

For Information
on 1 November 2019

Legislative Council Panel on Welfare Services

2019 Policy Address Policy Initiatives of the Labour and Welfare Bureau

Introduction

The Chief Executive delivered her 2019 Policy Address on 16 October 2019. This paper sets out the new and on-going welfare initiatives pertaining to the Labour and Welfare Bureau (LWB) and Social Welfare Department (SWD) in the 2019 Policy Address and Policy Address Supplement.

Summary of New Initiatives

2. The new welfare initiatives in the 2019 Policy Address and Policy Supplement are summarised as follows :

- Introducing various enhancement measures to strengthen the after school care programme, including addition of 2 500 full fee-waiving places, relaxation of application eligibility, increase of subsidy level, provision of extra subsidy for students with special educational needs, and streamlining of financial vetting process, etc. (see paragraph 3 below);
- Increasing the number of service places under On-site Pre-school Rehabilitation Services (OPRS) to 7 000 in October 2019 and providing an additional 1 000 places in each school year from 2020/21 to 2022/23, and increasing the total number of service places for special child care centres as well as early education and training centres by about 1 200 from 2019-20 to 2012-22 (see paragraph 4 below);
- Implementing a pilot project in kindergartens (KGs)/kindergarten-cum-child care centres (KG-cum-CCCs) in early 2020 to provide early intervention services for children with signs of special needs (see paragraph 5 below);

- Launching a three-year Ethnic Minority (EM) District Ambassador pilot scheme in nine districts with a higher EM population in 2020-21 to enhance EM services provided by centres/service units, and co-ordinate and deepen communication and co-operation with relevant stakeholders (see paragraph 6 below);
- Injecting an additional \$500 million into the Community Investment and Inclusion Fund (CIIF) to support social capital development projects (including community support projects for residents of new public rental housing estates (PRH)) (see paragraph 7 below);
- Enhancing the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme (see paragraph 8 below);
- Raising all rates of the Working Family Allowance (WFA) (see paragraph 9 below);
- Providing an additional 3 000 service quota under the Integrated Home Care Services (IHCS) (Frail Cases) (see paragraph 11 below);
- Providing an additional 1 000 service vouchers, bringing the total to 8 000, under the Pilot Scheme on Community Care Service Voucher for the Elderly (see paragraph 12 below);
- Providing additional places in day rehabilitation service units and residential rehabilitation service units (see paragraph 14 below);
- Setting up two new rehabilitation service centres to implement a two-year pilot scheme on community care services (see paragraph 15 below);
- Providing additional resources for Social and Recreational Centres for the Disabled (S&RC) with a view to enhancing their function in providing community support, particularly for carers (see paragraph 16 below);
- Purchasing some 40 places from private residential care homes for persons with disabilities (RCHDs) as designated residential respite places; setting up a vacancy enquiry system on designated residential respite places for persons with disabilities and exploring the feasibility of developing pre-registration arrangement (see paragraph 17 below);
- Regularising the Pilot Regional Guardianship Office (Hong Kong

Island) and setting up two additional Regional Guardianship Offices to provide support services to mentally incapacitated persons (MIPs) and their families (see paragraph 18 below);

- Implementing an enhanced integrated vocational and skills training service model by the Vocational Training Council, which seeks to equip students with disabilities with skills commensurate with their abilities, assist them in adapting to the work environment, upkeep their work motivation and help graduates sustain continuous employment in the open market (see paragraph 19 below);
- Increasing the allocation for public education on rehabilitation from \$13.5 million to about \$20 million with effect from 2020-21 to implement public education exercises with inclusive themes (see paragraph 20 below);
- Providing additional 20 Rehabuses in 2020-21 to enhance Scheduled Route service, Dial-A-Ride service and hospital feeder/recreational routes service (see paragraph 21 below);
- Regularising the Pilot Scheme on Providing Special Subsidy for Persons with Permanent Stoma from Low-income Families for Purchasing Medical Consumables under the Community Care Fund (see paragraph 22 below); and
- Increasing the number of medical social workers of the SWD to keep pace with the continuous implementation of new initiatives and service enhancements by the Hospital Authority (HA) and Department of Health (DH) (see paragraph 23 below).

Details of Policy Priorities/New Initiatives

Support for Children and Families

Strengthening After School Care Programme

3. In order to meet the keen service need, the SWD will introduce various enhancement measures to strengthen the after school care programme at primary school level, including addition of 2 500 full fee-waiving places, relaxation of application eligibility, increase of subsidy level, provision of extra subsidy for students with special educational needs, and streamlining of financial vetting process, etc. The enhancement measures are expected to roll out in October 2020 and benefit more than 5 700 students and their

families.

