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Panel on Welfare Services

**Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat
for the meeting on 13 February 2012**

Community care services for the elderly

Purpose

This paper provides a brief account of the past discussions of the Panel on Welfare Services ("the Panel") and its Subcommittee on Residential and Community Care Services for Persons with Disabilities and the Elderly ("the Subcommittee") on the provision of community care services for the elderly, and the findings and recommendations of the consultancy study initiated by the Elderly Commission ("EC") on community care services for the elderly.

Background

2. According to the Administration, "ageing in the community" is an underlying principle of the Government's elderly policy. This is in line with most elders' wish as they cherish the support from their families and the sense of belonging that a familiar community offers. To this end, the Government provides a range of subsidised supporting services, including centre-based day care services provided by the 60 Day Care Centres/Units for the Elderly and home-based services provided by 85 service teams. They cover personal care, nursing care, rehabilitation exercises, meal delivery and escort services, etc. Users include both elders who wish to stay in the community and those who are on the waiting list for subsidised residential care places.

3. In 2008, EC commissioned the University of Hong Kong to conduct a consultancy study on residential care services for the elderly. As the consultant recommended, among other things, that community care services for the elderly in Hong Kong should be improved, EC embarked on another consultancy study in April 2010 to examine how to strengthen these services through a more flexible and diverse mode of service delivery. The final report of the Consultancy Study on Community Care Services for the Elderly initiated by EC was released in June 2011.

Deliberations by members

Existing provision of community care and support services

4. While supporting the Government's elderly care policy of ageing in place, members and many deputations expressed concern about the inadequate provision of both residential care services and community care services for the elderly to meet the increasing demand arising from the ageing population. Members considered it necessary for the Administration to step up its efforts in enhancing the services and relieving the waitlisting situation. The Administration should also formulate a long-term strategy for the provision of community care services for the elderly according to the users' needs and ensure that the community care services should be allocated to those who were most in need of the services.

5. In the view of the Administration, elders with long-term care needs did not necessarily age in residential care homes for the elderly. Further development of community care services would encourage elders to age in place and thus avoid premature and unnecessary institutionalisation. Therefore, a range of subsidised community care services was provided in parallel to facilitate elders to age in the community. These included –

- (a) centre-based day care services to frail elders who had long-term care needs and could not be taken care of by their family members during daytime through the 60 Day Care Centres/Units for the Elderly in the territory; and
- (b) home-based Enhanced Home and Community Care Service and Integrated Home Care Services for frail elders.

6. The Administration stressed that while ageing in place was the Government's policy objective, residential care places would continue to be provided to elders who were in need of such services. Elderly who were

staying at home while waiting for subsidised residential care places were receiving subsidised home-based community care services or day care services.

7. The Panel and the Subcommittee discussed at several meetings the new initiatives to enhance support for the frail elders to live in the community. These included the Pilot Scheme on Home Care Services for Frail Elders, District-based Scheme on Carer Training and Integrated Discharge Support Trial Programme for Elderly Patients.

(a) Pilot Scheme on Home Care Services for Frail Elders

8. Members were advised that a three-year pilot scheme would be launched to provide a new package of intensive and tailor-made home care services for 510 frail elders residing in Wong Tai Sin, Sai Kung, Kwun Tong, Yau Tsim Mong, Kowloon City and Sham Shui Po districts who were on the waiting list for subsidised places in nursing homes. While welcoming the pilot scheme, some members cautioned that the pilot home care services could not cater for the specific needs of elders according to their different kinds of caring needs or relieve the burden and pressure faced by the family carers in taking care of those elders who required very intensive care at home. Members took a strong view that the pilot home care services should not be regarded as a substitute for the provision of additional residential care places.

9. The Administration clarified that the impairment level and care needs of elders who were on the waiting list for subsidised residential care services were assessed under the Standardised Care Need Assessment Mechanism for Elderly Services which was widely used internationally. Under the pilot scheme, personalised home care services with greater emphasis on the rehabilitation and nursing care elements would be provided to frail elders. The services would be delivered through non-governmental organisations or social enterprises with experience in elderly care and established service networks in the districts concerned, and would be subsidised by the Government according to a fee-charging scale to be set by the Social Welfare Department. Elders who joined the pilot scheme would remain on the waiting list for subsidised residential care services.

10. Some members remained concerned about the long-term commitment of the Government in providing the enhanced home care services given that only one-off funding was provided for the services. They took note that there would be an interim review to be followed by a final review upon the

completion of the pilot scheme. Should the review findings of the pilot scheme be encouraging, the Administration would consider financing the projects under the recurrent funding and extending the scheme to other districts after the three-year pilot period.

(b) District-based Scheme on Carer Training

11. Under the District-based Scheme on Carer Training, District Elderly Community Centres would partner with community organisations in the districts in organising carer trainer programmes. The Scheme aimed to enhance carers' capability through training so as to alleviate their stress resulting from taking care of elders. Carers who had completed the training would be recruited as carer-helpers, providing care service for elders at the district level. Members noted the extension of the Scheme to Neighbourhood Elderly Centres since April 2010 in the light of the positive response.

