

For Information
on 30 October 2018

Legislative Council Panel on Welfare Services

2018 Policy Address Policy Initiatives of the Labour and Welfare Bureau

Introduction

The Chief Executive delivered her 2018 Policy Address on 10 October 2018. This paper sets out the new and on-going welfare initiatives pertaining to the Labour and Welfare Bureau (LWB) and Social Welfare Department (SWD) in the 2018 Policy Address and Policy Agenda.

Summary of New Initiatives

2. The new initiatives in the 2018 Policy Address and Policy Agenda are summarised as follows :

- Allocating additional resources for the Commission on Children for implementing various specific measures to safeguard the interests and well-being of children (see paragraph 3 below);
- Enhancing child care services to integrate care and development and formulating planning ratio for the provision of child care centre places (see paragraph 5 below);
- Enhancing the existing manning ratios for qualified child care workers serving in day and residential child care centres within the 2019/20 school year so as to improve service quality (see paragraph 6 below);
- Increasing the level of subsidy for child care centre service within the 2019/20 school year so as to alleviate parents' financial burden in paying service fees (see paragraph 7 below);
- Enhancing the service quality of the Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project by strengthening the training for home-based child carers and raising their incentive payments within 2019-20 (see paragraph 8 below);

- Re-engineering in phases the existing Mutual Help Child Care Centres from 2019-20 onwards so as to further meet the child care needs in the community (see paragraph 9 below);
- Setting up four small group homes on top of the continued increase in the number of residential child care places in phases so as to enhance support and protection for children and families in need (see paragraph 10 below);
- Launching a three-year pilot scheme in the 2018/19 school year to provide social work services in phases for about 150 000 pre-school children and their families in more than 700 subsidised/aided child care centres, kindergartens and kindergarten-cum-child care centres in Hong Kong for early identification of and provision of assistance to pre-school children and their families with welfare needs (see paragraph 11 below);
- Exploring the provision of after school care services for children aged 3 to 6 in suitable welfare facilities settings (see paragraph 12 below);
- Strengthening support for divorced/separated families by, among others, setting up five specialised co-parenting support centres from 2019-20 onwards to co-ordinate and arrange children contact (see paragraphs 13 and 14 below);
- Launching a two-year Child Care Training Programme to equip grandparents with contemporary child care knowledge and skills so as to strengthen support for nuclear families (see paragraph 15 below);
- Regularising On-site Pre-school Rehabilitation Services and increase service places from 2018/19 school year, and enhance support to persons with special needs (especially children) through various measures (see paragraphs 16 to 18 below);
- Setting up a study group to explore the feasibility of integrating the family-related policies, including those on children, women, the elderly and family currently put under the respective purviews of the LWB and the Home Affairs Bureau (HAB) (see paragraph 19 below);
- Strengthening welfare support for ethnic minority communities by reaching out to ethnic minorities in need through designated

outreaching teams which will be operated by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and comprise of ethnic minority staff to assist them in receiving relevant welfare services (see paragraph 20 below);

- Setting up specialised ethnic minority units in Parents/Relatives Resources Centres for persons with disabilities and provide additional subsidy for Special Child Care Centres and Early Education and Training Centres (see paragraphs 21 below);
- Regularising the community support programme for residents of new public rental housing estates (PRHs) through the Community Investment and Inclusion Fund to help the new residents and families integrate into the community as soon as possible (see paragraph 22 below);
- Enhancing the employment support for able-bodied recipients of the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme (see paragraphs 24 to 25 below);
- Providing an additional 2 000 service quota under the Enhanced Home and Community Care Services (EHCCS) (see paragraph 27 below);
- Implementing a new scheme to set up day care units for the elderly at qualified private and self-financing residential care homes for the elderly (RCHEs) to increase the supply of day care services (see paragraph 27 below);
- Providing an additional 1 000 vouchers (bringing the total to 7 000) under the Second Phase of the Pilot Scheme on Community Care Service Voucher for the Elderly (see paragraph 28 below);
- Providing designated residential respite places in private RCHEs participating in the Enhanced Bought Place Scheme (EBPS) to relieve the stress of carers (see paragraph 29 below);
- Purchasing an additional 5 000 EA1 places under the EBPS in the next five years to increase the supply of subsidised residential care places for the elderly and enhance the overall service quality of private RCHEs (see paragraphs 30 and 31 below);
- Reinstating by end-2018 the population-based planning ratios in the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines (HKPSG) in respect

of subsidised residential care services and community care services, district elderly community centres and neighbourhood elderly centres (see paragraph 32 below);

