

**For information on
23 September 2020**

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
PANEL ON WELFARE SERVICES**

**Support for Carers and Provision of Residential Care Services
for Persons with Disabilities**

Purpose

This paper provides information on the Government's support services provided for special school leavers and their parents, and the community support and residential care services provided for persons with disabilities and their carers.

Support for Special School Leavers and Their Parents

2. Currently, subject to the assessment and recommendations of specialists and the consent of parents, the Education Bureau (EDB) refers students with more severe or multiple disabilities to aided special schools for intensive support services. In the 2020/21 school year, there are 61 aided special schools in Hong Kong¹, 22 of which² also offer boarding service. Students of special schools are generally admitted at the age of 6, and graduate from school upon completion of Secondary 6³.

3. EDB has been providing resources and support for special schools to guide and help their students unleash their potential during the developmental stage. Schools devise individualised education programmes for students in accordance with their interests, capabilities and needs, and prepare their life planning from the perspective of whole person development, so that they could transit to adult life and integrate into the community smoothly. Specifically, special schools have included the elements of job training and adjustment to future life in the school-based curriculum to allow students experience the authentic work conditions through

¹ These 61 aided special schools include 42 schools for children with intellectual disability, 2 schools for children with visual impairment, 1 school for children with hearing impairment, 7 schools for children with physical disability, 8 schools for social development and 1 hospital school.

² These 22 schools include 15 schools for children with intellectual disability, 2 schools for children with visual impairment, 1 school for children with hearing impairment and 4 schools for children with physical disability. Besides, 7 schools for social development also provide residential home services subvented by the Social Welfare Department.

³ Special schools offer a 12-year primary and secondary education for their students with intellectual disability, including 6 years of primary, 3 years of junior secondary and 3 years of senior secondary education. Students with normal intelligence pursuing ordinary curriculum in the school for children with hearing impairment and schools for children with physical disability complete primary and secondary education in 13 years.

various pre-set contexts. Special schools also contact relevant adult services centres and arrange visits and practicum for students to facilitate their adjustment to the workplace and social life. When students approach the senior secondary level, schools will arrange for their multidisciplinary teams to discuss with the parents the pathways of their children and assist them in applying for appropriate post-school services. Subject to the requirements of different services and parents' choice, special schools will refer students to wait for related services at the age of 15 the earliest. Besides, special schools will organise seminars and invite parents of alumni to share with prospective school leavers and their parents, so as to alleviate parents' pressure and worries about their children's pathways.

4. Special schools generally follow up with the school leavers for two years after they have left schools. The actions include arranging school social workers to keep track of the school leavers' adjustment to daily lives, and referring the school leavers, while they are awaiting the services, to District Support Centres for Persons with Disabilities (DSCs) or Integrated Family Service Centres subvented by the Social Welfare Department (SWD), where assistance will be provided for the school leavers and their families.

5. From the 2017/18 school year onwards, EDB, SWD, Vocational Training Council (VTC) and Hong Kong Special Schools Council meet annually to discuss matters relating to post-school placement for special school leavers. Latest developments of various post-school services and relevant information would be shared so as to strengthen the support and assistance to special schools in applying for appropriate post-school services for the students. For planning the various types of services suitable for special school leavers, EDB also provides the annual projected number of special school leavers for VTC and SWD's reference.

Support for Persons with Disabilities and Their Carers

6. SWD subvents non-governmental organisations (NGOs) for providing community care and support services to persons with disabilities and their carers, with a view to facilitating persons with disabilities to develop the capabilities of adapting to living in and integrating into the community, as well as supporting carers.

District Support Centres for Persons with Disabilities

7. DSCs offer training, care, social, psychological and personal development activities for persons with disabilities taking account of their needs; and provide support and training for their family members and carers (including care skills training, mutual support groups, relevant educational courses/seminars/workshops, leisure and family recreational activities) for enhancing their caring capabilities and lessening their pressure. Day care services (including nursing care, rehabilitation services, social development and personal care services) are provided for persons with severe disabilities aged between 15 and 59, in a bid to better support their family members and carers. As at end June 2020, there were a total of about 5 000 DSC members.

8. SWD has in 2019-20 increased DSCs' manpower of social workers and therapists for enhancing service planning and coordination, case management and rehabilitation training services. From 2020-21, resources have been reserved for progressively increasing the number of DSCs from the present 16 to 21.

Home Care Service for Persons with Severe Disabilities and Integrated Support Service for Persons with Severe Physical Disabilities

9. Home Care Service for Persons with Severe Disabilities (HCS) and Integrated Support Service for Persons with Severe Physical Disabilities (ISS) provide a range of integrated home-based services (including personal care, nursing care and rehabilitation training) for persons with disabilities in need as well as carer support (including counselling service, care skills training, home respite service and service referral). ISS also provides special subsidies for eligible persons with severe physical disabilities needing constant care to purchase medical equipment and medical consumables. As at end June 2020, there were a total of about 3 500 and 960 cases receiving HCS and ISS services respectively.