(c) Integrated Discharge Support Trial Programme for Elderly Patients

12. The Subcommittee was informed that on the advice of EC, the Administration had in collaboration with the Hospital Authority launched the three-year Integrated Discharge Support Trial Programme for Elderly Persons in Kwun Tong, Kwai Tsing and Tuen Mun in March and August 2008 and July 2009 respectively. The Programme aimed to provide timely support to elderly hospital discharges and their carers so as to help the elders recuperate at home. The entire programme was expected to serve a total of 20 000 elders and 7 000 carers.

13. According to the Administration, the Trial Programme demonstrated how comprehensive and continuous care might be provided to elderly patients through better coordination of medical and welfare services. In view of the positive response to the Programme, the Administration decided to allocate additional recurrent funding of \$148 million to make it a regular service and extend its coverage from the current three districts to all districts within 2011-2012. The number of elders to be served each year was expected to increase from 8 000 to 33 000.

14. Some members questioned the need for introducing various pilot schemes for providing care services to frail elders to support them to age in the community. These members considered that the Administration should provide such services to all frail elders across the territory without the need to try out the services under different pilot schemes.

15. The Administration explained that the various new initiatives in place sought to fill the service gap and complement each other. Specific home care services would be provided to frail elders having regard to their conditions and the level and intensity of care they required. An elderly-oriented case management service approach would be adopted, under which the responsible case manager and his/her multi-disciplinary team would draw up a personal care plan, including the types and number of hours of services, for each elder having regard to his/her actual conditions.

Consultancy Study initiated by EC

16. Following the release of the final report of the Consultancy Study on Community Care Services for the Elderly initiated by EC in June 2011, the Panel was briefed on the findings and recommendations made therein on the provision of subsidised community care services for the elderly. The Panel noted that the consultant had made a number of recommendations, which fell into the following three major areas, for EC's consideration –

- (a) Area 1: Improving the existing mode of service delivery and increasing the service volume;
- (b) Area 2: Introducing a community care service voucher based on affordability and shared responsibilities and equitable allocation of resources; and
- (c) Area 3: Creating an environment for further development of community care services.

The Panel held a special meeting on 22 August 2011 to gauge views from the stakeholders on the findings and recommendations of the Consultancy Study on Community Care Services for the Elderly initiated by EC.

17. Members agreed with the consultant's recommendations that the development of subsidised community care services should be further enhanced. However, members cautioned that the provision of community care services would by no means replace residential care services for the elderly. Members and deputations urged the Administration to continue to take concrete action to address the waitlisting situation for subsidised residential care places for the elderly.

18. In the view of members, the higher institutionalisation rate in Hong Kong was largely attributable to the congested living environment. To encourage the elderly to age at home, the Administration should enhance the support for family carers of frail elders, such as the provision of a carer allowance. According to the Administration, respite service and training had been providing to family carers of frail elders to relieve their pressure in taking care of the elders at home. This apart, a series of new initiatives had been put in place to further enhance the community care services for the elderly. For instance, the launch of the Integrated Discharge Support Trial Programme for Elderly Persons would provide timely support to elderly hospital dischargees and their carers so as to help the elders recuperate at home.

19. Some members and deputations were gravely concerned about the introduction of means-tested mechanism and the "users pay principle" for subsidised community care services. According to EC, the objective of the EC study was to examine ways to strengthen community care services for elders through a more flexible approach and diverse mode of service delivery. The provision of community care service voucher would serve as an incentive to encourage eligible elders who were waiting for residential care services to opt for community care services under the dual option system, and they would remain on the waiting list for subsidised residential care places for the elderly while using the voucher. The recommendation of introducing community care service voucher based on the principles of affordability and shared responsibility might help to address the varying needs of different sectors of the older population and throw light on the discussion on the effective use of public resources. It was mindful of the controversies in the proposal. Should the Administration accept the directions put forward by the consultant, EC would then study the details of the proposal, and further public discussion would be necessary.

20. According to the Administration, it agreed in principle with the overall thrust of the EC report, but it would take time to study the recommendations in greater detail as it was only released in June 2011. It would revert to the Panel on its way forward for the recommendations in the 2011-2012 session.

21. In his Policy Address 2011-2012, the Chief Executive announced that the Government would introduce a four-year pilot community care service voucher scheme to provide direct subsidy to elders who had long-term care service needs with more flexibility and choices of community care services that suited their needs to age at home. The

Administration will brief the Panel on the Pilot Scheme on Community Care Service Voucher for the Elderly at its next meeting on 13 February 2012.

Relevant papers

22. A list of the relevant papers on the Legislative Council website is in the **Appendix**.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
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Appendix

Relevant papers on provision of community care services for the elderly

Committee	Date of meeting	Paper
Panel on Welfare Services	11 January 2010 (Item IV)	Agenda Minutes
Panel on Welfare Services	6 February 2010 (Item I)	Agenda Minutes
Panel on Welfare Services	8 March 2010 (Item IV)	Agenda Minutes
Subcommittee on Residential and Community Care Services for Persons with Disabilities and the Elderly	28 June 2010 (Item I)	Agenda Minutes
Panel on Welfare Services	12 July 2010 (Item III)	Agenda Minutes
Panel on Welfare Services	11 April 2011 (Item VI)	Agenda Minutes CB(2)1907/10-11(01)
Panel on Welfare Services	11 July 2011 (Item III)	Agenda Minutes
Panel on Welfare Services	22 August 2011 (Item I)	Agenda