

For discussion
on 10 April 2017

Legislative Council Panel on Welfare Services

Progress of Implementation of After-school Care and Support Services

Purpose

This paper sets out the progress of implementation of after-school care and support services provided by the Social Welfare Department (SWD).

Preface

2. To assist parents of low-income families who need to work or receive vocational training to strengthen their self-reliance capabilities, the Government has been providing after-school care and support services through different channels to families in need, including the After-school Care Programme (ASCP) provided by SWD through non-governmental welfare organisations (welfare NGOs), as well as the after-school learning and support programmes funded with matching grants under the dedicated portion of the Partnership Fund for the Disadvantaged (PFD). Besides, the Education Bureau (EDB) provides the “School-based After-school Learning and Support Programme” for disadvantaged students to facilitate their whole-person development and personal growth, and to alleviate the burden of working parents in taking care of children. As this paper mainly sets out the implementation progress of relevant services provided by SWD, the programme under EDB will not be mentioned in this paper.

ASCP provided by SWD

3. The ASCP is operated by welfare NGOs on a self-financing and fee-charging basis, offering support services for children aged six to 12 whose parents are unable to provide proper care for them during after-school hours owing to work or other reasons. Services provided

include homework guidance, parent guidance and education, skill learning and social activities, etc. At present, there are 157 ASCP centres operated by welfare NGOs, offering about 5 800 ASCP places throughout the territory. Most of the ASCP centres are located in public housing estates. As at end-December 2016, the overall utilisation rate for ASCP centres was around 90%.

4. To support parents to balance between work and family so as to relieve their pressure, SWD, through the Fee-waiving Subsidy Scheme for ASCP, has since 2005 provided fee-waiving and fee-reduction for children using the ASCP service. This enables parents of low-income families to work or receive vocational training, so as to strengthen their self-reliance capabilities. At present, SWD provides more than 1 800 full fee-waiving quotas to families in need. Needy and eligible families can directly approach the organisations operating the ASCP to apply for full fee-waiving or half-fee reduction. SWD's annual recurrent expenditure on the Fee-waiving Subsidy Scheme for ASCP is about \$15 million.

5. To further support parents with longer or unstable working hours or those who may need to work over weekends, SWD has initiated the Enhanced ASCP since December 2014 to provide additional resources to some of the organisations operating the ASCP, and to extend the service hours on weekday evenings, Saturdays, Sundays and school holidays. At present, there are 35 ASCP centres operating the Enhanced ASCP, providing more than 460 additional full fee-waiving quotas to families in need. SWD's annual recurrent expenditure on the Enhanced ASCP is about \$17 million.

After-school learning and support programmes under PFD

6. SWD has since 2015 provided \$200 million matching funds (the dedicated portion) through the PFD to encourage the business sector to work with welfare NGOs and schools to implement more after-school learning and support programmes to facilitate the whole-person development of primary and secondary school students mainly from grassroots families. Compared with the regular portion of the PFD, SWD exercises more flexibility in processing the applications under the dedicated portion, including (1) relaxing the application criteria to cover primary and secondary schools; (2) raising the ceiling of matching grant for each approved project from \$2 million to \$3 million; and (3) considering applications with the same substance as other previously

approved projects having regard to the benefits of the programmes to the target students.

7. SWD launched the first two rounds of application for the dedicated portion in January and December 2015 respectively. Altogether 149 projects have been approved so far, involving matching grants totalling \$117 million and benefiting over 60 000 primary and secondary school students. With the business donations and matching grants, the total funding for these after-school learning and support programmes amounts to more than \$230 million. The third round of application for the dedicated portion just closed at the end of March 2017. SWD is examining around 50 applications received.

8. Among the 149 after-school learning and support projects approved, 89 are run by 55 schools (including 52 secondary schools, one primary school and two special schools) while the other 60 are run by 38 welfare NGOs.

9. The projects implemented by schools mainly offer a variety of whole-person development programmes after school hours or during long school holidays, having regard to the different development needs of the eligible students of the respective schools. These include arts and cultural activities, sports activities, training in innovation and technology, leadership training, voluntary services and visits. These development programmes not only enhance the students' learning capability, but can also foster their physical and mental health and enrich their life experiences. Apart from school-based programmes, some schools may participate in joint school activities, including company visits, job shadowing programmes and language training to broaden students' horizon and facilitate their life planning.

10. The projects implemented by welfare NGOs primarily identify eligible students for service through liaison with welfare units or schools within the district. More than 60% of the beneficiaries are primary school students. Some projects arrange for diversified learning and support services and interest groups after school hours (i.e. 4 p.m. to 6 p.m.) to improve students' academic performances and promote their positive growth in the interpersonal, emotional and psychological health aspects. The projects also enable parents to stay in employment or enter the job market. Some other projects provide students with special education needs and their parents with group training and parent support services.

Way Forward

11. Through the Fee-waiving Subsidy Scheme for ASCP, SWD provides support to low-income parents to balance between work and family, and relieve their pressure in taking care of children. SWD will regularly review the demand for the ASCP in each district and redeploy the fee-waiving quotas as appropriate. Moreover, SWD will, in consultation with the welfare NGOs operating the services, provide additional ASCP places when necessary.

12. The projects under the dedicated portion of the PFD can effectively facilitate the learning, personal growth and life planning skills of primary and secondary school students from grassroots families. They can also help parents balance the stress of work and supervision of their children's learning. The Government will continue to support projects that assist the development of primary and secondary school students from grassroots families through the dedication portion of PFD.

Advice Sought

13. Members are invited to note the contents of this paper.

Social Welfare Department
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