

立法會 *Legislative Council*

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Panel on Welfare Services

Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat for the meeting on 10 December 2018

Long-term development of child care services

Purpose

This paper gives an account of past discussions by the Council and relevant committees on long-term development of child care services.

Background

2. According to the Administration, the Government announced, in the report on "Population Policy: Strategies and Initiatives" in January 2015 and the 2015 Policy Agenda, the commissioning of the Study on the Long-term Development of Child Care Services ("the Study") to advise on the long-term development of child care services. The Social Welfare Department ("SWD") commissioned the Study in December 2016 to the Department of Social Work and Social Administration of The University of Hong Kong ("the Consultant Team"). A Steering Committee was set up for overseeing and monitoring the progress of the Study, as well as endorsing the work plan and reports submitted by the Consultant Team. Having consulted various stakeholders (including Legislative Council ("LegCo") Members, The Hong Kong Council of Social Services, non-governmental organizations, service users and operators, women's groups, etc.), the Government and the Consultant Team set out the following objectives of the Study:

- (a) to review the philosophy and policy objectives of day child care services;
- (b) to take stock of the operation modes and service positioning of day child care services;

- (c) to identify service gaps, gauge the demand for and supply of day child care services, and explore a systematic and workable service planning mechanism; and
- (d) to advise on the service modes and financing modes of day child care services with reference to the needs of different types of families and other relevant considerations (e.g. cost-effectiveness, sustainability, etc.).

3. The Study will take stock of the existing child care services in Hong Kong and draw on the experience in providing child care services in other places. It will also conduct in-depth analyses on various aspects of child care services, such as objectives, contents, targets, financing modes, service models, demand and supply situation, facility planning, manpower planning and training. The Consultant Team submitted the interim report of the Study in May 2018 for consideration and endorsement by the Steering Committee. Based on the findings and observations in the interim report, the Consultant Team will formulate the direction of the recommendations corresponding to the scope of the Study. The major areas to be covered include: (a) philosophy and positioning of child care services; (b) planning parameters for child care centre ("CCC") places to meet the demand; (c) manning ratios for qualified child care workers ("CCWs") serving in CCCs; (d) enhancement of the Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project ("NSCCP"); (e) re-engineering of mutual help child care centres; and (f) government subsidy for CCC service.

4. The Consultant Team has conducted engagement sessions with various stakeholders, including the relevant advisory bodies, to brief them on the findings and observations in the interim report, and the direction of the recommendations of the Study. The Consultant Team will take into account the views collected during the engagement sessions in preparing the final report of the Study.

Deliberations by Members

Increasing supply of child care services

5. In the light of the long waiting time for CCC places, some Members considered that the Administration should formulate a planning ratio for the provision of CCC places. These Members suggested that there should be 200 CCC places per 1 000 population or one CCC in each district. The Administration should also consider using idle space in public rental

housing ("PRH") estates, which made up a total area of about 110 000 square feet, for provision of CCC service.

6. According to the Administration, it would make reference to the recommendation of the Study for formulating a planning ratio for the provision of CCC places. Given that most of the aforementioned idle space was rented to commercial tenants of PRH estates for use as storerooms which were not large enough to address the operational needs of CCC service, these storerooms were not suitable for conversion to CCCs. The Administration would continue to identify suitable accommodation for the provision of CCC service. The Administration would also study whether additional CCCs could be set up in district development projects.

7. Noting that the Consultant Team had divided families with children under six into three priority categories for child care services,¹ some Members took the view that families with grandparents or helpers to help look after children should not be regarded as the low priority group. These Members considered that the priority for child care services of these families should be further studied. Given that some of these grandparents or helpers might not be able to identify problems in the development or growth of children, these Members were concerned that the Study might have overlooked the impact of child care services on the development and growth of children. In view of the severe shortage of child care services, these Members called on the Administration to draw up a timetable for providing child care services for families in the three priority categories and provide professional training for child care staff. The Administration was also requested to plan for the provision of relevant training programmes in tertiary institutions so that there would be sufficient manpower supply for child care services.

