

For discussion  
on 25 January 2016

## **Legislative Council Panel on Welfare Services**

### **2016 Policy Address**

### **Policy Initiatives of the Labour and Welfare Bureau**

#### **Introduction**

The Chief Executive delivered his 2016 Policy Address on 13 January 2016. This paper sets out the new and on-going welfare initiatives pertaining to the Labour and Welfare Bureau (LWB) and Social Welfare Department (SWD), as described in the 2016 Policy Address and Policy Agenda.

#### **Policy Priorities/New Initiatives**

##### ***Poverty Alleviation***

2. The direction of the Government's poverty alleviation policy is to encourage young people and adults to be self-reliant through employment, while putting in place a reasonable and sustainable social security and welfare system to help those who cannot provide for themselves. The Government has set the poverty line to assess the poverty situation on an annual basis. In 2014, the overall poverty indicators both before and after policy intervention were at six-year lows. The Commission on Poverty (CoP) will continue to serve as the major policy platform to assist the Government in pursuing poverty alleviation initiatives. LWB will continue to work with the CoP in taking forward the initiatives.

##### ***Implementing the Low-Income Working Family Allowance (LIFA)***

3. According to the poverty situation reports of the previous two years, non-Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) working poor households generally have few working members, who are usually engaged in lower-skilled occupations, while generally having more children to raise, thus facing a higher poverty risk. In order to relieve the financial burden of these low-income working families, the

Government has introduced a new poverty alleviation measure, which is the LIFA. It aims to encourage working members in low-income families to stay in active employment to strive for self-reliance. By design, LIFA accords special attention to families with children and young people, with the objective of promoting upward social mobility and alleviating inter-generational poverty. As announced by the Government on 24 November 2015, the LIFA Scheme will be implemented in May 2016. Our estimate is that over 200 000 low-income households (involving 700 000 persons, including around 170 000 eligible children or young people) could benefit from the LIFA Scheme. The overall poverty rate is estimated to be reduced by two percentage points and the child poverty rate is estimated to be reduced by 4.2 percentage points.

### ***Exploring Retirement Protection***

4. In exploring the issue of retirement protection, we must fully consider the adequacy, sustainability, affordability and robustness of various policy options. Hong Kong's long-term economic growth will decelerate over time owing to an ageing population. The Government will face increasing fiscal pressure in the medium to long terms. If we were to deploy our financial resources to benefit all, the benefits received by elderly persons in financial need would inevitably be reduced. In addition, we should take into full account the functions of the various pillars under the existing retirement protection system and explore possible necessary enhancement measures. We should also have regard to the traditional values cherished by our community, including self-reliance, focusing social resources on helping those most in need and mutual support among family members.

5. The CoP launched a six-month public engagement exercise entitled "Retirement Protection Forging Ahead" on 22 December 2015 to gauge public views on how to improve the retirement protection system in Hong Kong. The CoP appeals to the community to actively participate in the public engagement activities to express their views. LWB has commissioned an independent consultant to collate, consolidate and analyse all the views received during the public engagement exercise.

### ***Care for the Elderly***

6. As regards caring for the elderly, the Government adopts a

proactive approach in handling the ageing population in Hong Kong. Our objective in elderly services is to enable our senior citizens to live in dignity and provide necessary support for them to promote their sense of belonging, sense of security and sense of worthiness. We will continue to implement a wide spectrum of measures to strengthen elderly services on all fronts. We will proactively promote active ageing while taking care of the service needs for the frail elderly. We strive to provide quality and cost-effective long-term care services to those who are in need under the policy of promoting “ageing in place as the core, institutional care as back-up”.

#### *Supporting Ageing in Place for the Elderly*

7. To facilitate “ageing in place”, the Government will continue to provide elderly persons and their carers with different types of support and care service at the community level. In 2016-17, the Government plans to implement a pilot scheme under the Lotteries Fund to provide training to foreign domestic helpers with a view to enhancing their knowledge and skill in taking care of elderly persons.

