

LEGCO PANEL ON WELFARE SERVICES

Meeting on 12 July 1999

Agenda Item III: Hong Kong Red Cross Report on the Operation of the Portable Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (PCSSA) Scheme

Background

The PCSSA Scheme, which came into operation on 1 April 1997, allows elderly CSSA recipients to continue to receive benefits¹ after they retire to Guangdong². Since implementation of the Scheme, 1 600 applications were received and 1 400 applications were approved as at mid-June 1999.

Hong Kong Red Cross (HKRC)

2. The HKRC was appointed as the agent of the Social Welfare Department to implement the Scheme for two years in April 1997. Its main duty is to carry out checks on PCSSA cases by means of postal reviews and home visits. Each year, five percent of PCSSA cases would be randomly selected for visits by the HKRC to ensure the PCSSA recipients have properly received their benefits. The HKRC also handles enquiries from recipients and arranges escort service for those having a genuine need to return to Hong Kong but are unable to make their own arrangements.

3. The HKRC prepared a report in 1998 on the implementation of the

¹ Benefits payable under the Scheme include standard rate payment and an annual supplement.

² For other CSSA recipients not covered by the PCSSA Scheme, their CSSA payment will be terminated if they are away from Hong Kong more than 180 days in a year.

PCSSA Scheme in the first year. In the report, HKRC made some recommendations based on its observations and a study on the PCSSA participants who have already returned to Guangdong conducted by Dr. Joe Leung of the University of Hong Kong.

Study Result and Recommendations

4. Over 75% of the respondents to the survey indicated that the availability of family support and care in the mainland was the major reason for them to move to live in Guangdong. Almost 95% of the respondents said that the scheme met their needs. Almost all respondents claimed that they generally enjoyed better social care and relationship, better housing facilities and living environment in Guangdong compared with Hong Kong.

5. HKRC considered the current arrangement of making only cash payment to PCSSA recipients in Guangdong unsatisfactory and called for a “supported choice” for PCSSA recipients. It advocated the provision of more support services both before and after the PCSSA recipients returned to Guangdong, such as pre-departure interview, assistance in remittance of benefits to Guangdong, medical assessment both in Hong Kong and in Guangdong, subsidised escort service to and from Guangdong, regular follow-up visits after the PCSSA recipients have settled in Guangdong, affordable medical care in Guangdong and reimbursement of burial expenses.

Way Forward

6. The review of the PCSSA Scheme is near completion and we plan to seek the advice of Social Welfare Advisory Committee (SWAC) shortly. We will take into account the recommendations contained in HKRC’s

report and the views of members of the Legislative Council Panel on Welfare Services. We will present the result of our review and our recommendations to members after completion of the review.

Health and Welfare Bureau

July 1999