

**For discussion
on 22 October 2009**

LC Paper No. CB(2)6/09-10(01)

**Legislative Council Panel on Welfare Services
Policy Initiatives of the Labour and Welfare Bureau for 2009-10**

Purpose

The Chief Executive announced his 2009-10 Policy Address on 14 October 2009. This paper elaborates on the key welfare initiatives in the 2009-10 Policy Address and Policy Agenda.

New Initiatives

Strengthening elderly care services

Enhance the pace of increasing the provision of additional subsidised residential care places through a novel multi-pronged approach

2. The Government is providing about 26 000 subsidised places in residential care homes for the elderly (RCHEs), serving about 45% of all elders staying in RCHEs throughout the territory. In view of the growing demand for subsidised residential care places, we will accelerate the provision of additional subsidised residential care places which provide nursing and continuum of care through a novel multi-pronged approach, including increasing the ratio of nursing home places (from 50% on average to 90%) in existing contract RCHEs, purchasing vacant places from self-financing RCHEs, maximising the space in existing subsidised RCHEs to provide more long-term care (LTC) places with continuum of care under the conversion programme; and in parallel, continue to increase the provision of subsidised places through the development of new contract RCHEs. Five new contract homes will open in the next three years.

Launch a pilot scheme to provide RCHEs with visiting pharmacist

services

3. Apart from enforcing licensing regulations, the Government has been promoting the quality of RCHEs through various means, such as provision of staff training and promulgation of guidelines in care-related areas. To further strengthen the capability of RCHEs in drug management and enhance their quality of care, we will launch a pilot scheme to provide RCHEs with visiting pharmacist services.

Provide additional subsidised day care places for frail elders

4. To further support frail elders who cannot be adequately taken care of by their family members in daytime, we will provide an additional 80 subsidised day care places for the elderly in 2010 in Tsuen Wan, Tai Po, Sham Shui Po and Southern District. In addition, we will continue to provide in the coming two years additional day care places in districts with a strong service demand.

Extend the District-based Scheme on Carer Training

5. To further enhance support to elders and their carers at the district level, we launched the “District-based Scheme on Carer Training” in October 2007 and invited the District Elderly Community Centres to organise elderly care training programmes and care support services in collaboration with local organisations.

6. In view of the positive response to the scheme, we will extend the Scheme to cover all Neighbourhood Elderly Centres (NECs) in the territory. Each participating NEC will be provided with seed money of \$50,000 to run carer training courses and engage those who have completed training to provide carer services at the local neighbourhood level.

Examine how to strengthen home care services for the elderly through a more flexible and diverse mode of service delivery

7. In line with our policy of supporting “ageing in the community as the core, institutional care as back-up”, we will work with

the Elderly Commission (EC) to examine how to strengthen home care services for the elderly through a more flexible and diverse mode of service delivery, and through which social enterprises and the private market are encouraged to develop related services, with a view to providing better support to elders who age at home.

Take forward the work of the committee set up for the Elder Academy Development Foundation

8. The Government has been promoting active ageing, encouraging elders to maintain close contact with the community and lead an enriched life. To this end, we and the EC jointly launched the Elder Academy Scheme in early 2007. In the 2009-10 school year, a total of 98 elder academies are operating in primary and secondary schools. Together with the tertiary institutions offering opportunities for elders to pursue learning, more than 100 elder academies have been established under the Scheme.

9. To ensure the sustainable development of the Elder Academy Scheme, the Government has allocated \$10 million to establish an Elder Academy Development Foundation. A committee is being set up under the EC to administer the Foundation. Apart from handling applications for funding, the committee will devise strategies and measures relating to the academies' curriculum design and development, learning structure, extra-curricular activities and the establishment of new elder academies, etc. for the sustainable development of the Scheme.

Enhancing rehabilitation services for persons with disabilities (PWDs)

Provide additional places for rehabilitation services for PWDs

10. To meet the diverse needs of PWDs in different stages of their lives, we will continue to enhance rehabilitation services to strengthen the capabilities of PWDs and facilitate their full integration into society. We will provide additional places for pre-school training, day training, vocational rehabilitation and residential care services, in accordance with the directions set out in the 2007 Hong Kong Rehabilitation Programme Plan.