- Extending the Old Age Living Allowance (OALA) to the Guangdong (GD) Scheme and the Fujian (FJ) Scheme (see paragraphs 33 to 34 below);
- Providing a total of 1 200 training places in the coming years under the enhanced Navigation Scheme for Young Persons in Care Services to help the social welfare care sector attract young people (see paragraph 35 below);
- Increasing the number of places of pre-school rehabilitation service, day service and residential service, and those under the Bought Place Scheme for Private Residential Care Homes for Persons with Disabilities (see paragraph 37 below);
- Setting up new District Support Centres for Persons with Disabilities and Support Centres for Persons with Autism in order to enhance service capacity and quality of these Centres (see paragraph 39 below);
- Increasing the provision of home-based care services and strengthen transport support for home-based care services (see paragraph 40 below);
- Enhancing speech therapy services to ageing service users and persons with severe disabilities (see paragraph 41 below);
- Enhancing the accessibility of community/living environment (see paragraph 42 below);
- Expanding the target groups of Integrated Community Centre for Mental Wellness to secondary school students with mental health needs (see paragraphs 43 below);
- Exploring the need and feasibility of developing a new service mode for ageing service users and explore the need and feasibility of developing a new service mode for Sheltered Workshops (see paragraph 44 below);
- Increasing the number of medical social workers in the hospitals of the Hospital Authority (HA) in order to continue to provide

appropriate services for patients and their families (see paragraph 45 below);

- Launching a new phase of the Special Scheme on Privately Owned Sites for Welfare Uses (the Special Scheme) for NGOs to apply for the expansion, redevelopment or development of the sites they own, thereby increasing the provision of much-needed welfare facilities (see paragraph 46 below); and
- Supporting NGOs' development of non-profit making elderly apartments, which will be included in projects aiming at providing much-needed welfare facilities as the core components under the Special Scheme (see paragraph 47 below).

Details of Policy Priorities/New Initiatives

Support for Children and Families

The Commission on Children

3. Children's growth and development is one of the priority policy areas of the current-term Government. The Government has set up the Commission on Children (the Commission), chaired by the Chief Secretary for Administration, in June 2018 with cross-bureau and departmental representation to engage the children concern groups in addressing the issues that children face while growing up, and the Commission has commenced operation. The Commission is an on-going, action-oriented, responsive and high-level body. It provides overall steer, sets policy directions, strategies and priorities, and translates them into the Government policy agenda for implementation. To further safeguard the interests and well-being of children, the Government will allocate additional resources for the Commission from 2019-20 onwards, so as to enhance the Commission's research and public education work. Meanwhile, the family is the cornerstone of our society and the key to maintaining social harmony and stability. In view of the above, the Government will, in the coming year, strengthen measures focusing on the healthy growth and development of children, as well as support for families.

Child Care Services

4. For the long-term development of child care services, the Government commissioned The University of Hong Kong in December 2016 to conduct the Consultancy Study on the Long-term Development of Child

Care Services (the Study) which will soon be completed. Having consulted stakeholders on the direction of recommendations, the consultant team is collating the final report. With a view to enhancing the quality of child care services as soon as possible, the Government has made reference to the consultant team's draft final report, and proposed a series of initiatives to strengthen the long-term development of child care services.

Formulating Planning Ratio for the provision of child care centre (CCC) places

5. To address the keen demand for CCC service, the SWD is committed to setting up more aided standalone CCCs subject to compliance with the Child Care Services Ordinance (CCSO) (Cap. 243) and the Child Care Services Regulations (CCSR) (Cap. 243A) in order to meet the service need, and to support women in fulfilling work and family commitments. The Study would make recommendation on the planning of CCC. The Government would make reference to the recommendation of the Study for formulating appropriate planning ratio for CCC places, so as to satisfy the service demands and meet the child care needs of modern families.

Enhancing the manning ratio for qualified child care workers (CCWs) serving in day and residential CCCs

6. In accordance with the CCSO (Cap. 243) and CCSR (Cap. 243A), the existing manning ratios for CCWs working in day CCCs are: 1 CCW to eight children aged under 2 and 1 CCW to 14 children aged 2 to under 3. As more knowledge and skills are required for taking care of young children, and parent's expectation for quality service provided by CCCs (including the care and training of children) has kept increasing, the service sector has been requesting for the improvement of manning ratio for CCCs so as to lessen the workload of CCWs and upgrade the quality of child care. With regard to the recommendations of the Study, the Government will enhance the existing manning ratios for qualified CCWs serving in day and residential CCCs within the 2019/20 school year so as to improve service quality. On the basis of meeting the minimum statutory requirements, we propose the manning ratios for qualified child care workers serving in day child care centres to be 1:6 for children aged 0 to under 2; and 1:11 for children aged 2 to under 3.

