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Panel on Welfare Services

**Updated background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat
for the meeting on 12 February 2018**

Pilot Scheme on On-site Pre-school Rehabilitation Services

Purpose

This paper summarizes past discussions of the Council and its committees on the Pilot Scheme on On-Site Pre-school Rehabilitation Services.

Background

2. According to the Administration, the Social Welfare Department provides subvented pre-school rehabilitation services for children (from birth to six years old) assessed mainly by the Child Assessment Centres of the Department of Health ("DH") to be in need of early professional intervention. Pre-school rehabilitation services are provided mainly through Early Education and Training Centres ("EETCs"), Special Child Care Centres ("SCCCs") and Integrated Programme in Kindergarten-cum-Child Care Centres ("IP"). EETCs provide 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. SCCC provide special training and care for children aged from two to six assessed to have moderate to severe disabilities to facilitate their growth and development. IP provides training for children aged from two to six assessed to have mild disabilities with emphasis on facilitating their integration into mainstream education.

3. Recognizing the importance of early intervention for children in need of rehabilitation services, the Chief Executive announced in the 2015 Policy Address that the Pilot Scheme would be launched to provide

on-site rehabilitation services for children with special needs who are studying in kindergarten ("KGs") or kindergarten-cum-child care centres ("KG-cum-CCCs"). Operators of subvented pre-school rehabilitation services would be invited to provide services under the Pilot Scheme. According to the Administration, the objectives of the Pilot Scheme are to provide:

- (a) on-site rehabilitation services forthwith for children with special needs who are attending KGs/KG-cum-CCCs; participating organizations may flexibly deploy part of the service quotas to children waiting for assessment;
- (b) support for teachers/child care workers, equipping them with knowledge and skills in identifying and working with children with special needs; and
- (c) support for parents/carers, enabling them to raise their children with special needs with positive attitude and effective skills.

Deliberations by Members

Provision of additional pre-school rehabilitation service places

4. Some Members had time and again expressed grave concern about the long waiting time for and serious shortfall of pre-school rehabilitation services for children with disabilities. At its meeting on 10 June 2013, the Panel on Welfare Services ("the Panel") passed a motion urging the authorities to substantially increase pre-school rehabilitation service places, establish an inter-departmental mechanism for formulating a policy on rehabilitation of pre-school children, and making long-term planning on service places, manpower (for both professional and supporting staff), premises, facilities, resources and so on.

5. According to the Administration, it had been continuously increasing the provision of pre-school rehabilitation places. From 2009-2010 to 2014-2015, funding had been allocated to provide about 1 500 additional pre-school rehabilitation places, representing an increase of nearly 30%. In addition, sites had been reserved for providing about 1 100 additional pre-school rehabilitation places in the next five years. It was estimated that an additional 3 800 pre-school rehabilitation places would also be provided under the Special Scheme on Privately Owned

Sites for Welfare Uses ("Special Scheme")¹ and 344 of which would be provided in 2017-2018. As at end-November 2016, the Administration provided 6 903 subsidized pre-school rehabilitation service places.

6. Some Members considered that the additional pre-school rehabilitation places were not adequate to meet the growing demand. Moreover, the Training Subsidy Programme ("TSP")² could not help children with special needs obtain self-financing services operated by non-governmental organizations ("NGOs"), given that the subsidy amount was too small and there was a general lack of rehabilitation services in the private market. These Members were of the view that needy children had the right to receive free rehabilitation services since education was a basic human right rather than a welfare benefit.

7. The Administration advised that starting from 2016-2017, the number of training hours per month provided for eligible children under TSP had been increased. It had also earmarked additional funding to provide an additional 1 500 places under TSP in 2017-2018. Starting from 2017-2018, the Administration would provide non-means-tested training subsidy for children on the waiting list for SCCCs and waive the service fees of SCCCs.

Evaluation of effectiveness of the Pilot Scheme

8. The Panel was briefed on the implementation of the Pilot Scheme at its meeting on 14 December 2015. The Administration advised that the Pilot Scheme would span over a period of two years and the Lotteries Fund would allocate over \$420 million for its implementation. Sixteen NGOs were allocated a total of 29.25 project teams to serve at least 2 925 children studying in some 450 KGs and KG-cum-CCCs over the territory. Each project team would be required to serve at least 100 children except for one of the teams which would serve at least 25 non-Chinese speaking

¹ The Administration launched the Special Scheme on Privately Owned Sites for Welfare Uses ("Special Scheme") in September 2013 with a view to making better use of the land owned by non-governmental organizations through redevelopment or expansion to provide diversified subvented and self-financing facilities. An organization applying for the Special Scheme will have to provide on a site under its ownership a net increase in the provision of one or more than one service on the list of facilities set out by the Administration through expansion or redevelopment. Projects under the Special Scheme are funded by the Lotteries Fund.