Enhancing Support for Pre-school Children with Special Needs and Their Parents

4. Early intervention of rehabilitation services is of particular importance to children with special needs. Following the regularisation of the OPRS in October 2018, the Government has increased the number of service places to 7 000 in October 2019. Since the number of pre-school children who are identified to have special needs after assessment, namely Tier 2 children, is constantly on the rise, the Government plans to further increase the service places by 1 000 each year for the three school years from 2020/21 to 2022/23, making an aggregated increase of 3 000 service places which will bring the total number to 10 000; and the total number of service places for special child care centres as well as early education and training centres will also increase by about 1 200 to about 6 700 from 2019-20 to 2021-22. The Government will continuously review the demand and supply for pre-school rehabilitation services as well as manpower supply of relevant allied health professionals, with a view to progressively meeting the objective of “zero-waiting time”.

5. Moreover, the Government will implement a 20-month pilot project at the KGs/KG-cum-CCCs participating in the OPRS in early 2020, under which children with signs of special needs (i.e. Tier 1 children) will be given early intervention services. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) operating the OPRS will be invited to participate in the pilot project and a consultant from tertiary institution will be commissioned to conduct an evaluation on the pilot project. Subject to the outcome of the evaluation study of the pilot project, the Government will explore the feasibility of merging the early intervention programme with the OPRS, with a view to providing more comprehensive, flexible and ongoing support to cater for children with various levels of special needs at different stages.

Enhancing Support for EMs

6. In view of the increasingly diversified needs of EM communities, the SWD will launch a three-year EM District Ambassador pilot scheme in 2020-21 to enhance EM services in nine districts with higher EM population (i.e. Central and Western, Islands, Wan Chai, Eastern, Yau Tsim Mong, Kowloon City, Kwai Tsing, Yuen Long and Sham Shui Po). Additional EM or designated staff will be engaged as “EM District Ambassadors” to enhance service provision in welfare service units of the SWD and subvented NGOs, including medical social services units, integrated family service centres/integrated services centres, parent/relatives resource centres for

persons with disabilities, district elderly community centres, district support centres for persons with disabilities and integrated service centres for ex-offenders and their families.

Injecting \$500 Million into the CIIF

7. Since its establishment in 2002, a total amount of \$800 million was injected into the CIIF. Through implementing diversified social capital development projects in the community, the CIIF promotes reciprocity between the public and different sectors, and builds cross-sectoral collaborative platforms with a view to developing the social capital of mutual trust, spirit of co-operation and social cohesion in the community, and enhancing mutual support among individuals, families and organisations so that our community can grow from strength to strength. A total of 29 batches of applications have been processed so far. As at September 2019, the CIIF has provided/committed funding of about \$617 million to 395 projects launched by 278 agencies/service units. Besides, we have regularised the community support programme for new PRHs through the CIIF with effect from April 2019 to help the new residents and families integrate into the community as soon as possible. The Government will inject \$500 million into the CIIF to support social capital development projects (including community support projects for residents of new PRHs) and build mutual help networks in the community through cross-sector collaboration. The funding injection should enable the continual operation of the CIIF until 2024, for supporting about 140 projects benefiting more than 140 000 people.

Poverty Alleviation and Society Security

Enhancing the CSSA Scheme

8. The SWD has completed a review of the ‘pro-employment’ measures under the CSSA Scheme, and put forward a host of improvement measures to further encourage able-bodied CSSA recipients to work, while ensuring the CSSA Scheme can continue to serve as the safety net of last resort. The proposed measures include raising the maximum amount of disregarded earnings by 60% from \$2,500 to \$4,000 per month, enhancing the CSSA employment support services, extending a range of supplement and special grants to eligible non-elderly able-bodied recipients, and increasing the maximum rates of rent allowance from about 3% to 27% with reference to the number of members in the household. The additional Government expenditure for the relevant measures is estimated to be around \$960 million per year. We will further brief the Panel on details of the above measures at

the Panel meeting scheduled for 11 November 2019, and seek relevant funding approval from the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council later on.

Raising All Rates of the WFA

9. Having considered the enhancements of the CSSA ‘pro-employment’ measures mentioned above and to preserve the relativity and balance between the economic position of the WFA and the CSSA-receiving households, so that lower-income working households would not be discouraged to remain in active employment and resort to the CSSA, we also propose raising the payment rates of the WFA by increasing the working-hour linked household allowance of the Scheme by 16.7% to 25%, and increasing the Child Allowance substantially by 40%. The above proposed increase of the WFA rates is estimated to incur additional Government expenditure of around \$460 million per year. We will brief the Panel on further details of the WFA improvements in tandem with the ‘pro-employment’ measures under the CSSA Scheme at the Panel meeting scheduled for 11 November 2019.

Care for the Elderly

10. The Government’s objective in elderly services is to enable our senior citizens to live in dignity and provide suitable support for them to promote their sense of belonging, sense of security and sense of worthiness. The Government will continue to offer hardware and policy support to promote “active ageing” while taking care of the service needs of frail elderly persons. The Government strives to provide appropriate long-term care services for those elderly persons in need under the policy of promoting “ageing in place as the core, institutional care as back-up”. We will continue to implement the recommendations set out in the Elderly Services Programme Plan.