Strengthen support for ageing service users in subvented residential care homes for persons with intellectual disability

11. In view of the ageing trend of the service users in subvented residential care homes for persons with intellectual disability, the Government will strengthen physiotherapy service and health care support for ageing users of these residential care homes in order to help them maintain physical health and basic self-care abilities. This is in line with our service development direction of providing continuum of care for users of residential care services.

Introduce a bill to implement a licensing scheme to regulate the operation of residential care homes for PWDs

12. The Government aims to introduce the Residential Care Homes (Persons with Disabilities) Bill into the Legislative Council to implement a licensing scheme to regulate the operation of residential care homes for PWDs (RCHDs) so as to ensure their service quality. In tandem with the licensing scheme, we will consider suitable complementary measures to help operators meet the licensing requirements.

Introduce a Bought Place Scheme to develop more service options for PWDs

13. We will also introduce a pilot Bought Place Scheme to encourage the operators of private RCHDs to upgrade the service standard of these homes, help the market develop more service options for PWDs, and increase the supply of subsidised residential care places.

Expanding social rehabilitation and medical social services for persons with mental health problems

14. The Government is mindful of the needs of persons with mental health problems (MHPs) and their family members/carers, and keeps under regular review the operation and provision of community support services in response to changing demand. The first Integrated

Community Centre for Mental Wellness (ICCMW) in Tin Shui Wai started operation in March 2009 to provide one-stop, accessible and integrated community mental health support services to discharged mental patients, persons with suspected mental health problems, their families/carers and residents living in the district. These integrated services range from early intervention to prevention of relapse through public education, day training, counselling, outreaching visits and, where required, direct liaison with the Hospital Authority (HA) for urgent medical consultation to meet the varying needs of service users. We will expand this integrated service model across the territory by revamping the existing community mental health support services subvented by the Social Welfare Department (SWD) through setting up ICCMW in all 18 districts. We will also strengthen the manpower of these centres to provide comprehensive and accessible services to persons in need, and to dovetail with HA's "Case Management Programme" to provide timely support for patients with severe mental illness living in the community.

15. To complement HA's new initiative in providing support for newly discharged psychiatric patients, SWD will enhance its psychiatric medical social services to provide timely and appropriate welfare services to patients and their family members/carers, thereby facilitating their rehabilitation and reintegration into society.

Tackling domestic violence

Launch a Victim Support Programme for victims of domestic violence

16. The Government is committed to combating domestic violence. In the coming year, SWD will launch a Victim Support Programme to enhance support services to victims of domestic violence, particularly those undergoing the judicial process. Through the Programme, the victims will be provided with information on the relevant legal proceedings and community resources (such as legal aid service, accommodation, treatment and childcare support, etc) that are available to them. They will also be provided with emotional support and company in going through the judicial process, as appropriate, to alleviate their fear and helplessness. Through close collaboration with case workers, the victims will be empowered and supported to resume normal life and

functioning.

Progress of Ongoing Initiatives

Poverty alleviation

Co-ordinating efforts through the Task Force on Poverty

17. The Task Force on Poverty (TFP), led by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, has duly followed up the recommendations of the former Commission on Poverty, most of which have already been implemented. The TFP will continue to co-ordinate and closely monitor the Government's efforts in assisting the disadvantaged and people in need.

Providing short-term food assistance to individuals and families in need

18. We have allocated a sum of \$100 million to provide short-term food assistance for those individuals and families who have difficulties in coping with daily food expenditures. A total of five district-based short term food assistance service projects were launched in February 2009 by five non-governmental organisations (NGOs) operators commissioned by SWD. We expect the projects to benefit at least 50 000 people. By the end of September 2009, they had already served about 20 000 people, most of them low-income individuals (36.2%) or unemployed (28.7%). We will closely monitor the projects.

Implementing the Child Development Fund pioneer projects

19. The first batch of seven Child Development Fund (CDF) pioneer projects, run by six NGOs and benefiting 750 children aged 10-16, was rolled out in December 2008 throughout the territory¹. Taking into account the initial experience and outcome of the project, we will shortly roll out the second batch of CDF projects. We expect the CDF to ultimately benefit 13 600 children.

¹ There is one project in each of the following seven regions/districts – (i) Hong Kong Island, (ii) Kowloon East, (iii) Kowloon West, (iv) New Territories East, (v) New Territories West, (vi) Tin Shui Wai and (vii) Tung Chung.

