

**Legislative Council Panel on Welfare Services
Progress Report on the Voluntary Registration Scheme and
Licensing Scheme for
Residential Care Homes for the Disabled**

Purpose

1. This paper aims at updating Members on the progress of the Voluntary Registration Scheme (VRS) and licensing scheme for residential care homes for the disabled (RCHDs).

Background

2. At the Legislative Council Panel on Welfare Services meeting on 21 March 2006, the Administration agreed to introduce a licensing scheme for all RCHDs to regulate their service quality. As it takes time to prepare for the licensing legislation, the Administration suggested introducing VRS as an interim measure to enhance their service quality.

3. Under VRS, information of private RCHDs meeting the requirements in general management, fire safety, building safety and health care will be uploaded onto the homepage of the Social Welfare Department (SWD) for public viewing. In addition, the dates of SWD's latest inspections of these RCHDs will also be uploaded onto the homepage. The Registration Office of Private Residential Care Homes for the Disabled (the Registration Office), a multi-disciplinary office comprising social workers, nurses, fire officer and building surveyor, was set up in September 2006 to implement VRS and to prepare for the ground work of the licensing scheme.

Progress of VRS

4. As in June 2007, there are 37 private RCHDs known to SWD providing around 2 175 residential places with the utilisation rate of 69%. Since the launch of VRS in September 2006, 23 private RCHDs have submitted applications to join the scheme. Inspection visits by the Registration Office revealed that improvement works relating to fire and/or building safety are required by all applicants. As in June 2007, out of the 23 private RCHDs which have submitted applications, 5 (414 places) have successfully joined VRS after carrying out improvement works; 10 (620 places) are carrying out improvement works in accordance with the advice of the Registration Office; and 8 have withdrawn their applications due to difficulties in complying with the requirements. The remaining 14 private RCHDs among the 37 private RCHDs in Hong Kong did not apply to join the scheme for reasons such as not being able to meet the requirements or expiry of land lease.

Other Service-Enhancing Measures

5. In parallel with the implementation of VRS, SWD has also taken measures to support all private RCHDs to enhance their service quality. SWD commissioned the nursing school of the Hospital Authority to organise two training workshops for all private RCHDs' staff on health care, use of physical restraints and effective drugs management in January 2007. In addition, two briefing sessions on drugs management were organised by SWD and the Department of Health for the staff of private RCHDs in February and March 2007 respectively. More training courses on different areas will be provided for staff of private RCHDs in the coming months.

6. SWD also invited frontline staff of private RCHDs to join the training courses organised by SWD for staff of subvented non-governmental organisations (NGOs) with a view to better equipping them with the essential knowledge and skills in serving people with disabilities (PWDs). A total of 22 staff members from private RCHDs have enrolled in these courses so far.

7. SWD has also extended the community rehabilitation and support services, such as Home-based Training and Support Service and Community Rehabilitation Day Services, to those PWDs residing in private RCHDs with a view to enhancing their self-care and social functioning as well as the home staff's caring capability.

8. The Registration Office will continue to pay regular visits, including unscheduled ones, to those private RCHDs which have joined VRS so as to continuously monitor their compliance with the requirements of VRS. Visits by the Registration Office and the District Social Welfare Offices concerned to those private RCHDs which have not yet joined VRS will also be arranged periodically to keep in view their operation and provide support to them.

Progress of the Licensing Scheme

9. As the future licensing scheme will cover all 259 RCHDs in Hong Kong, including 37 private RCHDs, 206 subvented RCHDs and 16 self-financing RCHDs operated by NGOs, the Registration Office is conducting a detailed survey on the conditions of these RCHDs with a view to collecting information for drawing up the licensing standards and assessing the need for improvement/reprovisioning works.

10. As in June 2007, 107 (41%) RCHDs including 37 private RCHDs, 55 subvented RCHDs and 15 self-financing RCHDs were inspected.

11. In 2002, SWD issued a "Code of Practice for Residential Care Homes for Persons with Disabilities" (the Code), which serves as a guide on the minimum standard of service for operators. The Code will serve as a blueprint for the future licensing scheme. SWD has organised three consultation sessions for the parents' groups, subvented NGOs and private RCHDs operators since April 2007 to collect their views on the Code and the future licensing standards. Diverse views have been expressed regarding the requirements in some management issues such as manpower requirement and minimum area of

floor space for each resident. A working group with representatives from all the stakeholders will be formed to examine the views gathered and further consult the stakeholders so as to make appropriate modification to the Code.

12. Inspection of the services currently provided by 259 RCHDs and revision of the Code are expected to complete by end of 2007. The Administration will proceed with the legislative work of the licensing system after consulting the Panel on Welfare Services of the Legislative Council on the licensing standards and legislative proposal.

Advice Sought

13. Members are invited to note the content of this paper.

Health, Welfare and Food Bureau/Social Welfare Department
June 2007