Supporting Ageing in Place for the Elderly

11. In view of the ageing population, elderly persons have a keen demand for community care services. The Government will, within 2020 and 2021, provide an additional 3 000 service quota under the IHCS (Frail Cases) to support ageing in place for elderly persons with moderate or severe impairment.

12. The Government also continues to implement the Pilot Scheme on Community Care Service Voucher for the Elderly. Since October 2019, an additional 1 000 vouchers have been provided, bringing the total to 7 000, to

meet the keen demand. At end-August 2019, the SWD issued invitations to eligible elderly persons to apply for the additional 1 000 vouchers and further invited eligible organisations to apply for operating recognised service units for providing more service quota. To further strengthen community care and support services, the Government plans to provide another 1 000 vouchers to bring the total to 8 000 in 2020-21, in order to provide services for more elderly persons in need.

Support for the Disadvantaged

13. The Government is committed to promoting, protecting and ensuring the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promoting respect for their inherent dignity. The Government will continue to aim at helping these persons develop their capabilities and building a barrier-free living environment. The Government will provide persons with disabilities with community support, residential care, vocational rehabilitation and employment support service and render support to their families and carers, with a view to enabling persons with disabilities to participate in full and enjoy equal opportunities both in terms of their social life and personal growth.

Formulating a New Hong Kong Rehabilitation Programme Plan

14. The Government has asked the Rehabilitation Advisory Committee (RAC) to formulate a new Hong Kong Rehabilitation Programme Plan (RPP) in order to set out the strategic directions and measures to address the service needs of persons with disabilities at different stages of life. The RAC has completed the consultation work for the first and second stages (i.e. Scoping Stage and Formulation of Recommendations Stage) formulation of the RPP. The RAC is preparing the Report on Second Stage (Formulation of Recommendations Stage), which will include the vision, strategic directions, themes and strategic recommendations proposed by the RAC having regard to the three guiding principles of formulating a new RPP and the major views expressed by stakeholders during the Formulation of Recommendations Stage public engagement exercise. The RAC is making preparation for the consultation work for the third stage formulation of the RPP (Consensus Building Stage) in mid-November 2019. Depending on the actual circumstances of the Consensus Building Stage consultation work, the Government expects the RAC to submit a report on the new RPP to the Government in early 2020. At the same time, the Government will continue to improve our rehabilitation services. Efforts include increasing the number of places of pre-school rehabilitation services, day rehabilitation

services and residential rehabilitation services. The increase in the number of pre-school rehabilitation services places is set out in paragraph 4 above. In parallel, the Government will provide a total of about 3 800 additional places in day rehabilitation service units and residential rehabilitation service units from 2019-20 to 2021-22.

Enhancing Community Support Services

15. To meet the needs of persons with disabilities who have a high degree of caring need and live in the community in a more comprehensive and focused manner, the SWD would seek to use the Lotteries Fund (LF) to set up two new rehabilitation service centres (centres) to implement a two-year pilot scheme on community care services. The centres would integrate the service of day care centres and home care services to enhance the service flexibility and would provide appropriate support for persons with severe disabilities having regard to the changes of their service needs at different stages.

16. To meet the needs of the S&RC service users, such as the stress of family members in taking care of the S&RC members, the SWD will increase the manpower of the S&RC and enhance the services with a view to strengthening community support for persons with disabilities and their carers.

17. To provide carers of persons with disabilities living in the community a planned short break so that they may attend to their personal business and make their life less stressful and more stimulating, the SWD will purchase 40 some places from private RCHDs joining the Bought Place Scheme for private RCHDs (including those providing high level of care) to serve as designated residential respite places. Besides, the SWD plans to launch the Vacancy Enquiry System for Residential Respite Service for Persons with Disabilities, Residential Respite Service for the Elderly and Emergency Placement for the Elderly in the fourth quarter of 2019, with a view to facilitating persons with disabilities/ the elderly and their carers to search for information on vacant residential respite places, as well as vacant emergency placement for the elderly. The SWD will also explore the feasibility of developing pre-registration arrangement.

18. Besides, to strengthen the support service to the MIPs received into Guardianship under Mental Health Ordinance and their families, the Government will regularise the pilot Regional Guardianship Office (Hong Kong Island) and set up two additional Regional Guardianship Offices to provide support services to the MIPs and their families under a new specialised service model.

