

**For discussion
on 13 January 2018**

**Legislative Council House Committee
Subcommittee on Children's Rights**

Day Child Care Services

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on day child care services, including those provided for children with special needs.

Current Situation of Services

Day child care services

2. Day child care services include centre-based care services and those provided in the form of volunteer support.

3. On centre-based child care services, child care centres (CCCs) offer day care services to children aged under three in a safe and nurturing environment. CCCs include standalone CCCs and CCCs attached to kindergartens (KG-cum-CCCs). At present, there are about 30 700 CCC places, including about 7 000 aided places. Of these, seven aided standalone CCCs underwent in-situ expansion from 2014-15 to 2016-17, and the number of places was increased from 690 to 738.

4. Occasional child care service (OCCS) and extended hours service (EHS) are ancillary services provided in aided standalone CCCs and KG-cum-CCCs, serving children aged under six. These services aim to provide a safe venue for children who have care needs since their parents/carers have to be away from home to deal with various occasional commitments or sudden events, such as emergencies, engagement in employment/retraining programmes and job-seeking, with a view to minimising the risk of children being left unattended. OCCS is a short-term subvented child care service provided on a full-day, half-day or sessional basis by the operating agencies, whereas EHS refers to the provision of longer hours of child care service by the operating agencies beyond the normal operating hours of the CCCs for enrolled

children. At present, there are 434 OCCS places and 2 254 EHS places (including the about 1 200 places rolled out in 2015-16).

5. The Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project (NSCCP) and mutual help child care centres (MHCCCs) are child care services provided in the form of volunteer support. The NSCCP provides flexible child care services at the neighbourhood level for children aged under nine whose parents are in need of child care support due to their long or unstable working hours, emergencies or other reasons, and are lacking financial means to secure relevant support services. The NSCCP consists of two components, namely home-based child care service and centre-based care groups, providing a total of at least 954 places in the 18 districts across the territory (including the 234 places added since October 2014). The operating agencies may use the additional resources provided by the Social Welfare Department (SWD) in 2014 to increase the number of places on top of the minimum requirement set by the SWD to meet the actual service demand.

6. MHCCCs are set up by non-profit-making local organisations, women's associations, church groups, etc. to serve children aged under three. Operating agencies may also provide services to children aged three to under six on a need basis. Activities of MHCCCs are carried out mainly by volunteers, neighbours and/or parents by means of mutual help child care groups to care for children in the spirit of mutual help. There are a total of 275 places provided by 20 MHCCCs at present.

7. The Government provides needy families or low-income families with fee waiving or fee reduction of varying degrees for the above services.

Day care services for children with disabilities

8. The Government provides various day care services for children with disabilities by subventing pre-school rehabilitation services, including special child care centres (SCCCs), the Integrated Programme in KG-cum-CCCs (IP) and occasional child care service for disabled children (OCCS-DC). The details are set out in the ensuing paragraphs.

9. SCCC provide special training and care services for children aged two to six who are assessed to have moderate to severe disabilities to facilitate their growth and development. To dovetail with the implementation of the Free Quality Kindergarten Education Scheme in the 2018/19 school year, the Government has waived the fees of SCCC since September 2017. As at the end of October 2017, there were 1 724 day service places in 33 SCCC.

10. The IP provides training and care services for children aged two to six who are assessed to have mild disabilities, with emphasis on facilitating their integration into mainstream education. As at the end of October 2017, there were 1 980 IP places in 216 KG-cum-CCCs.

11. OCCS-DC provides a safe venue for children with disabilities whose parents/carers have to be away from home due to occasional commitments or sudden events, so as to minimise the risk of accidents that may occur to children with disabilities being left alone at home. As at the end of October 2017, there were 94 OCCS-DC places in 36 service units (mainly SCCCs). Applications may be made by parents/carers to the operating agencies directly or through referral by medical social workers, family caseworkers or staff of pre-school rehabilitation service centres.

Way Forward

12. The Government will continue to monitor the demand for child care services and plan for new CCCs in districts with acute demand, including the provision of a total of about 300 additional aided standalone CCC places in phases in North District, Kwun Tong District, Kwai Tsing District and Sha Tin District starting from 2018-19. The Government also plans to provide an additional 3 800 EHS places in phases having regard to the demand by district. On the other hand, the Government encourages non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to set up CCCs under the Special Scheme on Privately Owned Sites for Welfare Uses (Special Scheme), and is exploring the feasibility of providing on a pilot basis 100 NGO-operated child care places for staff members in the proposed Government Complex in Tseung Kwan O.

13. Meanwhile, the Government commissioned in December 2016 the Department of Social Work and Social Administration of the University of Hong Kong to conduct a Consultancy Study on the Long-term Development of Child Care Services (the Study). The Study will review the existing child care services in Hong Kong and draw on the experience of other countries in providing child care services. It will also conduct an in-depth analysis of the objectives, contents, targets, financing modes, service models, demand and supply situation, facility planning, manpower and training, etc. of the child care services in Hong Kong, and will make recommendations on the long-term development of the relevant services. The consulting team has preliminarily collated the overseas experience on child care services, and is meeting with stakeholders to collect their views and embarking on a questionnaire survey on service users. The Study is expected to be completed in mid-2018. Upon the completion of the Study, the Government will take into account the

recommendations and map out the direction for the long term development of child care services to meet the child care needs of modern-day families.

14. As regards children with disabilities, the Government will continue to increase the provision of pre-school rehabilitation services. About 500 additional SCCC places are expected to be provided in the next five years. In addition, if all the proposed projects under the Special Scheme can be implemented smoothly, it is expected that about 1 300 additional SCCC places can be provided.

Advice Sought

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

**Labour and Welfare Bureau
Social Welfare Department
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