

**For discussion on
12 February 2018**

**Legislative Council Panel on Welfare Services
Pilot Scheme on On-site Pre-school Rehabilitation Services**

Purpose

This paper informs Members of the progress of the Pilot Scheme on On-site Pre-school Rehabilitation Services (OPRS) and preliminary observations of the evaluative study.

Background

2. At present, Social Welfare Department (SWD) provides the following three types of Government subvented pre-school rehabilitation services for children assessed mainly by the Child Assessment Centres (CACs) of the Department of Health (DH) to be in need of professional intervention –

- (a) Early Education and Training Centre provides early intervention programmes for children aged from birth to six assessed to have mild to moderate disabilities with emphasis on the caring and training role of children's families;
- (b) Integrated Programme in Kindergarten-cum-Child Care Centre (KG-cum-CCCs) provides training for children aged from two to six assessed to have mild disabilities with emphasis on facilitating their integration into mainstream education; and
- (c) Special Child Care Centre provides special training and care for children aged from two to six assessed to have moderate to severe disabilities to facilitate their growth and development.

However, the demand for pre-school rehabilitation services for children with mild to moderate disabilities has far outstripped supply, resulting in

relatively long average waiting time for these services.

3. Recognising the importance of early intervention for pre-school children with special needs, SWD launched the Pilot Scheme in phases from November 2015 onwards with a funding of \$422 million from the Lotteries Fund, with a view to enabling pre-school children with special needs to receive necessary training early in the prime learning period. Under the Pilot Scheme, inter-disciplinary service teams from 16 non-governmental organisations (NGOs) offer around 3 000 on-site pre-school rehabilitation service places at participating KGs and KG-cum-CCCs to provide early intervention for children on the waiting list for subvented pre-school rehabilitation services. The Pilot Scheme also provides professional advice and support for KG teachers/child care workers for children with special needs, and renders support to parents in fostering a positive attitude and acquiring effective skills in raising their children with special needs.

4. With the pilot scheme delivering notable preliminary results, the Chief Executive announced in the 2017 Policy Address that the Government had decided to regularise the Pilot Scheme, upon its completion, from 2018/19 school year. The Government earmarked \$460 million a year for OPRS and will increase the number of services places from about 3 000 to 7 000 in two years.

Progress of Implementation of the Pilot Scheme

5. A cumulative total of 5 682 children have received services under the Pilot Scheme since its implementation in November 2015. As at the end of December 2017, 2 950 children are receiving the services. The average waiting time for the Government subvented pre-school rehabilitation services set out in paragraph 2 falls in the range of 13.5 to 18.2 months depending on the type of services. Nonetheless, among some 8 000 children on the waiting list, 42% of them are receiving the necessary rehabilitation training either through the Pilot Scheme or the Training Subsidy Programme for Children on the Waiting List of Subvented Pre-school Rehabilitation Services¹.

¹ The Training Subsidy Programme for Children on the Waiting List of Subvented Pre-school Rehabilitation Services was implemented by SWD in October 2014. Under the Programme,

The Evaluative Study

6. The Government has commissioned a Consulting Team headed by City University of Hong Kong to carry out an evaluative study on the Pilot Scheme and review the service models of different NGO service operators, with a view to formulating the modes and standards of services to be regularised in the 2018/19 school year. The Consulting Team carries out the evaluative study through case studies, questionnaires, focus group interviews and literature review, including:

- (a) assess the development progress of the children participating in the Pilot Scheme and effectiveness of the services;
- (b) study the service models and service effectiveness of NGO service operators;
- (c) review and analyse parents' views on the Pilot Scheme;
- (d) gauge the views of KG principals and teachers on the Pilot Scheme;
- (e) make recommendations on effective and feasible service models and formulate indicators for OPRS; and
- (f) compare the pre-school rehabilitation services in different countries or areas.

Preliminary Observations

7. On the basis of the analysis of available data and information so

eligible children on the waiting list for subvented pre-school rehabilitation services will be provided with training subsidy to acquire self-financing services run by recognised service providers during the waiting period with a view to facilitating their learning and development at an early age.

far², the Consulting Team has the following preliminary observations.