Strengthening Integrated Vocational and Skill Training for Persons with Disabilities

19. The Vocational Training Council (VTC) will implement enhanced integrated vocational and skills training service model in 2020-21 by phases. The enhanced service model will combine the strengths of the existing services of Shine Skills Centre operated by the VTC and Integrated Vocational Training Centres subvented by the SWD, and seeks to equip students with disabilities with skills commensurate with their abilities, assist them in adapting to the work environment, upkeep their work motivation and sustain continuous employment in the open market. The enhanced service model includes augmenting internship places for students in collaboration with different organisations; more courses under the Qualification Framework; providing post-training employment support services at workplaces through job coaches for graduates and their employers/peer workers; and “up-skilling” or “re-skilling” courses for graduates to enhance their opportunities to find or change jobs in the open market.

Enhancing the Promotion of Disability Inclusive Culture

20. The LWB plans to increase the allocation for public education on rehabilitation from \$13.5 million to \$20 million with effect from 2020-21 to implement public education exercises on various inclusive themes, including inclusive workplace, courtesy towards persons with disabilities, promotion of various measures to enhance access to information, etc.

Continued Enhancement of Rehabus Services

21. The Government plans to provide additional 20 Rehabuses in 2020-21 to continuously enhance the service capacity of Rehabus in:

- (i) providing services for persons with disabilities who are currently on the waiting list for Scheduled Route service (i.e. for going to work or school);
- (ii) meeting the rising demand of Dial-A-Ride service and providing Rehabus service to meet urgent needs; and
- (iii) introducing more hospital feeder service routes and recreational routes on weekends and holidays for persons with disabilities.

Other New Initiatives for Supporting Persons with Disabilities

22. In 2017, the Community Care Fund implemented a three-year Pilot Scheme on Providing Special Subsidy for Persons with Permanent Stoma

from Low-income Families for Purchasing Medical Consumables (the Pilot Scheme). The objective is to release the financial burden of the persons with permanent stoma with low family income. Considering their special need, the SWD would regularise the Pilot Scheme upon its completion so as to extend the support to the persons with permanent stoma from low-income families.

23. Besides, the SWD will increase the number of medical social workers to keep pace with the continuous implementation of new initiatives and service enhancement by the HA and the DH with a view to providing appropriate services for patients and their families continuously.

On-going Initiatives

Children, Family and Youth Services

The Commission on Children

24. The Government has established the Commission on Children (the Commission) in June 2018 to focus on addressing children's issues as they grow. The Commission agreed to implement a series of important tasks, including the commissioning of a Consultancy Study for developing a Central Databank on Children, the establishment of a Funding Scheme for Children's Well-being and Development, and the formulation of publicity strategy and promotional plans.

Formulating Planning Ratio for the Provision of Child Care Centre (CCC) Places

25. Regarding the long-term planning of child care services, the Government will formulate an appropriate planning ratio for subsidised CCC places on a population basis. The Government has planned to include the planning ratio in the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines (HKPSG) in 2019-20 with a view to reserving suitable premises in housing development projects for CCC operations so as to better meet the service demands in the new community.

Increasing the Level of Subsidy for CCC Service and Enhancing the Manning Ratio for Qualified Child Care Workers (CCWs) serving in Day and Residential CCCs

26. The Government will increase the level of subsidy for CCC places within the 2019/20 school year to alleviate parents' financial burden on

service fee payment, and improve the existing manning ratio of qualified child care workers in day and residential CCCs on top of meeting the minimum statutory requirement. With effect from September 2019, the manning ratios for Child Care Workers serving in aided day CCCs have been enhanced from 1:8 to 1:6 for children aged 0 to below two; and from 1:14 to 1:11 for children aged two to below three. With reference to the manning ratios for day CCCs, the ratio for residential CCCs has also been adjusted accordingly in September 2019.

Increasing Aided CCC Places

27. To further enhance day child care services, the SWD plans to provide in phases about 400 long full day child care service places in aided standalone CCCs for children aged below three in North District, Kwun Tong, Kwai Tsing, Sha Tin and Yuen Long.

Enhancing the Service Quality of Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project (NSCCP)

28. To enhance the service quality of the NSCCP, additional provision will be provided to increase professional and supporting staff to strengthen training for home-based child carers commencing in January 2020, and the level of incentive payment for home-based child carers will be raised to encourage more volunteers to serve as child carers.

Re-engineering the existing Mutual Help Child Care Centres (MHCCCs) by phases

29. MHCCCs, which are operated by NGOs on a fee-charging and self-financing basis, provide flexible child care service to children aged below three (if necessary, children aged below six could also use the service) and facilitate mutual help and care within the community. The SWD will re-engineer in phases the MHCCCs from 2019-20 onwards, and will consider converting them to provide after-school care service for pre-school children so as to further meet the child care needs in the community. Additional provision for social workers and supporting staff will be provided. Besides, the Government is now studying the provision of after-school care service for children aged three to six in suitable welfare facilities. The study is expected to complete in the fourth quarter of 2019. The Government will formulate the way forward depending on the outcome of the study.