8. The Government will launch the Second Phase of the Pilot Scheme on Community Care Service Voucher for the Elderly by the third or fourth quarter of 2016. The number of vouchers to be issued will be increased from 1 200 vouchers in the First Phase by 1 800 vouchers to 3 000 vouchers in the Second Phase. The coverage of the scheme will also be extended to all the 18 districts over the territory to allow eligible elderly persons to freely choose the community care services (CCS) that suit their needs. Having regard to the mid-term evaluation findings and the operational experience of the First Phase, a number of enhancements will be introduced in the Second Phase, which include increasing service mode, increasing the number of service providers, and introducing more diversified voucher values, etc.. SWD will set up a Centralised Team to provide assistance to elderly persons participating in the Second Phase of the Pilot Scheme as well as strengthening the monitoring of the service providers.

#### *Increasing Higher Quality Subsidised Places under the Enhanced Bought Place Scheme (EBPS)*

9. SWD launched the EBPS in 1998 with a view to upgrading the service standard of private residential care homes for the elderly (RCHEs) through enhanced service requirements in terms of staffing ratio and per capita space standard. The Scheme also helps increase the supply of

subsidised places so as to reduce elderly persons' waiting time for subsidised care-and-attention places. A major characteristic of EBPS is that once a private RCHE participates in the scheme, the same enhanced standards (e.g. staffing and bed spacing requirements) will apply to the entire home (including non-subsidised places), thus making the scheme an effective means of encouraging private RCHEs to enhance their service quality.

10. Starting from 2016-17, the Government will progressively convert 1 200 EA2 places under EBPS to higher quality EA1 places so as to increase the supply of higher quality subsidised places and improve the overall quality of private RCHEs.

#### *Strengthening Inspection and Monitoring Of Residential Care Homes For the Elderly and Persons with Disabilities*

11. We are planning to reorganise SWD's Licensing Office of Residential Care Homes for the Elderly and Licensing Office of Residential Care Homes for Persons with Disabilities in 2016-17. The two Offices will be merged with additional manpower to comprehensively strengthen the inspection and monitoring of residential care homes for the elderly and those for persons with disabilities. SWD will also set up dedicated inspectorate teams; formulate strategies and step up inspection of RCHEs with unsatisfactory performance; conduct more follow-up inspections by inspectorates; and strengthen training for private RCHE managers and staff, prosecution of non-compliant RCHEs and transparency of service information of RCHEs in the territory. At the same time, SWD will set up a dedicated complaint handling team, etc.

#### *Creating an Age-friendly Community*

12. We strongly support the vision of age-friendly community. Given the diverse characteristics and needs of the 18 districts in Hong Kong, each district should implement its own age-friendly community project at the district level. The Government will provide additional resources to District Councils (DCs) to promote the building of age-friendly communities at the district level. In particular, we will encourage DCs to participate in the World Health Organisation's (WHO) "age-friendly community" accreditation scheme having regard to their own circumstances. Last year, Tsuen Wan, Kwai Tsing and Sai Kung obtained WHO's accreditation and became the first batch of "age-friendly communities" in Hong Kong.

### *Building Neighbourhood Mutual Help Networks for Elderly Singletons and Elderly Couples*

13. With a rapidly ageing population in Hong Kong, increasing emphasis has been placed on the issues possibly faced by elderly persons. In particular, elderly singletons and elderly couples often lack community support given their limited social networks. On the other hand, we appreciate that many elderly persons are still energetic and they should be given opportunities to utilise their talents, participate in social affairs actively and live a colourful life. In this regard, we plan to deploy resources in the years starting from 2016-17 through the Community Investment and Inclusion Fund to support projects which aim at building mutual help networks among residents of public housing estates in various districts to strengthen the care and support for elderly singletons and elderly couples, and enable them to have an active elderhood.

### ***Support for the Disadvantaged***

14. Some people in the community are in need of temporary or more long-term assistance from the community owing to various factors such as financial or family circumstances etc. Different welfare services are one of the ways to support them. We will continue to offer appropriate financial assistance to people in need through the CSSA Scheme and Social Security Allowance Scheme and to strengthen the support for people or families with special needs. We will also continue to develop client-centred, family-focused and community-based services that provide integrated and cross-sectoral support.