² The Training Subsidy Programme ("TSP") was means-tested when it was launched in December 2011 under the Community Care Fund. TSP provides children who are on the waiting list of special child care centre with a training subsidy of around \$6,000 per month to acquire self-financing rehabilitation services run by recognized service providers to facilitate early intervention. TSP has been regularized in October 2014.

children. The projects under the Pilot Scheme were being implemented in phases: five NGOs had launched their projects in November 2015, six NGOs in December 2015 and the remaining five NGOs in January 2016.

9. Some Members enquired whether standards for evaluating effectiveness of the Pilot Scheme had been set and the timing for evaluating its effectiveness. They also sought information on the selection of the 16 participating NGOs, the intervals of evaluating their performance and the consequences the NGOs had to bear if their performance did not measure up to the prescribed standards. According to the Administration, a consultant would be engaged to evaluate the Pilot Scheme. A cross-departmental vetting committee ("Vetting Committee") including representatives of the Labour and Welfare Bureau, SWD, the Education Bureau and DH was set up in August 2015 to examine the proposals submitted by NGOs. In examining the proposals, the Vetting Committee had vetted their background and service standards. NGOs participating in the Pilot Scheme were required to fulfil a specified set of output and outcome standards. The Administration would monitor their performance closely and on a continuous basis according to the established mechanism. Participating NGOs would be required to make improvements if necessary.

10. Given that the number of KGs/KG-cum-CCCs to be served by participating NGOs would vary, some Members expressed concern that there would be an imbalanced allocation of resources to these KGs/KG-cum-CCCs. The Administration advised that it had stringently assessed the capacity of participating NGOs versus the service quota they proposed. The Administration would allocate a suitable number of project teams to participating NGOs according to the assessment results, where each project team would need to serve 100 children. Participating NGOs might flexibly deploy a small number of surplus service quota to children who were studying in KGs or KG-cum-CCCs and were waiting for assessment.

11. Given that many additional pre-school rehabilitation service places would only come on stream in the next few years and some service users of the Pilot Scheme might still be in KGs/KG-cum-CCCs when the Pilot Scheme ended in 2017, some Members requested the Administration to consider extending the Pilot Scheme or adopting other measures to address the demand for pre-school rehabilitation services between the lapse of the Pilot Scheme and the availability of these additional service places. The Administration advised that it would endeavour to secure resources to regularize the Pilot Scheme to ensure the continuity of the services.

Supply of allied health professionals for the Pilot Scheme

12. Some Members were concerned about whether the existing supply of allied health professionals could cope with the growth in the service demand brought about by the Pilot Scheme. According to the Administration, the Vetting Committee had considered the manpower requirement for the Pilot Scheme in selecting participating NGOs. The 16 participating NGOs had confirmed that they would be able to arrange manpower, either by internal deployment or reallocation of resources, to serve the service users without affecting their other existing services. Depending on the manpower situation of the welfare sector, the Administration would consider increasing the service quota of the Pilot Scheme in future.

Latest development

13. According to the Administration, the Pilot Scheme will be regularized in the 2018-2019 academic year. It has earmarked an annual recurrent provision of \$460 million and the number of service places will be increased from around 3 000 to 7 000 within two years. The Panel will be briefed on the initial findings of an evaluation study on the implementation of the Pilot Scheme at its meeting on 12 February 2018.

Relevant papers

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

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
2 February 2018

Appendix

Relevant papers on Pilot Scheme on On-site Pre-school Rehabilitation Services

Committee	Date of meeting	Paper
Panel on Welfare Services	10 June 2013 (Item V)	Agenda Minutes
Panel on Welfare Services	11 November 2013 (Item V)	Agenda Minutes
Panel on Welfare Services	10 February 2014 (Item III)	Agenda Minutes
Panel on Welfare Services	14 April 2014 (Item V)	Agenda Minutes
Finance Committee	2 April 2015	Administration's replies to members' written questions in examining the Estimates of Expenditure 2015-2016 Pages 251-253, 407-411 and 536-537
Panel on Welfare Services	26 January 2015 (Item I)	Agenda Minutes
Panel on Welfare Services	14 December 2015 (Item V)	Agenda Minutes
Legislative Council	18 February 2016	Official Record of Proceedings (Pages 124-237)
Finance Committee	8 April 2016	Administration's replies to Members' written questions in examining the Estimates of

Committee	Date of meeting	Paper
		<u>Expenditure 2016-2017 Pages 437-439, 1980 and 2094-2095</u>
Panel on Welfare Services	26 January 2017 (Item I)	<u>Agenda Minutes</u>
Finance Committee	7 April 2017	<u>Administration's replies to Members' written questions in examining the Estimates of Expenditure 2017-2018 Pages 137-138, 185-186, 190-192, 1684-1685, 1721 and 1941-1942</u>

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