Launching a two-year Project on Child Care Training for Grandparents

30. In view that the two-year Pilot Project on Child Care Training for

Grandparents launched in 2016 was well received by the public, the SWD will launch within November 2019 a child care training programme with a similar mode of operation to equip grandparents or grandparents-to-be with contemporary child care knowledge and skills, so as to enhance the support for nuclear families. The two-year new programme will provide about 1 200 training places.

Launching the Pilot Scheme on Social Work Services for Pre-primary Institutions

31. For early identification of and to provide assistance for pre-primary children and their families with welfare needs, the Government has allocated \$989 million from the LF to launch a three-year pilot scheme from the 2018/19 school year to provide social work service in phases for about 150 000 pre-primary children and their families in more than 700 subsidised/aided Pre-primary Institutions (PPIs) (including aided CCCs, KGs and KG-cum-CCCs) in Hong Kong. The Pilot Scheme will be implemented in three phases. A total of 48 social work teams (or more if there are half-teams), with not more than 16 teams by each phase, will be set up. Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the Pilot Scheme, serving a total of 246 and 239 eligible PPIs, have commenced operation in February 2019 and August 2019 respectively, whereas Phase 3 of the Pilot Scheme will commence operation in August 2020. An evaluation study on the current mode of service operation, as well as the service performance and service outputs/outcomes will be carried out during the implementation of the Pilot Scheme. It is expected the study would shed light on the way forward of the service.

Enhancing Co-parenting Support for Divorced/Separated Parents and Their Children

32. In October 2019, the SWD set up five Specialised Co-parenting Support Centres, operated by NGOs, in five clusters, i.e. Hong Kong, Kowloon East, Kowloon West, New Territories East and New Territories West, to provide divorced parents and their children with one-stop co-parenting support services, including co-parenting counselling and parenting co-ordination service, structured parenting groups or programmes, child-focused counselling, groups or programmes, as well as children contact service.

Strengthening Residential Child Care Services

33. To support and protect those children lacking proper care by their families and young persons with behavioural or emotional problems, the Government would continue to increase in phases the number of residential

child care places. 30 additional small group home places and five additional places of emergency/short-term care in small group homes has been provided at So Uk Estate, Sham Shui Po since August 2019 while 30 additional small group home places and four additional places of emergency/short-term care in small group homes will further be provided in New Territories East in 2020-21. To further enhance the care and support for children receiving residential care services, the SWD has, from 2018-19 onwards, allocated an additional amount of about \$92 million annually to strengthen the manpower of various residential child care services (including small group homes, residential CCCs, children's homes, and boys'/girls' homes/hostels).

Increasing Foster Care Service Places and Promoting Foster Care Service

34. To further support families in need, the SWD has raised the levels of various foster care allowances since 1 December 2017, along with the introduction of an extra incentive payment for taking care of children aged below three to encourage foster families to take in young children. An additional 240 foster care places will be provided in phases from 2017-18 onwards, including 60 foster care (emergency) places, with a view to bringing the total number of foster care places from 1 070 to 1 310, including the increase of foster care (emergency) places from 95 to 155. As at 1 March 2018, the addition of 60 foster care places, including 20 foster care (emergency) places, was provided under the first phase of the exercise. The SWD will continue to optimise the use of its existing resources and closely monitor the recruitment of foster families in providing the remaining additional places in phases.

Improving the Facilities of Small Group Homes

35. To address the present-day need for looking after the daily living of children and youth, the SWD has been discussing with the welfare sector how to carry out improvement works for residential care service units. The SWD provided additional recurrent funding in 2017-18 for air-conditioning in all subsidised residential child care service units. The SWD has also been working with the welfare sector on improvement works of residential care services. Since small group homes generally have more standardised facilities and physical environment, it is feasible to submit batch applications for the LF for the improvement works. The environment improvement programme is to be implemented in phases without affecting the existing service and is expected to be completed in about 8 years. The SWD issued invitation for participation in the environment improvement programme to NGOs operating small group homes in September 2018. The first phase of the environment improvement programme has commenced in 2019-20. The SWD will follow up with the participating small group home operators

on the service delivery and temporary accommodation for children during the renovation period to ensure smooth implementation of the programme. As for other residential care homes for children (including boys'/girls' homes/hostels), their physical environment, scales and facilities vary from one to another, and some of them have already applied for or been granted with provisions from the LF or other charitable funds to carry out improvement works. The SWD will continue to discuss and follow up with them individually on their improvement programmes so as to provide appropriate assistance.

Combating Domestic Violence

36. The Government does not tolerate domestic violence and has been dealing with the problem through a three-pronged strategy, viz. prevention of domestic violence, supporting victims of domestic violence and providing specialised services and crisis intervention. The Government will continue to allocate resources in enhancing specialised and support services, including providing various support services for victims of domestic violence as appropriate and providing counselling and psycho-educational services for batterers to change their abusive attitude and behaviour.