Increasing the Level of Subsidy for CCC Service

7. The service of CCC is fee-charging. The operation of aided centres mainly relies on the income from the inclusive monthly fees, in addition to the Government's subsidy. Apart from the rent/rates/ Government rent as

well as grants from the Lotteries Fund, other subsidies currently provided to long full-day CCCs by the Government, including the “Child Care Centre Subsidy Scheme”, the “Subsidy for Operation Enhancement” and the “Subsidy for Manpower Enhancement”, amounting to about 20% of the operating cost. In recent years, stakeholders in society have requested the Government to adopt the rationale of “sharing the responsibility” by increasing the subsidies to standalone CCCs and/or parents, so as to ensure parents’ affordability of the service fees. The Study has recommended increasing the level of subsidy for CCC places with a view to reducing the pressure of dual working parents in affording CCC service. In this regard, the Government will increase the level of subsidy for CCC service within the 2019/20 school year so as to alleviate parents’ financial burden in paying service fees.

Enhancing the Service Quality of Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project (NSCCP)

8. Since October 2014, the Government has strengthened the quality and quantity of NSCCP by uplifting the age limit of the service targets from aged under six to aged under nine; increasing at least 234 places for home-based child care service which makes the total number of places from at least 720 to 954 (representing a substantial increase of 33%); as well as allocating additional resources to the service operators to strengthen the social work support for the service, including the enhancement of the service administration and supervision, training of home-based child carers, etc. To meet the development and demand of child care service, the Government, by making reference to the recommendations of the Study, will enhance the service quality of the NSCCP by strengthening the training for home-based child carers and raising their incentive payments within 2019-20.

Re-engineering the existing Mutual Help Child Care Centres (MHCCCs) by phases

9. MHCCCs, which are operated by NGOs on a fee-charging and self-financing basis, provide flexible child care service to children aged below three (if necessary, children aged below six could also use the service) and facilitate mutual help and care within the community. Currently, there are 19 MHCCCs in operation in the territory, providing a total of 261 places. In response to the persistently low utilisation rate of MHCCCs in recent years, the SWD will re-engineer in phases the existing MHCCCs from 2019-20 onwards so as to further meet the child care needs in the community.

Strengthening Residential Child Care Services

10. To support and protect those children lacking proper care by their families and young persons with behavioral or emotional problems, the Government would continue to increase in phases the number of residential child care places. The SWD plans to set up four small group homes in New Territories East in 2020-21, providing a total of 30 additional places as well as four additional places in emergency/short-term care, so as to enhance support and protection for children and families in need.

Launching the Pilot scheme on Social Work Services for Pre-primary Institutions

11. For early identification of and providing assistance to pre-school children and their families with welfare needs, the Government will launch a three-year pilot scheme on social work service for pre-primary institutions (the pilot scheme) in the 2018/19 school year through the allocation by the Lotteries Fund. The pilot scheme will provide social work service in phases for about 150 000 pre-school children and their families in more than 700 subsidised/aided CCCs, kindergartens (KGs) and KG-cum-CCCs. The pilot scheme will be implemented in three phases with the first phase to be launched in February 2019, and the second and third phases are expected to be launched in August 2019 and August 2020 respectively.

Exploring the provision of after school care services for children aged three to six in suitable welfare facilities settings

12. NGOs provide supportive after-school care services for children aged six to 12 so that children whose parents are unable to care for them during after-school hours due to work, job-search or other reasons can receive proper care. The Government is now exploring the provision of after school care services for children aged three to six in suitable welfare facilities settings, and the study is expected to be completed in around October 2019. Meanwhile, the SWD would, through the Fee-waiving Subsidy Scheme for the After School Care Programme, continue to waive or reduce the fee of after-school care services. On the other hand, the Government, through the Community Care Fund, rolled out in October 2017 a three-year Pilot Scheme on Relaxing the Household Income Limit of the Fee-waiving Subsidy Scheme under the After School Care Programme for Low-income Families and Increasing Fee-waiving Subsidy Places, so that families whose income is higher than 75% but not exceeding 100% of the relevant Median Monthly Domestic Household Income can receive a one-third fee reduction, with the number of full fee-waiving places increased by 2 000, and it is expected that about 3 000 children would benefit from the Scheme.

