

THE HONG KONG COUNCIL OF SOCIAL SERVICE

香港社會服務聯會

贊助人： 行政長官董建華先生
PATRON: The Chief Executive
The Honourable TUNG Chee Hwa

行政總裁： 方敏生
CHIEF EXECUTIVE: Christine M.S. FANG



香港灣仔軒尼詩道十五號溫莎公爵社會服務大廈
十一至十三樓
11-13/F Duke of Windsor Social Service Building
15 Hennessy Road, Hong Kong
Postal Address : G.P.O. Box 474 H.K.
Fax : (852) 2865 4916 Tel : (852) 2864 2929
E-mail: council@hkcss.org.hk

Views on the Conversion of Elderly Hostels and Homes for the Aged

1. Council's Position

1.1 To reduce pressure on the high-rising demand of residential care for the elderly, ***we support the overall direction in converting all the Elderly Hostels and Homes for the Aged into higher level of care.***

1.2 Regarding contents of the conversion exercise, we are glad that most of our concerns that might affect the service quality have been shared and addressed together with the Administration.

1.3 As the present waiting list for Residential care for the elderly is still as high as 21,323 (Jan, 2005), ***we hope the direction of this conversion exercise can be confirmed as soon as possible to meet the demand.*** Other details like staff training programs, provision of self-financing services, etc. can be worked out later as the exercise is expected to take years to complete. NGOs are ready to work hand in hand with the Administration to ensure a smooth conversion process.

2. Background

2.1 In our submission to the LegCo Welfare Panel on April 10, 2003, we have supported the policy direction to gradually phase out the Elderly Hostels and Homes for the Aged (HFA) given the provision of elderly housing to address the housing needs of the elderly and community support services to provide care to those with mild impairment.

2.2 We also recommended converting these Hostels and HFAs into higher level of care, like Care-and-attention Homes (C&A Homes), in order to address the continuously high demand on Long-term-care (LTC).

3. Discussion with the Administration on the conversion plan

Since May, 2004, representatives of the Council and NGOs were invited by Social Welfare Department to join a Task Group to deliberate on the conversion plan. In the meetings, we have raised the following concerns which were later addressed together with the Department :

3.1 Conversion mode

3.1.1 Initially, Department requested the converted homes to provide both C&A and Nursing Home (NH) services, as well as implementing continuum of care. NGOs have expressed worries in rendering NH service given the proposed unit subvention and the skills set of the existing staffs. After deliberations, several options were agreed to address the above concerns. We are glad to note that the Department finally took our views and recently improve the conversion mode by requesting all the converted homes to provide C&A service with continuum of care only. This greatly lessened the anxiety of the staff and reduced the financial pressure of the agencies.

3.2 Resources calculation

3.2.1 Being a conversion of service instead of setting up a new service, agencies have to honour the contracts of existing staffs. After negotiations, the Department later took our views to follow the principles of Lump Sum Grant in the calculation of resources to avoid creating instability to existing staffs.

3.2.2 In the process, there was disagreement over the unit subvention of NH as the level proposed by the Department was around 10% lower than the existing NH subvention. Although the Department later improved the conversion mode by not requesting converted homes to provide NH service, the newly proposed NH unit subvention was still used in the calculation of resources to implement continuum of care. We have reiterated that we would only accept this new level as a reference in this exercise and it should not be used as a benchmark for future NH service development. Our stance was taken by the Administration in one of their briefing sessions to the sector.

3.2.3 The Department has made this a cost-neutral exercise, i.e. maintaining the same level of subvention to individual homes. However, agencies are facing fee income deficit as a result of the capacity reduction and have to rely on self-financing services to cover the deficit. On this, NGOs are ready to take up the challenge and hope the Department can consider offering

some assistance to the agencies in this aspect. We welcome more exchange with the Department in this area.

3.3 Assisting front-line staff to meet with service conversion

3.3.1 To facilitate a smooth service conversion, front-line staffs have to be supported by upgrading their skills to cope with the new demands. Apart from in-service training offered by individual agencies, we have conducted a survey to collect training needs of the sector as a whole. In addressing our concerns, the Department agreed to provide sector-wide training programs and details would be worked out later.

END

March 10, 2005