8. The Consultant Team advised that multifarious measures should be adopted to address the on-going demand for child care services and one of the interim measures was to provide training for grandparents and helpers to enhance their child caring skills. The Consultant Team had suggested that the Administration should start the manpower planning for child care services with a view to increasing the supply of child care staff.

¹ The three priority categories for child care services are: (a) high priority group: children living with parents (both of them working) or working single parents, without helpers; (b) mid priority group: children living with parents (either both of them working or only one of them working) and grandparents, without helpers; and (c) low priority group: families with helpers/relatives/grandparents to help look after the children.

Enhancing Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project

9. Some Members expressed concern that while NSCCP was welcomed by many working parents, the supply of home-based child carers ("HCCs") under NSCCP could not meet the demand as these carers were volunteers. Some stakeholders had also reflected that HCCs should be full-time employed. Given the great demand for HCCs, these Members were of the view that NSCCP should be systematized and revamped. The Administration should also consider increasing the level of incentive payment and enhancing training for HCCs so as to improve the quality of their services.

10. The Administration advised that if HCCs became employees of service operators, issues in relation to employees' compensation insurance, mandatory provident fund, statutory minimum wage, long service payment, etc. were to be considered. It required further study as to whether there was room to engage HCCs as part-time workers whose service quality was subject to monitoring and whether a registration system for HCCs should be established.

11. At its meetings on 9 July 2018, the Panel on Welfare Services ("the Panel") passed two motions urging the Government, one to enhance NSCCP, and the other to set up a task force to coordinate various government bureaux and departments for promotion and implementation of carer-oriented policies. The wording of the motions is in **Appendix I**.

Improving manning ratios for qualified child care workers serving in child care centres

12. Members noted that the Administration had proposed to enhance the manning ratios for qualified CCWs serving in day CCCs from 1:8 to 1:6 for children aged zero to under two, and from 1:14 to 1:11 for children aged two to under three within the 2019-2020 school year. Pointing out that the manning ratios for children aged under two in Singapore and South Korea were 1:5 and 1:3 respectively, some Members held the view that the enhanced manning ratio of 1:6 lagged behind global practices and might not meet public expectation. These Members called on the Administration to improve the manning ratios for qualified CCWs serving in day CCCs.

13. The Administration advised that the enhanced manning ratios were proposed on the basis of meeting the minimum statutory requirements and having regard to the recommendations of the Study. The manning ratios for qualified CCWs serving in CCCs were enhanced at a reasonable level.

While the detailed bases of figures collected from overseas jurisdictions were not available, taking into consideration the number of other supporting staff in Hong Kong's CCCs, the staff to child ratios in Hong Kong would be comparable to those of Finland generally.

14. The Panel passed a motion at its meeting on 30 October 2018 urging SWD to, inter alia, enhance the qualified CCWs to child ratio in Hong Kong by making reference to the corresponding manning ratios in Australia, Finland and South Korea. The wording of the motion is set out in **Appendix II**.

Latest development

15. The Administration will brief members on the final report of the Study at the Panel meeting on 10 December 2018.

Relevant papers

16. A list of the relevant papers on the LegCo website is in **Appendix III**.

福利事務委員會

在 2018 年 7 月 9 日會議上就議程第 V 項
"幼兒照顧服務的長遠發展研究的進展"
通過的議案

鑒於有不少市民及團體均認為，鄰里支援幼兒照顧計劃的社區保姆服務存在獎勵金水平過低、服務不包括接送兒童等問題，本委員會促請政府積極研究，增撥資源予非政府機構，(1)提高社區保姆的獎勵金，水平與法定最低工資看齊；(2)為保姆提供來回交通費，讓她們能夠外出接送兒童；及(3)加強訓練社區保姆並設立審查制度，確保保姆的服務質素及其家居安全，以優化服務。

動議人：田北辰議員, BBS, JP

(Translation)

Panel on Welfare Services

**Motion passed under agenda item V on
"Progress of the Consultancy Study on
the Long-term Development of Child Care Services"
at the meeting on 9 July 2018**