Enhancing Co-parenting Support for Divorced/Separated Parents and Their Children

13. The 65 Integrated Family Service Centres (IFSCs) and the two Integrated Services Centres (ISCs) operated by the SWD and NGOs across the territory provide a spectrum of preventive, supportive and remedial family services for families in need, including family life and parent-child education, developmental groups and activities, to facilitate parents to co-operate in bringing up their children. The centres also arrange for appropriate services having regard to the needs of divorced/separated parents and those undergoing divorce procedures. The Government provides additional manpower resources in 2018-19 for the abovementioned IFSCs and ISCs, as well as the 11 Family and Child Protection Services Units to enhance the support for divorced/separated parents and their children. Besides, five specialised co-parenting support centres to be operated by NGOs for five clusters over the territory will be set up from 2019-20 onwards. Services to be provided for divorced/separated parents and their children include co-parenting counselling and parenting coordination service, structured parenting groups or programmes, child-focused counselling, groups or programmes, as well as children contact service.

14. With funding of \$7.58 million from the Lotteries Fund, the SWD launched the two-year Pilot Project on Children Contact Service (the Pilot Project) through an NGO in September 2016 to facilitate the arrangement of child contact with divorced/separated parents and to strengthen support for divorced/separated families, so that children need not be torn between divorced/separated parents. The Pilot Project has been extended for one more year with supplementary grant of around \$5 million from the Lotteries Fund, and it will be incorporated into the specialised co-parenting support centres in due course.

Launching a two-year project on Child Care Training Programme for Grandparents

15. In view of the overwhelming response to the “Pilot Project on Child Care Training Programme for Grandparents” implemented between 2016 and 2018, and the high appreciation from the grandparent trainees and their families on the effectiveness of the pilot project, the SWD plans to launch a two-year project on Child Care Training Programme for Grandparents (the new project) in 2019. The new project aims at equipping grandparents or grandparents-to-be with contemporary knowledge and skills through child care training and help them become child carers, so as to strengthen and reinforce support for nuclear families. Reference will be made to the

Foundation Certificate Course in Infant Care (Part-time) and Foundation Certificate Course in Child Care (Part-time) offered by the Employees Retraining Board in the design of the course contents. The training bodies will appropriately organise the course contents and training timetables to suit the physical characteristics and life pattern of the grandparent trainees.

Enhancing support for pre-school children with special needs and their parents

16. Recognising the importance of early intervention for pre-school children with special needs, the Government will enhance support for pre-school children with special needs and their parents. The SWD launched the Pilot Scheme on On-site Pre-school Rehabilitation Services from November 2015 onwards to provide on-site rehabilitation services for children with special needs who are studying in KGs or KG-cum-CCCs through inter-disciplinary service teams coordinated by NGOs, with a view to enabling pre-school children with special needs to receive necessary training early in their prime learning period. The Government will regularise on-site pre-school rehabilitation services (OPRS) in 2018/19 school year and increase the number of service places from about 3 000 at present to about 5 000 in October 2018, which will be further increased to 7 000 in October 2019. In parallel, the Government will enhance the professional and support services provided under the OPRS, including strengthening the establishments of speech therapist and social worker of the inter-disciplinary service teams, and setting up mobile training centres. In addition, the Government will implement a pilot project, through the Lotteries Fund, on the provision of support for children who show signs of special needs and are waiting for assessment in KGs or KG-cum-CCCs.

17. Besides, in the 2018/19 school year, the Education Bureau and the SWD have enhanced the mechanism for information transfer from operators of pre-school rehabilitation services to primary schools. This allows primary schools to have knowledge of the special needs of the children concerned soon after their admission and their performances and progresses made in their rehabilitation training in KGs so as to plan ahead and provide appropriate support for them. In addition, the Government will explore ways to provide appropriate bridging and support services for children with special needs when they proceed to Primary One.

18. To further strengthen support for pre-school children with special needs and their parents, the Government will enhance social work services of Special Child Care Centres and Residential Special Child Care Centres and strengthen care and nursing support for children with severe disabilities receiving residential care services. Besides, the SWD will provide

psychological treatment for persons with special needs (especially children) and their parents to handle the emotional, behavioral and learning problems of these children, the stress and emotional disturbance of the parents, the familial problems arising from the caretaking of these children, and to fortify these children's competency in adjustment and parents' parenting skills. Also, the SWD will provide service users and their family members with psychological support and develop the professional training of the front-line workers in rehabilitation units.