Strengthening Support for EMs

37. To address the social and welfare needs of EMs, the SWD will commission NGOs to set up 3 outreaching teams with employment of EM staff on Hong Kong Island, in Kowloon and the New Territories to proactively reach out to EMs and connect those in need to mainstream welfare services. The outreaching teams will also provide case counselling, groups and activities for EMs. The outreaching services are expected to be launched in March 2020. The SWD would also engage an NGO in 2019-20 to raise EMs' awareness of domestic violence and sexual violence through community education programmes, and encourage victims to seek help.

Setting up Five Cyber Youth Support Teams

38. To further provide service to at-risk and hidden youths, aged six to 24, who have emotional or behavioural problems and are manifesting or engaging in various at-risk behaviours on the Internet, the SWD has provided subvention to NGOs for setting up five Cyber Youth Support Teams starting from 1 December 2018 on Hong Kong Island, in East Kowloon, West Kowloon, New Territories East and New Territories West respectively to reach out to at-risk and hidden youths to provide early intervention and support.

Continual Implementation of Enhanced Measures for District Support Scheme for Children and Youth Development

39. The SWD will continue to implement the enhanced measures for the District Support Scheme for Children and Youth Development to provide 10 000 annual quotas of cash assistance at the ceiling of \$2,000 so as to better cater for the development needs of deprived children and youths at the district level.

Implementation of “Two Social Workers for Each Secondary School” measure

40. To enhance teenagers’ mental health and stress resilience, the SWD has implemented the measure of “two school social workers for each school” in more than 460 secondary schools in Hong Kong from the 2019/20 school year, with the addition of about 370 school social workers. The number of school social workers for each secondary school has increased from 1.2 to 2 and about 46 posts of Social Work Officer have been increased concomitantly to enhance supervisory support.

Poverty Alleviation and Social Security

The WFA Scheme

41. Apart from the proposed increase in all payment rates of the WFA mentioned above, it is noteworthy that the WFA payments will not be considered as income of PRH applicants’ income starting from 1 April 2019. This arrangement would better suit the circumstances of households with lower income. Furthermore, the Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency has taken up the processing of the individual-based Work Incentive Transport Subsidy (WITS) applications¹ performed by the Labour Department on 1 April 2019 to deliver more efficient and convenient services to applicants.

Old Age Living Allowance (OALA)

42. The Government will continue to adopt a targeted approach to support elderly persons with financial needs. Of note, the Higher OALA, which was launched in June 2018, has become the social security payment with the highest number of elderly recipients aged 65 or above. At present, about 500 000 elderly persons are receiving the Higher OALA of \$3,585 per

¹ With effect from 1 April 2018, the WITS Scheme only accepts individual-based applications. The Government abolished the household-based WITS at the time of implementing the WFA Scheme.

month. With about 50 000 Normal OALA (currently at \$2,675 per month) recipients, the OALA programme covers some 550 000 elderly persons aged 65 or above, involving an annual recurrent expenditure of about \$24 billion.

43. Separately, the 2018 Policy Address announced the extension of OALA to the Guangdong Scheme and Fujian Scheme, which would provide Normal OALA or Higher OALA to eligible Hong Kong elderly persons who choose to reside in the two Provinces. The SWD is undertaking relevant preparatory work, and expects to implement the initiative in January 2020. The SWD will announce the relevant details of the scheme before its launch.

Care for the Elderly

Supporting Ageing in Place for the Elderly

44. The Government provided an additional 2 000 service quota under the Enhanced Home and Community Care Services in October 2019 to strengthen community care and support services for the elderly.

Stipulating Population-based Planning Ratios for Elderly Services in the HKPSG

45. The Government stipulated population-based planning ratios in the HKPSG in respect of subsidised residential care services for the elderly, subsidised community care services for the elderly, District Elderly Community Centres and Neighbourhood Elderly Centres in December 2018 to help reserve appropriate land for the provision of these elderly services and facilities

Promoting Gerontechnology

46. The Government launched the \$1 billion Innovation and Technology Fund for Application in Elderly and Rehabilitation Care in December 2018 to subsidise eligible elderly and rehabilitation service units to try out and procure/rent technology products, thereby improving the quality of life of service users as well as reducing the burden and pressure on care staff and carers.

Enhancing the Service Quality of Residential Care Home for the Elderly (RCHEs) and RCHDs

47. The Government launched a five-year scheme in March 2019 to provide full subsidies in phases for home managers, health workers and care

workers of all RCHEs and RCHDs in the territory to enrol in Qualifications Framework-based training courses to enhance the service quality of RCHEs and RCHDs.