### *Reviewing Disability Allowance (DA)*

15. The Inter-departmental Working Group on Review of the DA has completed the review of the eligibility criteria for the allowance and put forward nine recommendations. These include –

- (1) amending the Medical Assessment Form for the DA to remove the reference to “100% loss of earning capacity” and the work-related assessment criterion;
- (2) standardising the arrangements for the use of rehabilitation and mechanical devices in disability assessment under the DA;

- (3) inviting the Rehabilitation Advisory Committee to continue monitoring the adoption of the disability classification established by the WHO as the basis for assessment mechanism in neighbouring places;
- (4) implementing a pilot scheme through the Community Care Fund (CCF) to provide further disregarded earnings for recipients with disabilities under the CSSA Scheme;
- (5) implementing a pilot scheme through the CCF to provide a subsidy for eligible persons with disabilities who are receiving Higher DA and engaging in paid employment;
- (6) implementing a pilot scheme through the Labour Department to procure social counselling services from a non-governmental organisation (NGO) to provide counselling support for job-seekers with disabilities who are in need of such services;
- (7) preparing early for the regularisation of the pilot scheme on peer supporters for ex-mentally ill patients;
- (8) implementing a pilot scheme through the CCF to provide a living allowance for carers of persons with disabilities who are in financial need; and
- (9) examining the feasibility of setting up a public trust and reviewing the relevant guardianship system to enhance the support for children with special needs and their parents.

16. The Working Group proposes to brief this Panel on the review outcome in February 2016. We will also follow up with relevant departments and committees to implement the recommendations of the review report.

#### *Supporting Children with Special Needs and Their Parents*

17. As present, children wait-listed for subvented pre-school rehabilitation services could also apply for a means-tested Training Subsidy Programme (TSP) to acquire self-financing pre-school services. Starting from 2016-17, the Government will increase the training hours per month under the TSP for eligible children on the waiting list for

special child care centres (SCCCs).

18. The Government has launched a two-year pilot scheme through the Lotteries Fund to invite 16 NGOs operating subvented pre-school rehabilitation services to provide on-site services so as to benefit over 2 900 children with special needs who are studying in kindergartens or kindergarten-cum-child care centres as early as possible. The Government will conduct a comprehensive review of the pilot scheme to help determine the mode of operation if and when the scheme is regularised.

19. In addition, starting from 2017-18, the Government will waive the fees of SCCC and provide non-means-tested TSP for children on the waiting list for SCCC.

20. The Government has taken note of the fact that some middle-class parents of children with special needs, in particular those children with intellectual disabilities, are concerned about the care arrangements of their children after they have passed away. These parents are worried that they could not afford the high administrative cost of professional private trust even with assets. The Government will examine the feasibility of setting up a public trust. In the process, the Government will engage the relevant stakeholders, including legal experts, NGOs in the rehabilitation sector and parent organisations.

#### *Strengthening Care and Support for Ageing Service Users*

21. The Government is conscious of the need of rehabilitation service users for a higher level of care and support owing to ageing. Over the past three years, the Government has allocated additional resources to strengthen the manpower of different types of residential care homes, day training and vocational rehabilitation services centres for serving the ageing service users. A dedicated working group under the Rehabilitation Advisory Committee (RAC) completed a survey study on persons with intellectual disabilities as service users of day training centres, vocational rehabilitation services and residential care homes, and submitted a report to LWB in December 2015. LWB will, in consultation with relevant departments and stakeholders, study the details of implementing recommendations made in the report. In 2016-17, the Government will further increase the subvention for the Visiting Medical Practitioner Scheme to enhance the primary medical services for ageing service users at residential care homes, which is one of the recommendations made by the working group.

### *Enhancing the Transport Service for Persons with Disabilities*

22. To meet the special transport needs of persons with disabilities, the Government has all along been providing point-to-point Rehabus service and centre bus service for rehabilitation services centre for persons with disabilities who have difficulties in using public transport. The Government will continue to review the service needs from time to time to increase number of rehabuses and centre buses. In 2015-16, there are 147 rehabuses and 199 centre buses. In 2016-17, the Government will further enhance the Rehabus service, and bus service for the Day Activity Centres cum Hostels for Severely Mentally Handicapped Persons and Community Rehabilitation Day Centres.

