

**Sub-Committee to Study Issues Relating to
the Provision of Boarding Places,
Senior Secondary Education and Employment Opportunities for
Children with Special Educational Needs**

**Enhancement of Training for Special Child Care Workers
Working in Rehabilitation Service Units
for Pre-school Children with Disabilities**

Purpose

This paper aims to inform Members of the new measures to enhance the training for special child care workers (SCCWs) working in rehabilitation service units for pre-school children with disabilities.

Background Information

2. The Pre-primary Education Voucher Scheme (PEVS) was introduced by the Education Bureau in the 2007/08 school year. It seeks to provide direct fee subsidy for parents/legal guardians/registered custodians to meet towards the tuition fees of their children aged 2 years and 8 months or above who are attending nursery, lower or upper classes in eligible non-profit-making kindergartens (KG) or Kindergarten-cum-Child Care Centres (KG-cum-CCC), and in the relevant classes of eligible private independent KG as provided for under the transitional arrangements between the 2007/08 and the 2009/10 school years. Financial support is also provided to serving principals and teachers of all KG for professional upgrading between the 2007/08 and 2011/12 school years. With the implementation of PEVS, there have been concerns about its impact on rehabilitation service units for pre-school children with disabilities, namely, special child care centres (SCCC), integrated programmes in KG-cum-CCC (IP), and early education and training centres (EETC). In particular, questions were raised about the training opportunities for staff of these service units as they are not covered by the teacher development subsidy under PEVS.

3. As IP is offered in KG-cum-CCC, all kindergarten children attending IP in KG-cum-CCC eligible for PEVS may receive direct fee subsidy. While EETC is not a formal school setting, its service users may attend kindergarten education in ordinary KG/CCC eligible for PEVS. Under the current fee-charging arrangement, SCCC is charging at a substantially lower fee of \$354 per month, which is only about 14% of the fee charged by the majority of CCC. While the above fee charging arrangement should not be of concern, the training opportunities for SCCWs working in EETCs, SCCCs and IP would need to be addressed.

Existing Training Opportunities for SCCW

4. The Social Welfare Department (SWD) has been offering in-service training on knowledge and technical skills in working with children with disabilities to SCCWs since 1985 through sponsoring tertiary institutes to run the SCCW Course (the Course). SCCWs working in pre-school rehabilitation service units are expected to attend the Course to enhance their knowledge and skills in working with children with disabilities. It is a one-year part-time certificate course with around 210 training hours in total. Currently, the Course, with a class size of 45, is organized once a year. As the majority of the SCCWs have already attended this Course, SWD will keep in view the demand and continue to provide the Course to the SCCWs as appropriate.

Planned Training Opportunities for SCCW

5. SWD appreciates the concern of the sector on the need to enhance the knowledge and skills of SCCWs and relevant Child Care Supervisors (CCSs) in order to improve the quality of the service for the pre-school children with disabilities. To this end, SWD has sought new recurrent funding resources, amounting to \$5.8 million each year, to provide more training opportunities for the SCCWs and CCSs from 2008-09 onwards.

6. SWD plans to allocate the new funding resources for:

- (a) providing training subsidy for individual SCCW/CCS to attend recognised courses focusing on enhancement of their

knowledge/skills/techniques to enable them to perform independently and effectively as workers, supervisors and managers in pre-school education. The recognised courses include diploma/certificate courses and bachelor programme in early childhood education; and

- (b) strengthening training programmes co-ordinated by SWD to meet the specific training needs of SCCWs/CCSs having regard to changing service demand, such as programmes in identifying and training children with specific learning difficulties or attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, etc.

7. Training subsidy for the recognised courses will be allocated to individual NGOs in accordance with the number of SCCWs/CCSs posts of their SCCC/IP/EETC. SWD will conduct a stocktaking exercise to better understand the demand for the recognised courses and to collect views and suggestions on the proposed topics and approaches for the training programmes.

8. Subject to approval of the 2008-09 Budget, the above planned training opportunities will be implemented in 2008-09.

Advice Sought

- 9. Members are invited to note the contents of this paper.

Social Welfare Department
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