Residential Care Services Scheme in Guangdong

48. The SWD has since June 2014 been implementing the Pilot Residential Care Services Scheme in Guangdong. Elderly persons waitlisting for subsidised care-and-attention places can opt for residential places in the Hong Kong Jockey Club Shenzhen Society for Rehabilitation Yee Hong Heights or the Hong Kong Jockey Club Helping Hand Zhaoqing Home for the Elderly. The cost for the residential places are fully subsidised by the Government. There are currently about 160 Hong Kong residents receiving subsidy in the two elderly homes. They are generally satisfied with the living environment and services therein. We will regularise the Scheme in January 2020 with a view to continuing subsidising the existing participants and providing an additional option for elderly persons waitlisting for subsidised care-and-attention places.

Implementing the Government Public Transport Fare Concession Scheme for the Elderly and Eligible Persons with Disabilities

49. The LWB will continue to implement the popular 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 persons and eligible persons with disabilities to participate in community activities. In the past six months (from February to July 2019), the number of average daily passenger trips made on the Mass Transit Railway, franchised buses, ferries and green minibuses under the Scheme was around 1 439 000, with about 88% (some 1 268 000 trips) made by elderly persons² and about 12% (some 171 000 trips) made by eligible persons with disabilities³. In 2019-20, the estimated reimbursement of revenue forgone to public transport operators by the Government under the Scheme is around \$1.45 billion. The LWB has commenced a review on the Scheme and a consultant has been commissioned for the relevant work. The consultancy review is expected to be completed by end 2019.

Active Ageing

50. The Government will continue to encourage elderly persons to

² Elderly persons refer to those aged 65 or above.

³ Eligible persons with disabilities are recipients under the CSSA Scheme aged below 65 with 100% disabilities and recipients of Disability Allowance in the same age group.

actively take part in community affairs and lead a fruitful elderly life through participating in activities under the Opportunities for the Elderly Project, such as those related to elderly volunteer service and inter-generational harmony. As at end-September 2019, around 650 projects were approved for the 2018-20 period.

51. The Government will also continue to implement the Elder Academy (EA) Scheme to encourage the setting up of the EAs in primary schools, secondary schools and post-secondary institutions through the collaboration of school sponsoring bodies and organisations providing elderly services, so as to enable elderly persons to pursue life-long learning. At present, there are about 160 EAs. These EAs altogether provide more than 10 000 learning places each year.

52. Furthermore, having regard to the diverse characteristics and needs of the 18 districts in Hong Kong, the Government encourages each district to implement age-friendly community projects at the district level. All 18 districts in Hong Kong have obtained the World Health Organization's 'age-friendly community' accreditation.

Navigation Scheme for Young Persons in Care Services (Navigation Scheme)

53. The Government rolled out the Navigation Scheme in July 2015, providing a total of 1 000 training places in several years starting from 2015-16 to encourage young persons to join the elderly and rehabilitation care services. As at August 2019, a total of 1 140 trainees were recruited. The SWD will also continue to provide a total of 1 200 training places within five years starting from 2020-21, and enhance the existing scheme, including expanding the age range of trainees, reducing the number of weekly working hours of trainees so that they can further their studies more effectively and raising their salaries, to attract more young people to join the social welfare care sector.

Support for Women

Facilitating the Development of Women

54. 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, namely the provision of an enabling environment, empowerment of women and public education. The Government will also continue to

promote the concept of gender mainstreaming when formulating policies and programmes.

Support for the Disadvantaged

Continuing to implement the Child Development Fund (CDF)

55. Since its establishment in 2008, a total of \$900 million has been injected into the CDF to provide suitable support to underprivileged children to widen their horizons, enhance their exposure, and help them develop a saving habit and plan for the future, with a view to alleviating inter-generational poverty. It is estimated that the total injection can benefit about 30 000 participants. We will launch new batches of NGO-run projects and school-based projects having regard to the experience gained in implementing previous batches of CDF projects. On an average basis, our annual target is to let 2 000 to 2 300 new participants joining the CDF projects. Up till now, the CDF has rolled out seven batches of NGO-run projects and six batches of school-based projects, benefiting more than 18 000 grassroots children. The eighth batch of NGO-run projects will be rolled out in September 2020 which are expected to benefit more than 2 700 new participants.

Partnership Fund for the Disadvantaged (PFD)

56. Since the inception of the PFD in 2005, the Government has been promoting cross-sectoral collaboration and providing grants that match donations from business organisations to subsidise welfare projects helping the disadvantaged. A total of \$1.2 billion (comprising the \$800 million for the regular portion and the \$400 million for the dedicated portion for after-school learning and support programmes) has been injected into the PFD. The PFD has launched 12 rounds of application under the regular portion, approving matching grants of about \$470 million to implement 980 welfare projects and benefiting more than 1 million disadvantaged persons. The PFD has also launched five rounds of application under the dedicated portion, approving matching grants of about \$184 million to implement 243 projects and benefiting about 100 000 primary and secondary school students. A new round of application will be launched by end of 2019.

