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Panel on Welfare Services

**Updated background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat
for the meeting on 13 July 2020**

Pilot Scheme on Community Care Service Voucher for the Elderly

Purpose

This paper provides a brief account of the past discussions by the Panel on Welfare Services and relevant committees on the Pilot Scheme on Community Care Service Voucher for the Elderly ("the Pilot Scheme").

Background

2. The First Phase of the Pilot Scheme was implemented from September 2013 to August 2017, while the Second Phase of the Pilot Scheme has been implemented since October 2016. The Pilot Scheme, which operates on a co-payment basis, allows needy elderly persons to receive community care services ("CCS") under the "money following the user" funding approach. Government subsidy is provided directly for eligible elderly persons in the form of vouchers, so that they can choose the service packages which best suit their needs.

3. The Second Phase of the Pilot Scheme covers 18 districts across the territory and offers a maximum of 7 000 service vouchers. Elderly persons who are assessed as moderately or severely impaired by the Standardised Care Need Assessment Mechanism for Elderly Services, and are on the Central Waiting List for subsidized long term care ("LTC") services without receiving any kind of residential care services or subsidized CCS are eligible to join the Second Phase of the Pilot Scheme. As announced in the Chief Executive's 2019 Policy Address, the Administration plans to provide another 1 000 vouchers to bring the total number of service vouchers to 8 000 in the 2020-2021 financial year.

4. Currently, 179 Recognised Service Providers ("RSPs") have joined the Second Phase of the Pilot Scheme. Voucher holders may choose centre-based service and/or home-based service in accordance with their needs and, if necessary, may use residential respite service and/or speech therapy service.

5. Under the Second Phase of the Pilot Scheme, there are five different voucher values range from \$4,130 to \$9,870 to suit individual needs. Voucher values will be adjusted annually based on the Composite Consumer Price Index. The Social Welfare Department ("SWD") will determine the co-payment level, one of the six categories ranging from 5% to 40% of the voucher service package values, for elderly persons based on their household income.

Deliberations by members since 2012-2013 session

Co-payment and means test

6. Some members were worried that many elderly persons from low-income families could not afford the co-payment. They were of the view that it was not appropriate to adopt the "user pays" principle and introduce a means-test mechanism for subsidized CCS. Given the long waiting time for subsidized CCS or residential care services, some poor elderly persons had no choice but to opt for the Pilot Scheme although they could barely afford the co-payment. The Administration should draw up a holistic and long-term plan to address the inadequate provision of LTC services.

7. The Administration advised that the services provided under the Pilot Scheme would remain subsidized, with Government funding ranging from at least 60% to 95% of the voucher value for all service users. Under the First Phase of the Pilot Scheme, around 80% of the voucher users were paying the lowest two levels of co-payment. Voucher users who required extra services could top up the payment. In addition, in line with the existing practice, means test would be applied to assess the household income of the service users. This would help ascertain the elderly persons' real need for assistance and allocate public resources in a more prudent manner. The asset value of the elderly persons and their household was not subject to means test.

8. Expressing concern that the Pilot Scheme would thin out the resources for the existing subsidized CCS, some members considered that

the conventional subvention approach rather than the voucher approach should be adopted for CCS. The Administration assured members that the introduction of the Pilot Scheme would not affect existing subsidized CCS provision. The Administration would continue its efforts in providing more subsidized CCS and residential care places funded by the conventional financing mode.

Provision of voucher services

9. Some members were concerned about whether the Administration would consider setting up service centres for providing community or day care services for persons suffering from dementia under the Pilot Scheme. The Administration advised that eight RSPs had provided services for elderly persons suffering from dementia in the First Phase of the Pilot Scheme. RSPs would be encouraged to provide such services in the Second Phase with a view that such services could be extended to cover more districts in the Second Phase.

Inclusion of private organizations in the Pilot Scheme on Community Care Service Voucher for the Elderly

10. Some members expressed concern about inviting private organizations to provide services under the Pilot Scheme. These members considered that given that private organizations aimed at making profit and their business needs might override public interests, voucher services should not be provided by private organizations. They also expressed concern about the quality of services provided by private organizations. Some other members expressed support for the inclusion of private organizations under the Pilot Scheme, with a view to providing more choices and enhancing accessibility of services for elderly persons.

11. The Administration advised that private organizations had been invited to provide services under the Second Phase of the Pilot Scheme so as to enhance service quality and diversity. Apart from having 12-month proven experience in providing CCS for the elderly, private organizations were required to satisfy other stringent requirements in order to become RSPs. Private organizations should also have experience in providing home care services for the elderly and be able to provide two out of the three core CCS, namely, rehabilitation services provided by physiotherapist/occupational therapist, special/basic nursing care provided by registered/enrolled nurse and personal care services provided by health worker/personal care worker. SWD would only consider applications by private organizations with proven quality and good track records. Same

as the First Phase, a monitoring mechanism would be put in place to monitor the service quality of individual RSPs.

Monitoring of service quality of recognized service providers

12. Members expressed concern about the possible decline in service quality with the joining in of more novice service providers and the increasingly acute shortage of manpower in the elderly care sector. They called on the Administration to put in place a quality monitoring mechanism under the Pilot Scheme to monitor the performance of service providers.

13. The Administration advised that SWD would monitor the service quality of individual RSPs through conducting unannounced visits and random checks, interviewing voucher holders, auditing the relevant records and files of RSPs, and conducting complaint investigations. SWD would also check the receipts issued by RSPs to users in respect of the service items, the expenditure and the proposed price lists of RSPs. Moreover, all RSPs were required to sign an agreement on the provision of service under the Pilot Scheme and to comply with the terms and conditions set out in the Service Specifications issued by SWD. SWD might give instructions or directions in writing to RSPs in respect of the implementation of the Pilot Scheme, and RSPs had to undertake to comply fully with all such instructions and directions.

Latest development

14. According to the Administration, SWD has commissioned consultants to conduct evaluation of effectiveness on the second phase of the Pilot Scheme. In the process of evaluation, the consultants have collected the views of stakeholders through interviews, focus group discussions, telephone surveys, questionnaires, etc. SWD and the consultants are conducting comprehensive analysis on the data and views collected in the studies. Upon the completion of the evaluation reports, SWD will study the content of the reports and consider the way forward for the Pilot Scheme.

Relevant papers

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

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
7 July 2020

Appendix

Relevant papers on Pilot Scheme on Community Care Service Voucher for the Elderly

Committee	Date of meeting	Paper
Joint Subcommittee on Long-term Care Policy	26 March 2013 (Item I)	Agenda Minutes
	24 June 2013 (Item I)	Agenda Minutes
Panel on Welfare Services	13 January 2014 (Item V)	Agenda Minutes
	10 November 2014 (Item IV)	Agenda Minutes
	8 June 2015 (Item IV)	Agenda Minutes
	11 January 2016 (Item III)	Agenda Minutes LC Paper No. CB(2)781/15-16(01)
	6 February 2016 (Item I)	Agenda Minutes LC Paper No. CB(2)2060/15-16(01)
Legislative Council	8 January 2020	Question raised by Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung on "Pilot schemes on elderly care service vouchers"