Social security

Encouraging and helping able-bodied Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) recipients to become self-reliant

20. The Government will continue to provide employment services under the CSSA Scheme to encourage self-reliance. In October 2008, SWD launched a three-year Integrated Employment Assistance Scheme to provide ordinary and intensive employment assistance to help able-bodied unemployed CSSA recipients aged between 15 and 59 secure full-time paid employment. SWD also launched in October 2009 a new phase of the Special Training and Enhancement Programme to provide employment services, including counselling and structured motivational or disciplinary training, to at least 700 long-term unemployed able-bodied CSSA recipients aged between 15 and 29 across the territory.

21. In addition, SWD plans to launch a new phase of the New Dawn Project after completion of its current phase in end-March 2010. The Project was first introduced in April 2006 to assist single parents and child carers on CSSA with their youngest child aged between 12 and 14 to move towards self-reliance through engagement in paid employment. By the end of July 2009, a total of 16 981 CSSA recipients had participated in this Project.

Welfare planning

Continuing with the study on long-term social welfare planning

22. We undertook to study the long-term development planning for social welfare in Hong Kong through the Social Welfare Advisory Committee (SWAC). SWAC has invited stakeholders in the sector to offer their initial views on a number of key issues pertinent to the study. A Task Group on Welfare Planning was formed under SWAC earlier this year to take forward the study. As part of the study process, SWAC plans to conduct another round of consultation with the sector and stakeholders and is now working out the details.

Tackling domestic violence

Following through the scrutiny of the Domestic Violence (Amendment) Bill 2009

23. In June 2009, we introduced the Domestic Violence (Amendment) Bill 2009 into the Legislative Council to extend the protection provided under the Domestic Violence Ordinance (DVO) to same-sex cohabitants. The Bill is currently under scrutiny by the respective Bills Committee. We will follow through the scrutiny of the Bill and continue to strengthen our publicity efforts to enhance public awareness of the DVO, and to help victims of domestic violence understand their rights, protection provided by the law and support services available in the community.

Continuing to implement the batterer intervention programme and anti-violence programme for abusers

24. Upon completion of the two-year pilot project on batterer intervention programme (BIP) in March 2008, SWD has continued to implement the BIP for suitable abusers mainly involved in spouse battering as an integrated component of their counselling service. As the pilot project has proven the BIP to be effective in helping abusers change their abusive behaviour, additional resources have since last year been allocated to SWD to further develop the BIP, including developing suitable treatment models for different types of batterers, their spouses / partners and their children.

25. Separately, SWD has launched an anti-violence programme (AVP) in August 2008 as provided for under the Domestic Violence (Amendment) Ordinance 2008², which seeks to change the abusers' attitude and behaviour. The AVP is psycho-educational in nature and suitable for all types of domestic violence abusers. NGOs have been engaged in delivering the programme. During the first year of operation, the Court has referred two abusers under the DVO to SWD for attending AVP. SWD will continue to implement the programme as provided for

² Under the amended Domestic Violence Ordinance, the court may, in granting a non-molestation order, require the abuser to attend a programme approved by the Director of Social Welfare that seeks to change the attitude and behaviour of the abuser.

under the DVO.

Enhancing public education and training for professionals

26. SWD will continue to launch publicity campaign and public education initiatives to enhance public awareness of the problem of domestic violence, build up social capital and create a caring and more resilient community. To enhance the frontline professionals' knowledge and skills in handling different types of domestic violence and further promote multi-disciplinary collaboration, SWD will continue to strengthen the training programmes for the relevant professionals.

Implementing the pilot Child Fatality Review Mechanism

27. SWD launched a two-year pilot project to review cases of children who died of non-natural causes in February 2008. The objective of the review is to examine the relevant child death cases with a view to identifying patterns and trends for formulation of prevention strategies and promoting multi-disciplinary and inter-agency cooperation in the prevention of child death.

28. A Review Panel has been set up by SWD to review child death cases captured by the Coroners' Court in 2006 and 2007. SWD will publish the first annual report in the last quarter of 2009 to set out the initial findings and recommendations of the Review Panel. An evaluation will also be conducted at the end of the two-year pilot period.

Rehabilitation services for PWDs

Enhancing transport services for PWDs

29. In tandem with the Government's on-going efforts to improve the accessibility of public transport for PWDs, Rehabus provides point-to-point scheduled and dial-a-ride transport services for PWDs who have difficulties in using public transport. Having regard to service demand, we will continue to enhance the Rehabus Fleet by adding new vehicles and replacing old ones.