### *Enhancing the Medical Social Services for Patients and Their Families*

23. At present, the medical social workers (MSWs) of SWD are stationed at some specialist out-patient clinics and public hospitals to provide support to patients and their families in the Psychiatric and Accident & Emergency units, in-patients and out-patient services. Services provided by MSWs include counseling, referral for rehabilitation services and community resources, and financial/material assistance etc.. The Government will set up a medical social services unit in the new Tin Shui Wai Hospital to provide appropriate services to patients and their families.

### ***Families Services***

#### *Promoting “Parental Responsibility Model”*

24. In its Report on Child Custody and Access, the Law Reform Commission has recommended the introduction of a new “parental responsibility model” into Hong Kong’s family law to replace the custody and access arrangements under the existing family law. We have prepared the draft Children Proceedings (Parental Responsibility) Bill for implementing the Report’s recommendations and are conducting a four-month public consultation on the draft Bill and the relevant support measures until 25 March 2016. We will revise the Bill in the light of the views collected during the public consultation, and introduce the revised Bill into the Legislative Council afterwards. We will also consider the views of the stakeholders on the relevant support measures and the resources involved.



25. To continue the momentum of the publicity campaign and to promote the concept of parental responsibility more widely among the public, SWD has rolled out a series of television and radio Announcements in the Public Interest and posters since 30 November 2015. In addition, to facilitate separated/divorced parents and the concerned parties to obtain relevant information on continuing parental responsibility, SWD also launched a thematic website in late November 2015.

26. To further enhance support for separated/divorced families, SWD will launch a two-year pilot project on children contact service in the first half of 2016-2017. It aims to provide a place where children could have safe and conflict-free contact with parents whom they are not living with; and to assist the families with difficulties in contact arrangements so that children need not be torn between both parents.

## **On-going Initiatives**

### ***Poverty Alleviation Measures***

#### ***Continuing to Implement Child Development Fund (CDF)***

27. Since its establishment in 2008, the CDF has provided suitable support to underprivileged children aged 10 to 16 to widen their horizons and enhance their exposure, help them develop a saving habit and plan for the future, with a view to helping them overcome inter-generational poverty. Up till now, CDF projects have benefited more than 10 000 underprivileged children. The fifth batch of CDF projects run by NGOs were awarded under the new “one-plus-one” approach in the first half of 2015 which included 27 projects launched in the second half of 2015 and another 27 projects to be launched in the second half of 2018. Each of the two phases will benefit about 2 700 to 3 105 participants. In the 2015-16 academic year, the second batch of 10 school-based pilot projects were rolled out to further experiment the school-based approach. For the 2015-16 financial year, the financial commitment for CDF has been increased from \$300 million to \$600 million. The additional allocation of \$300 million will be used to fund projects to be launched beyond 2015, and such new allocation is estimated to benefit an additional 9 700 underprivileged children.

## *Care for the Elderly / Elderly Services*

### *Formulating the Elderly Services Programme Plan (ESPP)*

28. The Elderly Commission (EC) is pressing ahead with the formulation of the ESPP. Two stages of public engagement have hitherto been conducted to collect stakeholders' views on the ESPP since the formulation work started in mid-2014. The EC is considering the views collected during the second stage of public engagement exercise and other relevant information to draw up the preliminary recommendations of the ESPP, and is preparing for a further stage of consultation. We will continue to support the EC in its work formulating the ESPP and to fit in with its implementation schedule.

### *Feasibility Study on Residential Care Service Voucher (RCS Voucher) for the Elderly*

29. The EC is studying the detailed design of RCS Voucher and plans to submit its recommendations later this year. The RCS Voucher scheme would provide an additional choice on top of existing services to elderly persons waitlisted for subsidised residential care services (RCS). Elderly persons may, through the "money-following-the-user" approach, select non-subsidised RCHE places, including non-subsidised places of non-governmental organisations and non-subsidised places of private RCHEs that meet the required service standards.

### *Strengthening CCS*

30. In line with the policy of promoting "ageing in place as the core", the Government will continue to strengthen the provision of CCS to enable our elderly citizens to live in a familiar environment. We will continue to increase the supply of subsidised CCS places. Between now and 2016-17, a total of some 70 new day care places will be provided. A total of 1 666 additional places of the Enhanced Home and Community Care Services already commenced service from end-June 2015. In addition, we will continue to implement the Integrated Discharge Support Programme for Elderly Patients to provide integrated support services for discharged elderly patients who have difficulties with taking care of themselves and also for their carers.