8. As regards the preliminary effectiveness of the Pilot Scheme,
 - (a) positive impacts were found on child performance in both quantitative and qualitative analyses. Significant improvements were shown with respect to all of the five developmental domains under study, viz. gross motor skills, social and emotional skills, language skills, cognitive skills and fine motor skills;
 - (b) out of a total of 4 381 questionnaires received by the NGOs from November 2015 to November 2017, 4 370 (99.8%) parents/carers indicated that they were satisfied with the services provided by NGOs under the Pilot Scheme.

9. Based on the preliminary observations, the Consulting Team considers that the following elements should be upheld in delivery of OPRS upon regularisation:
 - (a) inter-disciplinary approach of a professional service team to provide comprehensive assessment and training to children with special needs;
 - (b) a tripartite model which integrates the social environments of children (i.e. home, school, community);
 - (c) effective coordination and dissemination of information among parents, teachers and professionals;
 - (d) active parental involvement with a family-centred feature to enhance the quality of children's training process;
 - (e) close teacher-professional collaboration which helps build up

² As at September 2017, the Consulting Team conducted 140 longitudinal studies and 28 in-depth case studies for children, 15 focus group meetings with the professionals of the NGO service operators, 8 focus group meetings with teachers and 2 focus group meetings with parents. It also collected 124 questionnaires from the chief administrators and professionals of the NGO service operators. The Consulting Team also completed the literature review on the pre-school rehabilitation services of three countries or areas.

teachers' capacity in supporting children with special needs in daily classroom teaching and learning; and

- (f) participation of children, depending on individual development needs, in centre-based training so that they can receive individual and group training in well-equipped facilities at NGO training centres.

Follow-up Study

10. In preparation of the final report of the evaluative study, the Consulting Team will carry out follow-up study in the following areas:

- (a) Some parents are unable to take their children to attend centre-based training due to various reasons. Meanwhile, inadequate space in some KGs/KG-cum-CCCs for training and storage of training equipment may lessen the positive impact of school-based training. In this connection, the Consulting Team will study which types of children with disabilities will benefit more from centre-based training and recommend appropriate training types and hours required for these children, including how school-based/ home-based training and centre-based training can complement each other. The Consulting Team will also explore feasible measures to overcome these on-site constraints, including the feasibility of procuring vans as mobile training centres.
- (b) NGO service operators reflected that they needed to handle various administrative works such as school recruitment and verification of the child's eligibility; participating KGs/KG-cum-CCCs also reflected that they needed to liaise with various stakeholders on each case under the Pilot Scheme. To minimise extra administrative work, SWD will enhance the existing Central Referral System for Rehabilitation Services to incorporate OPRS into the central allocation system to enhance the efficiency of application and allocation of service places upon regularisation of the service. The Consulting Team will also explore the resources required for service coordination.

- (c) Parents of children receiving services under the Pilot Scheme, even with significant progress as assessed by the professional team, would choose to stay in the scheme, resulting in fewer service places available for new intakes. The Consulting Team will propose a mechanism for continuous learning support for these children at a level of intervention commensurate with the actual needs of the children concerned.

Next Step

11. The Consulting Team is consulting NGO service operators, KGs/KG-cum-CCCs and parents/parents' groups on the preliminary observations of the evaluative study and gauge their views on the regularisation of the Pilot Scheme. It is envisaged that the final report will be completed in the third quarter of 2018.

12. Apart from monitoring the Consulting Team's follow-up study of the operational issues identified in paragraph 10, the Government will examine the following related macro issues to ensure the smooth regularisation of the Pilot Scheme :

- (a) interface between OPRS and other existing pre-school rehabilitation services (see paragraph 2 above), including the appropriate mode of providing centre-based service under OPRS and the relation between OPRS and Integrated Programme in KG-cum-CCCs;
- (b) transitional arrangements from KGs to primary schools, with a view to ensuring that children with special needs will be provided with appropriate services when they proceed to primary school;
- (c) optimal mix of allied health professionals and other professionals in the inter-disciplinary service team, and the supply of these professionals to meet the growing service need.

Advice Sought

13. Members are invited to note the progress of the Pilot Scheme and preliminary observations of the evaluative study.

Labour and Welfare Bureau
Social Welfare Department
February 2018