Exploring the feasibility of integrating family-related policies under the respective purviews of the LWB and the HAB

19. To enhance the integrity of family policies, the LWB will lead a study group to explore the feasibility of integrating the family-related policies, including those on children, women, the elderly and family currently put under the respective purviews of the LWB and the HAB. Subject to the availability of staffing resources, the study group will be set up in early-2019, with a view to completing the study in around mid-2019.

Enhancing Support for Ethnic Minorities (EMs)

20. In view of the increasingly diversified needs of EM communities, the SWD will commission NGOs to set up three designated outreaching teams, which will hire EMs, on Hong Kong Island, in Kowloon and the New Territories to proactively reach out to EMs and connect those in need to mainstream welfare services by outreaching method. The designated outreaching teams will also provide case counselling, groups and activities for EMs, so as to meet their social and welfare needs.

21. Besides, to strengthen support for EMs with disabilities or special needs, the Government will set up specialised EM units in parents/relatives resources centres for persons with disabilities to step up community support for EM families. In parallel, the Government will provide subsidy for special child care centres and early education and training centres to strengthen support for pre-school EM children with special needs.

Regularising the Community Support Programme for New PRHs

22. The Government has always been concerned about the needs of residents of the newly completed PRH estates. With a view to ensuring adequate and appropriate services are provided during the resident intakes of the new PRHs so as to facilitate the new residents to build mutual help networks, we will regularise the community support programme for new PRHs through the Community Investment and Inclusion Fund (CIIF). We

will plan for the community network building projects in a proactive matter and provide funding through the CIIF, so as to assist residents to adapt in the new community as soon as possible. Under this new initiative, the number of community support programmes for new PRHs to be funded will be subject to district needs and the number of tenants of the new PRHs. There is no pre-set level of maximum funding for each project.

Poverty Alleviation

23. The Government's philosophy in poverty alleviation is to encourage and support people capable of working to achieve self-reliance through employment, and put in place a reasonable and sustainable social welfare system. Shortly after assuming office, the current-term Government conducted a comprehensive review on the Working Family Allowance (WFA) Scheme (previously known as the Low-income Working Family Allowance Scheme), and implemented a series of enhancements on 1 April 2018. The Government has also launched the Higher OALA on 1 June 2018. The Government will continue to suitably deploy resources to offer appropriate support for the disadvantaged according to the above-mentioned philosophy in poverty alleviation.

Enhancing the employment support for able-bodied CSSA recipients

24. To further encourage able-bodied CSSA recipients to achieve self-reliance through continuous employment, we will enhance the employment support under the CSSA Scheme through joint efforts of departments and agencies to provide more focused employment and retraining services. In this connection, the new programme will replace the 'Integrated Employment Assistance Programme for Self-reliance' administered by the SWD and the 'Employment in One-stop' (EOS) Programme in Tin Shui Wai administered by the Labour Department (LD). The major features of the new programme include :

- (a) making reference to the implementation experience of the EOS Programme, the cooperation among the SWD, the LD and the Employees Retraining Board will be extended to CSSA employment support services in the entire territory. Participants of the new programme will have better access to information on job vacancies, retraining programmes, other training and employment support, etc.; and
- (b) having regard to the circumstances and needs of able-bodied CSSA recipients, services under the new programme will be divided into basic employment services for those who are unemployed for less

than six months, and focused and personalised employment support services by non-NGOs for those who are unemployed for six months or above.

25. The SWD is working out the implementation details of the new programme, as well as the expenditure involved. It is estimated that the new programme would be launched in the fourth quarter of 2019.

Care for the Elderly

26. The Government's objective in elderly services is to enable our senior citizens to live in dignity and provide suitable support for them to promote their sense of belonging, sense of security and sense of worthiness. The Government will continue to offer hardware and policy support to promote "active ageing" while taking care of the service needs of frail elderly persons. The Government strives to provide quality and cost-effective long-term care services for those elderly persons in need under the policy of promoting "ageing in place as the core, institutional care as back-up". We will continue to implement the recommendations set out in the Elderly Services Programme Plan (ESPP), including implementation of a series of new measures to strengthen community care and support services as well as enhancement of the service quality of RCHEs.

Supporting Ageing in Place for the Elderly

27. The Government will implement a number of new initiatives on supporting ageing in place for the elderly to meet the different needs of elderly persons living in the community and to make choices available for them. The Government will, within 2019, provide an additional 2 000 service quota under the EHCCS. The Government will also implement a new scheme to set up day care units for the elderly at qualified private and self-financing RCHEs through purchase of places from them and a total of around 120 day care places for the elderly will be provided, thereby increasing the service supply within a short period of time.