### *Supporting Carers*

31. In support of the carers of the elderly persons, a pilot scheme

funded by the CCF was introduced in June 2014 to provide a living allowance for 2 000 carers of the elderly persons from low income families. We have commissioned the Sau Po Centre on Ageing of the University of Hong Kong to assist in conducting an evaluation study during the pilot period to assess the effectiveness and implications of the pilot scheme. Meanwhile, the Government will continue to provide training programmes and other support services to carers in need through the subvented district elderly community centres and neighbourhood elderly centres.

#### *Implementing Improvement Programme of Elderly Centres (IPEC)*

32. The Government will continue to implement IPEC to enhance the physical setting and facilities of 237 elderly centres. As at November 2015, the Lotteries Fund Advisory Committee had approved 145 applications. Relevant works have commenced in succession, with 69 having completed renovation works and re-opened for service with a new look.

#### *Increasing Subsidised Residential Care Places*

33. We attach utmost importance to the quality of RCS. With the provision of infirmary care supplement and dementia supplement, we strive to offer a suitable level of care to elderly residents with different frailty conditions in subsidised care places. We will also continue to increase the supply of subsidised residential care places for the elderly through a multi-pronged approach. Apart from the Special Scheme on Privately Owned Sites for Welfare Uses (Special Sites Scheme) as described in paragraph 59 below, we will make better use of space in subvented homes and construct new contract homes for provision of more subsidised places. We will also continue to explore the option of converting or redeveloping the Wong Chuk Hang Hospital, which mainly provides extended care, into an RCHE with more places as well as with other welfare facilities.

34. We will continue to implement the Pilot Residential Care Services Scheme in Guangdong to provide elderly persons on the Central Waiting List for subsidised residential care places with an option to live in the two Hong Kong NGO-run elderly homes located in Shenzhen and Zhaoqing. As at end-2015, a total of 98 elderly persons had participated or were participating in this scheme and resided in the two RCHEs.

### Training Nurses for the Welfare Sector

35. To alleviate the problem of nurse shortage in the welfare sector, SWD, in collaboration with the Hospital Authority (HA), has run a two-year full-time programme to train Enrolled Nurses (General) / Enrolled Nurses (Psychiatric) for the welfare sector since 2006. Altogether 14 training classes have been organised so far, providing a total of about 1 800 training places. Another 920 training places will be provided in the coming years. The training programme is fully subsidised by the Government. Each trainee is required to sign an undertaking to work in the welfare sector for two consecutive years after graduation from the programme. Among the graduates of the first nine classes, over 90 per cent have joined the welfare sector after graduation.

### Enhancing Support for Elder Academies (EAs)

36. To promote active ageing, LWB and the EC launched, in early 2007, the EA Scheme to enable the elderly to pursue continued learning in a school setting so that they can lead a more fulfilled life, and to interact more with the younger generation to foster inter-generational harmony. In 2009, an allocation of \$10 million was provided to set up the Elder Academy Development Foundation (EADF) to support the Scheme. Up to now, a total of 129 EAs have been set up in secondary and primary schools and higher education institutions.

37. In March 2014, the Government injected \$50 million into the EADF. The Committee on EADF has since put in place new measures to enhance the Scheme. Apart from raising the amount of funding to EAs in secondary and primary schools, the Committee has strengthened support to district networks and encouraged recognition of credit and better coordination among different EAs within the networks, with a view to attracting more elderly persons to enrol into the EA courses.

### Merging the Neighbourhood Active Ageing Project (NAAP) and the Opportunities for the Elderly Project (OEP)

38. From 2016 onwards, the NAAP and OEP will be merged for better use of resources. We will continue to encourage elderly persons to actively take part in community affairs and continue contributing to society, and to lead a fruitful elderly life by joining elderly volunteer service as well as activities relating to community education and inter-generational harmony.

