

**Joint Meeting of Panel on Welfare Services and Panel on Education  
on 28 May 2019**

**Provision of speech therapy services for elderly persons, persons with  
disabilities and students with special needs**

**Supplementary Information**

At the joint meeting of Panel on Welfare Services and Panel on Education on 28 May 2019, the provision of speech therapy services for elderly persons, persons with disabilities and students with special needs was discussed. Members requested the Government to provide a written response to some members' call for removing the age ceiling (i.e. six years old) for receiving on-site pre-school speech therapy services and providing such services for pre-primary school children with special needs until they proceeded to primary school. The Government's written response is as follows:

2. At present, the Social Welfare Department (SWD) provides children from birth to six years old with disabilities/special needs or at risk of having disabilities/special needs with early intervention services to enhance their physical, psychological and social development, thereby improving their opportunities for admission to ordinary schools and participation in daily activities, and helping their families meet their special needs. A child who has reached the age of five years and eight months when he/she is enrolled in Primary One is eligible to apply for a place through the Education Bureau's Primary One Admission System so that he/she will be allocated a Primary One place in a government or an aided primary school. Children with special educational needs (SEN) will continue to receive necessary learning support at school.

3. Given that all school-age children with SEN studying in public sector primary schools are provided with appropriate support services by the primary schools they are attending, pre-school rehabilitation services which are mainly provided at kindergartens are normally offered to kindergarten children aged six or below with special needs only. If there are children with special needs who have reached the age of six as at 1 September of a new school year but are still attending kindergartens, they may apply for extension of pre-school rehabilitation services after being assessed as having continuous needs for such services so that they can continue to receive the services during the new school year. This measure can ensure that any children with pre-school rehabilitation

service needs can continue to have access to the services until they proceed to primary school and receive the necessary and appropriate services at school. For children provided with pre-school rehabilitation services at the beginning of a new school year in kindergartens, they can continue to receive such services until the end of the school year even though they may have reached the age of six during the school year.

4. The SWD has reminded non-governmental organisations (NGOs) providing pre-school rehabilitation services that when they review their service places for a new school year, they should take note of those children who have reached the age of six as at 1 September of the respective school year but with the need to apply for extension of the services. The NGOs concerned are advised to refer the children for re-assessment to ascertain their service needs as early as possible so as to ensure that they can continue to receive the necessary services in the new school year.

**Social Welfare Department  
September 2019**