Promoting the United Nations Convention on the Rights of PWDs

30. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (the Convention) has entered into force for the People's Republic of China, including the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, since 31 August 2008. To promote the spirit and core values enshrined in the Convention, the Government has substantially increased the allocation for the relevant public education activities to \$12 million this year. Apart from organising various territory-wide major publicity activities, we have also increased the subsidies to NGOs and the District Councils for organising related promotional activities in order to reach all sectors of the community. The Government has also strengthened civil service training to enhance civil servants' knowledge in the application of the spirit of the Convention in their daily work. Promotion of the Convention is an ongoing initiative. The Government will continue to promote the Convention in close collaboration with the rehabilitation sector and the community at large with a view to building an equal and barrier-free society.

Elderly care

Upgrading subvented residential care places to provide long-term care for frail elders

31. Under the conversion programme launched in June 2005, a total of 10 700 subsidised residential places for the elderly, which do not have LTC element or do not provide continuum of care, will be upgraded to LTC places providing continuum of care. By the end of September 2009, 9 169 places were being converted into 5 101 LTC places.

Continuing with outreaching efforts of elderly centres to singleton and hidden elders

32. Resources were allocated to 156 elderly centres throughout the territory for enhancing their outreach programmes, so as to encourage hidden and singleton elders to develop their social life, and provide referral, support and counselling services to those in need. At present, the elderly centres are handling about 6 800 hidden or singleton elders

cases.

Providing integrated support services to both elderly hospital discharges who have difficulty taking care of themselves and their carers through the Integrated Discharge Support Trial Programme for Elderly Patients

33. In March 2008, we launched a three-year trial programme to provide integrated support to elderly hospital discharges who have difficulty taking care of themselves. Integrated support under the scheme includes discharge planning, transitional rehabilitation services, transitional home-based community care services and carers' training and support.

34. Three pilot projects under the programme, covering Kwun Tong, Kwai Tsing and Tuen Mun, were launched in March 2008, August 2008 and July 2009 respectively. The entire programme can serve a total of about 20 000 elders and 7 000 elder carers.

Helping needy elders improve their home conditions through the Home Environment Improvement Scheme for the Elderly

35. To help improve the living environment of elders who live in dilapidated homes, we introduced the Home Environment Improvement Scheme for the Elderly in 2008 to provide home renovation works and/or essential fittings up to \$5,000 per eligible elderly household.

36. Response to the Scheme has been very positive. By June 2009, we received a total of 13 000 applications. Works for 5 000 households had been completed and another 3 200 applications had been approved. We expect the Scheme to benefit a total of 40 000 elderly households.

Training additional enrolled nurses for the welfare sector

37. To alleviate the shortage of nurses in the welfare sector, SWD, in collaboration with HA, has been running two-year full-time programmes to train enrolled nurses for the welfare sector since 2006. Four classes have been organised so far. Four more classes will be

organised between now and 2011. These eight classes will provide 930 training places in total. Tuition fees are subsidised by the Government. Graduates are required to work in the welfare sector for at least two years after graduation. The trainees of the first two classes graduated in April and October 2008 respectively, and about 85% of them have joined the welfare sector.

Reviewing the permissible limit of absence from Hong Kong under the Old Age Allowance (OAA) scheme

38. We are reviewing the permissible limit of absence from Hong Kong under the OAA scheme, and will brief Members of this Panel on the outcome as soon as possible.

Child care services

Continuing to promote flexible child care services to meet the varying needs of families

39. To support parents who are unable to take care of their children temporarily because of work or other reasons, the Government will continue to subsidise NGOs to provide a wide range of child care services and will strive to increase the flexibility of the services.

40. A three-year pilot Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project (NSCCP) was launched in October 2008. The first phase covered six locations with a more pressing demand for child care services, viz Tung Chung, Sham Shui Po, Kwai Chung, Tuen Mun, Yuen Long and Kwun Tong. In March 2009, the NSCCP was extended to Wong Tai Sin/Sai Kung, Kowloon City/Yau Tsim Mong, Tai Po/North, Shatin and Eastern/Wan Chai, thereby covering in full all the 11 administrative districts of SWD. The NSCCP provides a total of at least 286 home-based child care places and 154 centre-based care group places. Feedback from service users has so far been generally positive.

41. On residential child care services, we have provided a total of 100 additional places in children's homes and boys' and girls' homes in the past year to assist families and children in need of residential care

services.

Labour and Welfare Bureau
October 2009