*Continuing to Implement the Government Public Transport Fare Concession Scheme for the Elderly and Eligible Persons with Disabilities*

39. We shall continue to implement the widely welcomed Government Public Transport Fare Concession Scheme for the Elderly and Eligible Persons with Disabilities with a view to building a caring and inclusive society by encouraging elderly people and eligible persons with disabilities to participate more in community activities.

40. The number of average daily passenger trips under the Scheme is at present around 931 000, with about 816 000 trips (88%) made by the elderly persons<sup>1</sup> and some 115 000 trips (12%) made by eligible persons with disabilities<sup>2</sup>. In 2015-16, the estimated reimbursement of revenue forgone to public transport operators by the Government under the Scheme is around \$900 million. It is estimated that the reimbursement of revenue forgone in 2016-17 will rise to \$1,100 million.

***Rehabilitation Services***

*Providing Additional Places for Rehabilitation Services*

41. The Government will continue to adopt a multi-pronged approach to actively identify suitable sites to provide more service places. The Government will also provide more rehabilitation service facilities through the Special Sites Scheme as described in paragraph 59 below with a view to relieving the service demand and shortening the waiting time.

*Strengthening Community Support for Persons with Disabilities*

42. The Government will continue to develop and enhance day care and residential care services, and provide subsidies to persons with severe physical disabilities living in the community for renting of respiratory support medical equipment and acquisition of medical consumables. To facilitate their continued community living and integration into society, case managers will coordinate and arrange appropriate services for them according to their needs. Meanwhile, we will continue to provide one-stop community support services in a case

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<sup>1</sup> Elderly persons refer to those aged 65 or above.

<sup>2</sup> Eligible persons with disabilities are persons aged below 65 with severe disability as defined under the Disability Allowance receiving the allowance and those with 100% disabilities receiving CSSA in the same age group.

management service approach for persons with disabilities and their family members/carers through 16 District Support Centres for Persons with Disabilities, with a view to providing service users with more comprehensive and convenient support. In 2015-16, the Government increased the social work manpower in the Parents/Relatives Resource Centres with the aim of enhancing the support for persons with disabilities and ex-mentally ill patients, including children/youth with special needs and their family members/carers.

#### *Enhancing Support for the Ex-mentally Ill Persons*

43. Since October 2010, the Integrated Community Centres for Mental Wellness (ICCMWs) have been providing one-stop and district-based community support services ranging from prevention to risk management for discharged mental patients, persons with suspected mental health problems, their family members and carers and residents living in the serving community. These services include outreaching visits, casework counselling, therapeutic and supportive groups, social and recreational activities, day training and public education programmes and, where necessary, referral of cases to the Hospital Authority for clinical assessment and psychiatric treatment. The Government has continued to increase the funding allocation to enhance the service. At present, the annual allocation to these centres amounts to about \$217 million.

44. In 2015-16, the Government increased the social work manpower in ICCMWs to provide more intensive counselling and support for family members and carers of ex-mentally ill persons with a view to alleviating their pressure in taking care of the ex-mentally ill persons and to consolidate their mutual help networks.

45. In addition, the Government will implement a two-year pilot project funded by the Lotteries Fund in the first quarter of 2016 for trained ex-mentally ill persons to serve as peer supporters to provide support and encouragement for other persons in rehabilitation through sharing their recovery experience. The project also aims to improve the employment opportunities of ex-mentally ill persons (also see paragraph 15(7) above).

#### *Promoting Employment for Persons with Disabilities*

46. The Government's policy objective is to assist persons with disabilities in getting prepared for employment, taking up productive jobs

in society on the basis of their abilities, developing their potential and achieving self-reliance with a view to fostering social integration and building a caring and supportive society. In addition to the three pilot schemes mentioned in paragraphs 15(4)-(6), LWB, in collaboration with the RAC, the Hong Kong Council of Social Service and the Hong Kong Joint Council for People with Disabilities, will continue to take forward the Talent-Wise Employment Charter and Inclusive Organisations Recognition Scheme to mobilise the Government, business sector as well as public and subvented bodies to promote the employment of persons with disabilities.

### *Strengthening Support for Persons with Autism*

47. The Government will launch a pilot project under the Lotteries Fund in the first quarter of 2016 to strengthen support for persons with autism under which a multi-disciplinary team will provide them with professional services and training so as to enhance their skills in daily living, social interaction and employment, etc. The project will also provide support to the parents/carers of persons with autism as well as professional training to frontline workers serving persons with autism.