Given that many members of the public and deputations are of the view that there are problems in the home-based child care services under the Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project ("NSCCP"), such as low incentive payment and non-provision of pick-up services for children, this Panel urges the Government to proactively explore allocating additional resources to non-governmental organizations to enhance NSCCP services by (1) increasing the incentive payment for home-based child carers to a level comparable to the statutory minimum wage; (2) covering the round-trip transport cost of child carers to facilitate their provision of pick-up services for the children; and (3) enhancing the training for home-based child carers and setting up a monitoring system to ensure the service quality and home safety of these carers.

Moved by : Hon Michael TIEN Puk-sun, BBS, JP

福利事務委員會

在 2018 年 7 月 9 日會議上就議程第 V 項 "幼兒照顧服務的長遠發展研究的進展" 通過的議案

本委員會促請政府盡快成立專責工作小組，統籌勞工及福利局、教育局及食物及衛生局等局及部門，推動及落實一系列以照顧者為本的政策，包括進行照顧者人口特徵及服務需要統計調查、搜集及公開地區各項可為照顧者提供支援的服務資料供市民參考、設立恆常的照顧者津貼及就 0-6 歲兒童照顧服務(包括資助獨立幼兒中心及長全日制幼兒服務，改善託兒服務及社區保姆服務等)設立規劃標準與服務比例，充分滿足社會需要。

動議人：尹兆堅議員

(Translation)

Panel on Welfare Services

Motion passed under agenda item V on "Progress of the Consultancy Study on the Long-term Development of Child Care Services" at the meeting on 9 July 2018

This Panel urges the Government to expeditiously set up a task force, which will coordinate various bureaux and departments, such as the Labour and Welfare Bureau, Education Bureau as well as Food and Health Bureau, for promotion and implementation of a series of carer-oriented policies, including conducting surveys on demographic characteristics and service needs of carers, collecting information on various support services available for carers at district level and making such information available for the public's reference, providing regular allowances for carers and setting planning standards and service ratios with respect to care services for children aged zero to six (including aided standalone child care centres and long whole-day kindergarten services, enhancements to child-minding services and home-based child care services etc.), so as to fully address the needs of the community.

Moved by : Hon Andrew WAN Siu-kin

福利事務委員會

**在 2018 年 10 月 30 日政策簡報會上就議程第 I 項
"勞工及福利局局長及民政事務局局長就行政長官 2018 年施政
報告作出簡報"
通過的議案**

本委員會促請社會福利署盡快公開《幼兒照顧服務的長遠發展研究》報告，並參考澳洲、芬蘭及南韓 3 個國家的人手比例，改善香港合資格幼兒工作人員與幼兒的照顧比例，將香港幼兒工作人員與 0 至 2 歲幼兒的照顧比例由現時的 1:8 調整至 1:3.5，以讓所有使用服務的嬰幼兒可以獲得適切及優質的服務。

動議人：邵家臻議員

(Translation)

Panel on Welfare Services

**Motion passed under agenda item I on
"Briefing by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare and the Secretary
for Home Affairs on the Chief Executive's 2018 Policy Address"
at the policy briefing on 30 October 2018**

This Panel urges the Social Welfare Department to make public the report of the Consultancy Study on the Long-term Development of Child Care Services as soon as possible and, with reference to the manning ratio for child care workers ("CCWs") in the three countries (viz. Australia, Finland and South Korea), enhance the ratio for qualified CCWs taking care of children in Hong Kong by adjusting the existing ratio from one CCW to eight children aged zero to two to 1:3.5, so that all infants and young children using child care services can receive proper and quality services.

Moved by : Hon SHIU Ka-chun

Appendix III

Relevant papers on long-term development of child care services

Committee	Date of meeting	Paper
Legislative Council	22 February 2017	Written question (No. 18) on "Child care services"
Panel on Welfare Services	9 July 2018 (Item V)	Agenda Minutes
	30 October 2018 (Item I)	Agenda

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
4 December 2018