28. The Government also continues to implement the Second Phase of the Pilot Scheme on Community Care Service Voucher for the Elderly financed by the Lotteries Fund. Since October 2018, an additional 1 000 vouchers have been provided, bringing the total to 6 000, to meet the keen service demand. At end-August 2018, the SWD issued invitations to eligible elderly persons to apply for the additional 1 000 vouchers. To further strengthen community care and support services, the Government plans to provide another 1 000 vouchers under the Second Phase of the Pilot

Scheme to bring the total to 7 000 in 2019-20 to support ageing in place for elderly persons with moderate or severe impairment.

Supporting Carers

29. To relieve carers' stress and allow them to take a short break or attend to personal affairs when necessary, the Government currently provides designated day and residential respite services for elderly persons respectively through subsidised day care centres/units for the elderly and subvented RCHEs and contract homes. In addition, to meet the demand for beds in public hospitals during the seasonal peak of influenza, and to increase the number of residential respite places for the elderly, the SWD introduced a special measure from February to September 2018 to purchase about 250 additional residential places from private RCHEs participating in the EBPS to provide residential respite service for elderly persons. The measure has been extended to March 2019. In view of the positive response to this special measure, the Government plans to regularise the measure in 2019-20.

Purchasing an Additional 5 000 EA1 Places under the EBPS

30. The Government strives to increase subsidised residential care places for the elderly under a multi-pronged approach. In the next two years (2019-20 to 2020-21), a total of about 420 additional subsidised residential care places for the elderly will be provided through new contract homes and making better use of space in existing subvented homes. The Pilot Scheme on Residential Care Service Voucher for the Elderly will also continue to provide additional subsidised residential places. Separately, the Government will purchase an additional 5 000 EA1 places under the EBPS in the next five years to increase the supply of subsidised residential care places for the elderly and enhance the overall service quality of private RCHEs.

31. In addition, the Government will launch the following enhancement measures :

- (a) The subsidy amount for EA1 and EA2 places under the EBPS will be increased starting from 2019-20 to enable private RCHEs participating in the scheme to strengthen the care and support for elderly persons, thereby enhancing the service quality. The new subsidy amount will apply to all the existing EA1 and EA2 places under the EBPS, as well as the additional 5 000 EA1 places to be purchased; and
- (b) At present, the purchase prices for places under the EBPS are categorised into urban area and New Territories, and the purchase

price for the urban area is higher. Having regard to the rental adjustment of private properties in various districts in recent years, starting from 2019-20, regardless of the location of the RCHE, the Government will provide a standardised subsidy based on the level of the places (i.e. EA1 or EA2). The new measure will apply to all the existing EA1 and EA2 places under the EBPS, as well as the additional 5 000 EA1 places to be purchased.

Reinstating the Population-based Planning Ratios for Elderly Services in the HKPSG

32. Having regard to the recommendations of the ESPP, the Government will reinstate by end-2018 the population-based planning ratios in the HKPSG in respect of subsidised residential care services and community care services, district elderly community centres and neighbourhood elderly centres. This would facilitate early reservation of suitable sites for provision of elderly services and facilities by the SWD and relevant departments (e.g. the Planning Department and Housing Department) in planning new residential development projects.

Extending OALA to the GD Scheme and FJ Scheme

33. To further facilitate Hong Kong elderly persons who choose to retire in GD or FJ, the Government will extend OALA to the GD Scheme and FJ Scheme to provide monthly allowance (including Normal OALA currently at \$2,600 per month and Higher OALA currently at \$3,485 per month) for eligible elderly persons. Having regard to the circumstances of Hong Kong elderly persons residing in the two Provinces, the SWD will implement a special one-off arrangement in the first year of implementation of the initiative to waive the one-year continuous residence (OYCR) in Hong Kong requirement immediately before the date of application. This arrangement will also be applicable to the Old Age Allowance (OAA) (currently at \$1,345 per month) under the GD Scheme and FJ Scheme during the same period.

34. Taking into account the selection and appointment of implementation agent(s), the SWD envisages that the above initiatives would be implemented in early 2020 at the earliest. Whether eligible elderly persons would apply for the relevant allowances depend on their individual considerations and circumstances. It is difficult to provide an accurate assessment for the time being. Based on the take-up rates of the GD Scheme and FJ Scheme, the implementation experience of OALA in Hong Kong, the number of elderly persons residing in the two Provinces, etc., it is assumed that, for planning purpose, about 25 000 elderly persons (including those switching from OAA to OALA under the GD Scheme and FJ Scheme)

would benefit from the above initiatives. Additional recurrent allowance payment is about \$670 million.