### *Including Sign Language Courses in the Continuing Education Fund (CEF)*

48. We have included sign language courses in the language domain of the CEF, and have received applications from course providers for registration of their sign language courses with the CEF, so as to benefit people in need.

## ***Support for Women***

### *Helping Women Balance Family and Work Commitments*

49. To support parents who are unable to take care of their children temporarily because of work or other reasons, SWD has all along been providing subsidies to NGOs to run a variety of child care services for children below the age of six. To remove the barriers for women to enter or stay in employment and to further respond to the community demand for child care services, the Government has been launching a series of measures to enhance child care services, including –

- (a) from 2015-16 onwards, increasing, by phases, the provision of

about 5 000 Extended Hours Service places at aided child care centres and kindergarten-cum-child care centres in districts with high demand. About 1 200 of such places have been provided since September 2015;

- (b) planning to provide about 100 additional aided long full-day child care places for children aged below three in Sha Tin in 2018-19;
- (c) inviting those NGOs participating in the Special Sites Scheme to consider establishing work-based child care centres when they are making use of their land for expansion, redevelopment or new development. Two NGOs have responded positively, proposing to provide a total of about 100 self-financing places on implementation. The Government will also explore, on a pilot basis, the feasibility of providing about 100 NGO-operated child care places for staff members in the proposed Government Complex in Tseung Kwan O; and
- (d) launching the pilot project on Child Care Training for Grandparents in the first quarter of 2016. This two-year pilot project aims at reinforcing family support between generations, enhancing child care to support women in fulfilling work and family commitments; as well as promoting active ageing of grandparents. .

50. In respect of the medium and long-term planning, the Government will commission a consultancy study to advise on the long-term development of child care services with a view to providing services that meet the needs of the families in Hong Kong.

#### *Promoting Women Employment*

51. In parallel, the Government will continue coordinating the efforts of all parties in promoting women employment by, inter alia, encouraging employers to offer part-time jobs which are more popular with women.

#### *Facilitating the Development of Women*

52. To enable women to fully realise their due status, rights and opportunities in all aspects of life, the Government, in collaboration with the Women's Commission and the community as a whole, will continue



to promote the well-being and interests of women through a three-pronged strategy, viz. the provision of an enabling environment, empowerment of women and public education. Gender mainstreaming has been extensively adopted by bureaux and departments from 1 April 2015. The Government will implement a pilot scheme to encourage NGOs in the social welfare sector to refer to the Gender Mainstreaming Checklist adopted by the Government and apply gender mainstreaming when formulating policies and programmes. Also, the Government will continue to facilitate more women to participate in the work of Government advisory and statutory bodies with a view to attaining the 35% gender benchmark.

## ***Children Services***

### ***Strengthening Residential Child Care Services***

53. To support and protect children who cannot be adequately cared for by their families, as well as young people with behavioural or emotional problems, the Government has been providing subsidies to NGOs to provide various types of residential child care services. We will increase the number of residential places in small group homes to provide temporary accommodation and emotional support for children and young people who have been abused or affected by domestic violence or other family problems.

### ***Enhancing After-School Care Services***

54. Supportive after-school care services have been provided by NGOs for children aged 6 to 12 so that children whose parents are unable to care for them during after-school hours owing to work, job-search or other reasons could receive proper care. Through the Fee Waiving Subsidy Scheme for After School Care Programme, SWD provides assistance to needy families by waiving or reducing the fee of after-school care services. The Government will continue to strengthen the After School Care Programme by extending the service hours on weekday evenings, Saturdays, Sundays and school holidays in some after-school care centres and provide additional fee-waiving and fee-reduction quotas. From December 2014 onwards, SWD has been providing subsidies for setting up the above-mentioned enhanced services, with a current provision of 388 full fee-waiving places at 32 after-school care centres.