Extending the Short-term Food Assistance Service Projects (service projects)

57. The service projects have been implemented since 2009, aiming at

providing low-income persons who have temporary difficulties in meeting their basic food expenditure with short-term and basic food items for generally not more than eight weeks each time. The funding allocation for the service totals \$600 million. The Government has provided an additional funding of \$447 million in 2018-19 to extend the service until 2021. Through invitation for proposals, the SWD has selected service operators to implement eight projects in a new round for three years with effect from 1 August 2018. At the same time, as poverty alleviation measures introduced by the Government in recent years may overlap with the service projects in terms of objectives and service targets, the Government will conduct a comprehensive review on the positioning of and way forward for the service projects, and carefully consider the views of stakeholders in the process.

Review on Enhancement of Lump Sum Grant Subvention System

58. The Task Force for Review on Enhancement of Lump Sum Grant Subvention System (the Task Force) was set up in November 2017 to conduct a review on how to optimise the Lump Sum Grant Subvention System (LSGSS). The Task Force comprises a wide range of representatives, including members of the Legislative Council; representatives from the Hong Kong Council of Social Service, NGO management, staff side, service users, LSGSS-related committees, independent parties from the community, the LWB and the SWD. The Task Force agreed that the review should be comprehensive and thorough, and formally established the following eight areas as the scope of the review in June 2018:

- (a) Operating environment of NGOs under the LSGSS;
- (b) Review of staffing establishment and subvention benchmarks;
- (c) Use of Lump Sum Grant/Provident Fund reserve and financial planning;
- (d) Pay structures, staff turnover rate and vacancies;
- (e) Funding and Service Agreement (FSA)-related activities and flexibility provided for NGOs;
- (f) Mechanisms for reviewing FSAs and NGOs' service performance assessment;
- (g) Transparency and public accountability; and

(h) Communication and participation of stakeholders.

59. For the review on areas (a), (b), (c) and (d), the SWD hired a consultancy firm to assist the Task Force in data collection and research work by means of questionnaires, focus groups and in-depth interviews. The consultancy firm has generally completed the concerned data collection work, and is now analysing the information for consideration and discussion by the Task Force. For review areas (e), (f), (g) and (h), the Task Force has completed its review and came up with 33 recommendations. The Task Force will continue to listen to and consider in detail the views of the stakeholders during the upcoming sector consultation sessions and focus groups, with a view to making recommendations to enhance the LSGSS. The entire review is expected to be completed by mid-2020.

Welfare Premises Planning

60. The Government has all along been adopting a multi-pronged approach to identifying suitable sites or premises for the provision of more welfare services which are in acute demand.

61. The Government has launched a new phase of the Special Scheme on Privately Owned Sites for Welfare Uses (Phase Two of the Special Sites Scheme) in April 2019, under which targeted assistance is provided for participating NGOs during the planning or development process. Through applications for expansion, redevelopment or new development on the sites owned by the participating organisations, the scheme aims at providing diversified subvented and self-financing facilities, in particular additional places of elderly, rehabilitation and child care services. In parallel, we will continue to provide assistance to NGO applicants to take forward their project proposals submitted under the first phase of the Special Sites Scheme.

62. Besides, we have encouraged NGO applicants under the Special Sites Scheme to consider developing non-profit elderly apartments to be co-located with welfare facilities on the same application site, with a view to enhancing the development potential of the relevant sites, and providing suitable and affordable accommodation for elderly persons who are living in sub-standard housing, living in/applying for PRH or having special social needs.

63. To push in tandem with all other possible means to secure and identify premises, we need to take forward the initiative of purchasing premises in the private market, as a short-term measure to help meet the imminent need for premises for the early provision of welfare facilities. We

briefed the Legislative Council Panel on Welfare Services on 10 June 2019 the initiative of purchasing premises for the provision of welfare facilities, and prepared a list of around 160 welfare facilities spreading among 18 districts. The SWD proposes to optimise the budget allocation by aiming to, over some three years, purchase as many premises as possible for accommodating welfare facilities subject to the ceiling of \$20 billion allocation. After securing funding approval from the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council, the SWD will brief the 18 District Councils separately of the respective lists of welfare facilities proposed to be purchased in the districts concerned and listen to and consider carefully their views. The SWD and the Government Property Agency will start purchasing the premises as soon as possible.

64. On top of the above, in view of the acute demand for welfare facilities and the scarcity of land resources, the Government will continue to encourage private developers to provide in their development projects various welfare facilities, including day CCCs, residential CCCs, day care centres for the elderly and RCHEs.

Conclusion

65. The Government attaches great importance to social welfare services and has been investing substantial resources in this area. Recurrent expenditure on social welfare in the financial year of 2019-20 is estimated to be \$84.3 billion, accounting for 19.1% of the recurrent expenditure of the Government as a whole. The Government will continue to plan for and deliver suitable social welfare services through strengthening collaboration with different sectors of the community.

Labour and Welfare Bureau
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