Enhancing the Navigation Scheme for Young Persons in Care Services (Navigation Scheme)

35. The Government rolled out the Navigation Scheme in July 2015, providing a total of 1 000 training places in several years starting from 2015-16 to encourage young persons to join the elderly and rehabilitation care services. As at August 2018, a total of 1 010 trainees were recruited. To encourage more young people to join the care services in the social welfare sector, the Government will continue to implement the Navigation Scheme, providing a total of 1 200 additional training places in the coming years under an enhanced scheme, with a view to helping the social welfare care sector attract young people.

Support for the Disadvantaged

36. The Government is committed to promoting, protecting and ensuring the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promoting respect for their inherent dignity. The Government will continue to aim at helping these persons develop their capabilities and building a barrier-free living environment. The Government will provide persons with disabilities with community support, residential care, vocational rehabilitation and employment support service and render support to their families and carers, with a view to enabling persons with disabilities to participate in full and enjoy equal opportunities both in terms of their social life and personal growth.

Formulating a New Hong Kong Rehabilitation Programme Plan

37. The Government has asked the Rehabilitation Advisory Committee (RAC) to formulate a new Hong Kong Rehabilitation Programme Plan (RPP) in order to set out the strategic directions and measures to address the service needs of persons with disabilities at different stages of life. The RAC has completed the consultation work for the first stage formulation of RPP and is making preparation for the consultation work for the second stage formulation of RPP in end 2018. In response to the public views collated at the first stage of the public engagement exercise, the scope of the new RPP will include long-term planning of various rehabilitation and care services for persons with disabilities (including community support and residential care) and related macro issues, as well as specialised areas pertinent to the

building of a disability-friendly society. At the same time, the Government will continue to improve our rehabilitation services. Efforts include increasing the number of places of pre-school rehabilitation service, day service and residential service, as well as increasing the number of subsidised places under the Bought Place Scheme for Private Residential Care Homes for Persons with Disabilities.

Enhancing Community Support Services

38. Many persons with disabilities expressed their wishes during the consultation exercise of the new RPP to continue to live at home with a view to postponing the admission to residential homes. In this connection, the Government will strengthen community support services for persons with disabilities and their families before the completion of the new RPP, such that persons with disabilities may choose to continue living with their families in the community and reduce the pressure on their family members at the same time.

39. In this connection, the Government will increase the number of District Support Centres for Persons with Disabilities (DSCs) and enhance the rehabilitation training service of these centres in order to enhance service capacity and quality of DSCs, with a view to providing community services for more persons with disabilities, thereby strengthening support for their families/carers. In parallel, in view of the special service needs of persons with autism, the Government will increase the number of Support Centres for Persons with Autism from three to five, and enhance the manpower of the existing centres to strengthen support for persons with autism and their parents/carers.

40. To strengthen home-based rehabilitation services for persons with disabilities, the Government will increase the resources and redeploy existing resources of home-based care services. It is estimated to serve an addition of 1 800 persons with disabilities living in the community. In parallel, transport support for home-based care services will also be strengthened.

41. To enable carers to continue to take care of ageing persons with disabilities at home under the assistance of professionals, the Government will enhance speech therapy services to ageing service users and persons with severe disabilities through DSCs, Home Care Service for Persons with Severe Disabilities and Integrated Support Service for Persons with Severe Physical Disabilities so as to assist them in dealing with speech and swallowing problems. Besides, the Government will extend speech therapy services for ageing service users living in Care and Attention Homes for the Aged Blind, Long Stay Care Homes and Supported Hostels.

Enhancing the accessibility of community/ living environment

42. The Government will review the universal accessibility of the community/living environment in Hong Kong with reference to standards and best practices in overseas cities; conduct benchmarking exercise on existing barrier-free facilities and stakeholders engagement; and formulate strategy and recommend practical measures to enhance the accessibility of the community/living environment to facilitate persons with disabilities to lead an independent life.

Other New Initiatives for Supporting Persons with Disabilities

43. To enhance social support and re-integration of ex-mentally ill persons into the community, the SWD has set up 24 Integrated Community Centres for Mental Wellness (ICCMWs), operated by NGOs, across the territory to provide mental health support services for ex-mentally ill persons and persons with suspected mental health problems aged 15 or above. The Government will expand the target groups of ICCMWs to secondary school students with mental health needs and through community mental health support services ranging from early prevention to risk management, such as casework counseling, therapeutic groups, occupational therapy, etc., to strengthen professional support for them and to assist the needy ones transiting to appropriate adult support services.