55. The Government has also provided \$200 million matching grant via the Partnership Fund for the Disadvantaged to encourage the business sector to work with organisations and schools to launch more after-school learning and support programmes for primary and secondary school students from grassroots families. SWD launched the first and the second rounds of dedicated fund application in January and December 2015 respectively for implementing after-school learning and support programmes. In the first round, 89 eligible applications were received, involving a total commitment of business contributions of \$50 million. Among them, some 70 approved projects have commenced and the remaining projects, subject to further vetting, are expected to commence within the 2015/16 school year. About 20 000 primary and secondary school students would benefit from the first round programmes.

### ***Youth Services***

56. We have been providing subventions for NGOs to offer young people a series of preventive, developmental and remedial welfare services, such as Integrated Children and Youth Services Centres, school social work and youth outreaching social work, with a view to fostering a sense of responsibility among them so that they may contribute to society. Our service strategy is to provide timely support through cross-sectoral and inter-departmental collaboration as well as early identification of needy youth. In addition, in view of the current manpower shortage in elderly and rehabilitation services, we have been implementing the Navigation Scheme for Young Persons in Care Services (the Navigation Scheme) to attract more young people to join the elderly and rehabilitation care sector (please see paragraph 60 below for details).

### ***Family Services***

#### ***Enhancing the Services of Integrated Family Service Centres (IFSCs) and Integrated Services Centres (ISCs)***

57. Currently, the 65 IFSCs over the territory and the two ISCs in Tung Chung have been providing a spectrum of preventive, supportive and remedial family welfare services for individuals and families in need. To more effectively support individuals and families in preventing and handling problems, the Government has increased the number of professional social workers in IFSCs and ISCs to provide early identification and intervention and strengthen the support for families and

children who are vulnerable to domestic violence and who may have other welfare needs, at-risk pregnant women, mothers suffering from postnatal depression, and children with development problems and their family members, etc.

### Combating Domestic Violence

58. The Government does not tolerate domestic violence and has been dealing with the problem through a three-pronged strategy, viz. preventing domestic violence, supporting victims of domestic violence and providing specialised services and crisis intervention. We will continue to allocate resources in enhancing the specialised and support services, including providing various support services for victims of domestic violence as appropriate as well as providing counselling and psycho-educational services for batterers to change their abusive attitude and behaviour. At the same time, SWD will provide additional places in refuge centre for women and Family Crisis Support Centre, as well as additional manpower for refuge centres for women and Multi-purpose Crisis Intervention and Support Centre (namely, CEASE Crisis Centre) to enhance child care support service for residents.

### *Social Welfare Planning*

#### Implementing the Special Sites Scheme

59. LWB and SWD are actively following up on some 60 projects under the Special Sites Scheme to assist social welfare organisations to pursue expansion, redevelopment or new development on their land to provide particularly more elderly and rehabilitation facilities. Among the projects, five are expected to be completed by 2017-18 and will provide about 100 places for subsidised elderly services and 450 places for subsidised rehabilitation services in total. Separately, SWD has provided funding support for three other project proposals to proceed with technical feasibility studies and will continue to do so in respect of other more mature proposals in 2015-16 and 2016-17.

#### Developing Manpower Resources in Care Services

60. To encourage the younger generation to join the elderly long-term care sector, a “first-hire-then-train” pilot project was launched in 2013 through funding under the Lotteries Fund. Young persons were recruited to provide care services in RCHEs. Apart from receiving

on-the-job training, these young employees were provided with subsidies from the Government to pursue a relevant course. Upon completion of the course, they would be equipped to rise to higher positions and move further up their career ladder in the social welfare sector. In view of the positive response to the pilot project, the Government has earmarked approximately \$147 million to implement a Navigation Scheme, providing a total of 1 000 places in the next few years to encourage young persons to join the elderly and rehabilitation care services. SWD has selected five welfare NGOs to implement the Navigation Scheme. Among them, three NGOs started recruitment of trainees in July 2015, and the relevant courses subsequently commenced in October/November 2015. The other two NGOs are expected to start recruiting trainees in 2016-17.

## **Conclusion**

61. The Government continues to attach great importance to social welfare and has been investing substantial resources in this area. Recurrent expenditure on social welfare in this financial year (i.e. 2015-16) is estimated to be \$59.7 billion, accounting for 18.4% of the recurrent expenditure of the Government as a whole. The Government will continue to deliver and plan for suitable social welfare services, through strengthening collaboration with different sectors of the community.

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