012-2013 financial years), the Administration had allocated funding to provide about 1 500 additional places, representing an increase of nearly 30%. There were currently a total of 6 230 pre-school rehabilitation places. The Administration anticipated that about 607 additional places would come on stream in 2013-2014. In addition, the Administration had reserved sites for providing 1 200 additional places in the coming five years (from 2013-2014 to 2017-2018). A breakdown of the current provision,

waiting list and average waiting time for pre-school rehabilitation services as at April 2013 is in **Appendix I**.

13. Members considered that the 1 200 additional pre-school rehabilitation places were not adequate to meet the growing demand. Moreover, the provision of training subsidy under the relevant assistance programme of the Community Care Fund ("CCF") could not help parents with disabled children obtain self-financing services operated by NGOs, given that the subsidy amount was too small and there was a general lack of rehabilitation services in the private market. Furthermore, parents were subject to a means test before they became eligible for the training subsidy. In members' view, needy children had the right to receive free rehabilitation services since education was a basic human right rather than a welfare benefit.

14. The Administration advised that in addition to identifying more suitable sites for building rehabilitation facilities, the Administration was also exploring with NGOs on how to make better use of the land owned by them through re-development or in-situ expansion with a view to providing more pre-school rehabilitation places. According to the Administration, among the some 7 000 children waiting for subvented pre-school rehabilitation places, more than half of them were waiting for places in EETCs. Parents of these needy children could make use of the training subsidy provided under the assistance programme of CCF to enable their children to receive self-financing services operated by NGOs.

15. Some members were of the view that the training subsidy provided under CCF's assistance programmes was insufficient to meet the needs of parents with disabled children. They considered that the Administration should provide regular funding for the provision of rehabilitation services for pre-school children.

16. The Administration advised that CCF's endorsement for additional funding to meet the expenses of the assistance programme would be sought when necessary. Starting from May 2013, the ceiling of monthly training subsidy had been increased from \$2,500 to \$2,615. The Steering Committee on CCF had endorsed the extension of the relevant training subsidy assistance programme up to March 2014 so that the children in need could continue to receive appropriate training as early as possible. The Administration was considering incorporation of the programme into its regular subvented services and reviewing the operation mode of the pre-school rehabilitation services.

17. At its meeting on 10 June 2013, the Panel passed a motion urging

the authorities to substantially increase pre-school rehabilitation service places, establish an inter-departmental mechanism for formulating a policy on rehabilitation of pre-school children, and making long-term planning on service places, manpower (for both professional and supporting staff), premises, facilities, resources and so on.

Reducing waiting time for Child Assessment Service

18. Members expressed strong disappointment that the inadequacy of rehabilitation services for pre-school children remained a serious problem over the years. They considered that as early identification and assessment helped enhance the rehabilitation progress of disabled children, especially those aged zero to six, and thus could save medical costs in the long run, the Administration should allocate additional resources for adequate provision of rehabilitation services for pre-school children. Some members also suggested offering compensation to professional staff to work overtime to provide assessment services for those needy children who were on the waiting list so as to reduce the waiting time for assessment services.

19. The Administration explained that a mechanism had been put in place under the Maternal and Child Health Centres of the Department of Health to identify pre-school children with developmental problems. Needy children and their family members would be referred to the appropriate health and welfare service units for follow-up. The Administration would continue to step up efforts in increasing pre-school rehabilitation places to meet the growing demand.

Latest development

20. At its meeting on 11 November 2013, the Panel will be consulted on the Administration's proposal to seek funding from LF for the setting up of rehabilitation and elderly service facilities² in the development of Urban Renewal Authority at Hai Tan Street/Kwelin Street/Pei Ho Street, Sham Shui Po. The Administration aims to submit the proposal to the Finance Committee in December 2013.

² The proposed welfare facilities include an SCCC cum EETC, a DE and a sub-base for neighbourhood elderly centre.

Relevant papers

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

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
5 November 2013

Appendix I

Provision, Waiting List and Average Waiting Time For Pre-school Rehabilitation Services

Type of Service	Number of Places (as at April 2013)	Number of Applicants (as at April 2013)	Average Waiting Time (2012-13) (in months)
Early Education and Training Centre	2 613	3 936	15.2
Special Child Care Centre	1 757	1 462	16.9
Integrated Programme in Kindergarten-cum-Child Care Centre	1 860	1 851	12.7
Total	6 230	7 249	-

Source: Extract from the paper provided by the Labour and Welfare Bureau in June 2013 (LC Paper No. CB(2)1275/12-13(07))

Appendix II

Relevant papers on community support services for the elderly and pre-school rehabilitation services

Committee	Date of meeting	Paper
Panel on Welfare Services	11 January 2010 (Item IV)	<u>Agenda</u> <u>Minutes</u>
Panel on Welfare Services	6 February 2010 (Item I)	<u>Agenda</u> <u>Minutes</u>
Panel on Welfare Services	8 March 2010 (Item IV)	<u>Agenda</u> <u>Minutes</u>
Panel on Welfare Services	12 July 2010 (Item III)	<u>Agenda</u> <u>Minutes</u>
Panel on Welfare Services	11 April 2011 (Item VI)	<u>Agenda</u> <u>Minutes</u>
Panel on Welfare Services	11 July 2011 (Item III)	<u>Agenda</u> <u>Minutes</u>
Panel on Welfare Services	22 August 2011 (Item I)	<u>Agenda</u> <u>Minutes</u>
Panel on Welfare Services	21 October 2011 (Item I)	<u>Agenda</u> <u>Minutes</u>
Panel on Welfare Services	13 February 2012 (Item V)	<u>Agenda</u> <u>Minutes</u>
Panel on Welfare Services	27 April 2012 (Item I)	<u>Agenda</u> <u>Minutes</u>
Legislative Council	7 November 2012	<u>Official Record of Proceedings</u> <u>Pages 133 – 138</u>

Committee	Date of meeting	Paper
Panel on Welfare Services	14 January 2013 (Item I)	Agenda Minutes
Panel on Welfare Services	21 January 2013 (Item I)	Agenda Minutes
Joint Subcommittee on Long-term Care Policy	29 January 2013 (Item I)	Agenda Minutes
Joint Subcommittee on Long-term Care Policy	26 February 2013 (Item I)	Agenda Minutes
Panel on Welfare Services	11 March 2013 (Item IV)	Agenda
Joint Subcommittee on Long-term Care Policy	26 March 2013 (Item I)	Agenda Minutes
Panel on Welfare Services	21 May 2013 (Item I)	Agenda
Joint Subcommittee on Long-term Care Policy	28 May 2013 (Item I)	Agenda
Panel on Welfare Services	10 June 2013 (Item V)	Agenda Minutes

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