10. With the introduction of the Pilot Scheme on Professional Outreaching Teams for Private Residential Care Homes for Persons with Disabilities and the Pilot Scheme on Multi-disciplinary Outreaching Support Teams for the Elderly in 2019, the support services for residents of private residential care homes for persons with disabilities (RCHDs) as previously provided under HCS and ISS will be gradually covered by the two pilot schemes. Therefore from 2019-20, the resources of HCS and ISS will be redeployed to provide services for an expected additional 1 500 persons with disabilities living in the community. From March 2020, SWD has also increased resources for adding 300 HCS places, with the service gradually extending to persons with disabilities having moderate nursing care need or moderate functional impairment. Speech therapy service will be added and transport support increased for each HCS and ISS team.

Parents/Relatives Resource Centres

11. Parents/Relatives Resource Centres (PRCs) facilitate parents, family members and carers in need to share experience, and to attain mutual support, acquaintance and acceptance of family members with disabilities under PRCs' assistance for strengthening their caring capabilities. In 2018-19 to 2019-20, SWD has increased the number of PRCs from 6 to 19. As at end June 2020, there were a monthly average of about 7 800 family-members in 19 PRCs.

Support Centres for Persons with Autism

12. Support Centres for Persons with Autism (SPAs) seek to, through multi-disciplinary teams (comprising clinical psychologists, social workers, occupational therapists, speech therapists, etc.), enhance the living, social and job skills of young persons with high-functioning autism for helping them cope with the needs in the transition to adulthood. SPAs also provide support for parents and carers (including casework, group and programme support, and assistance in building

mutual support network) as well as advisory services and professional training for other subvented rehabilitation service units and frontline staff serving persons with autism. In 2019-20, SWD has increased the number of SPAs from 3 to 5 and increased their manpower.

Social and Recreational Centres for the Disabled

13. Social and Recreational Centres for the Disabled (S&RCs) provide social, recreational and developmental activities for persons with disabilities. In 2020-21, SWD will increase resources for strengthening S&RCs' community support function, particularly the support for family members and carers (including enhancing emotional support and counselling service to persons with disabilities and their family members and carers; getting in touch with the less motivated persons with disabilities and their family members and carers through outreaching services, hence providing immediate assistance in bridging the needy to suitable community services; and strengthening the support network of persons with disabilities and their family members and carers through volunteer service). As at end June 2020, there were a total of around 20 000 members in the 17 S&RCs.

Respite Services

14. Day respite and short-term residential respite services for persons with disabilities can help relieve their family members and carers from the caring duties, allowing them to attend to personal affairs and lessen the stress. As at end August 2020, there were a total of 160 day respite service places and 332 residential respite service places. From 2020-21, SWD will purchase over 40 places as designated residential respite service from RCHDs participating in the Bought Place Scheme (BPS) for Private RCHDs to provide more service places and options for carers in need.

Pilot Schemes on Allowances

15. SWD has launched, through the Community Care Fund (CCF), the Pilot Scheme on Living Allowance for Low-income Carers of Persons with Disabilities which provides a living allowance to carers concerned for facilitating persons with disabilities in need of long-term care to, under carers' help, receive suitable care and continue to live in the community. Each eligible carer may receive a monthly allowance of \$2,400. A carer taking care of more than one person with disabilities at the same time may receive a maximum monthly allowance of \$4,800.

16. SWD has also launched, through CCF, the Pilot Scheme on Providing Subsidy for Higher Disability Allowance Recipients in Paid Employment to Hire Carers which provides a monthly subsidy of \$5,000 for eligible persons with disabilities to hire carers to assist them in travelling between their homes and workplaces, with a view to encouraging them to stay in employment.

Residential Care Services

17. SWD provides residential care services and necessary training and support for persons with disabilities who cannot live independently and not adequately cared for by their families. In this respect, SWD has been actively identifying suitable service premises through multiple means. Specifically, SWD maintains close contact with relevant government departments for reserving sites for rehabilitation service facilities in new development or re-development projects. SWD also seeks to provide these service facilities in vacant government premises and vacant school premises, and identifies vacant public housing units for conversion into these service facilities where practicable. As at end August 2020, there were a total of 13 549 subvented residential care service places for persons with disabilities aged 15 or above. SWD has plans to provide about 2 200 additional service places from 2020-21 to 2024-25.

18. SWD also increases subsidised residential care service places through BPS. As at end August 2020, the number of relevant service places had been increased from 600 in 2016-17 to 940. Taking account of private RCHDs' service conditions, SWD has plans to continue to purchase 300 service places through BPS from 2020-21.

19. In addition, under the Special Scheme on Privately Owned Sites for Welfare Use, SWD encourages NGOs to better utilise their own sites for providing or increasing welfare services through expansion, redevelopment or new development, including increasing residential care service places for persons with disabilities.

Policy Study on Carer Support

20. With many areas of policy work concerning carers, the Labour and Welfare Bureau has commenced a policy study on strengthening carer support to explore carers' needs in a more comprehensive manner for developing an overall carer policy.

Advice Sought

21. Members are invited to note this paper.

**Labour and Welfare Bureau
Education Bureau
Social Welfare Department
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