44. To better address the service needs of ageing service users, the Government will review the training and care needs of ageing service users of Day Activity Centre cum Hostel for Severely Mentally Handicapped Persons and Sheltered Workshop/Integrated Vocational Rehabilitation Services Centre cum Hostel for Moderately Mentally Handicapped Persons so as to explore the need and feasibility of developing a new service mode. In parallel, the Government will explore the feasibility of developing a new service mode and building up a vocational training pathway to better address the vocational training needs of service users.

45. Besides, in view of the addition of hospital beds and shortening of waiting time for specialist out-patient services of the HA, the SWD will increase the number of medical social workers in the hospitals of the HA correspondingly in order to continue to provide appropriate services for patients and their families.

Social Welfare Planning

Implementing a New Phase of the Special Scheme

46. In view of the community's pressing demand for welfare services in light of the scarce land resources, the Government will implement a new phase of the Special Scheme, under which targeted assistance is provided for participating NGOs during the planning or development process. Through applications for expansion, redevelopment or new development on the sites owned by the participating organisations, the scheme aims at increasing the provision of much-needed welfare facilities, in particular additional places of elderly, rehabilitation and child welfare services. In parallel, we will continue to press ahead with the progress of project proposals submitted under the first phrase of the Special Scheme.

Developing Non-Profit Making Elderly Apartments under the Special Scheme

47. The Chief Executive stated in her 2017 Policy Address that based on a welfare service-oriented approach and the principle of enhancing people's livelihood, the Government would flexibly process development proposals under the Special Scheme, taking into account the preference of individual organisations. In this regard, the Government supports NGOs' development of non-profit making elderly apartments, which will be included in projects aiming at providing much-needed welfare facilities as the core components under the Special Scheme, by charging these organisations nominal premium and nil administrative fee, with a view to encouraging them to maximise the development potential of the sites, and providing suitable and affordable accommodation for elderly persons who are living in sub-standard housing, living in/applying for PRH or having special social needs.

On-going Initiatives

Children, Family and Youth Services

Increasing Foster Care Service Places and Promoting Foster Care Service

48. To further support families in need, the SWD has increased the level of various foster care allowances since December 2017 and planned to provide 240 additional foster care places (including 60 foster care (emergency) places) in phases, increasing the total number of foster care places from 1 070 to 1 310, of which the number of foster care (emergency)

places will be increased from 95 to 155. The SWD provided in the first phase 60 additional foster care places, including 20 foster care (emergency) places, in 2017-18. The SWD will also make continuous efforts to promote the service and recruit more foster parents to offer appropriate care in home settings for children who cannot be taken care of by their families temporarily.

Strengthening Care Manpower for Residential Child Care Services

49. Taking into account the increasingly complex emotional and behavioural problems of children and youth receiving residential care services in recent years, the SWD has provided additional social workers and clinical psychological services since February 2014 to enhance the support by professional staff for residential care services so that the children in care can be provided with relevant services when awaiting referral social workers' arrangement for long-term clinical psychological service. In 2014-15, the SWD also strengthened the supervisory and paramedical service support under the enhanced Lump Sum Grant Subvention System. To further enhance the care and support for the children receiving residential care services, the SWD allocates additional resources in 2018-19 to strengthen the care manpower of small group homes, residential CCCs, children's homes, boys'/girls' homes and boys'/girls' hostels.

Improving the Facilities of Small Group Homes

50. To address the present-day need for looking after the daily living of children and youth, the SWD has been discussing with the welfare sector how to carry out improvement works for residential care service units. The SWD has since 2017-18 provided additional recurrent funding for the provision of air-conditioning in all subvented residential child care service units to improve the care and living quality of the service users. To further improve the environment of the residential child care services, the SWD will implement an environment improvement programme of small group homes. As the facilities and physical environment of small group homes are relatively standardised, it is feasible to make batch applications for funding required under the Lotteries Fund for the environment improvement programme. The environment improvement programme will be implemented in four phases over a period of about eight years so that the service provision will not be affected. Support-in-principle for the funding request had been sought from the Lotteries Fund Advisory Committee in July 2018 while invitation for participation in the environment improvement programme was issued to NGOs operating small group homes in September 2018. The first phase of the environment improvement programme will commence in 2019-20. Regarding other residential care homes for children (including boys'/girls' homes and boys'/girls' hostels), the physical

environment, scales and facilities of these other homes vary from one to another, and some of them have applied for or been provided with grants under the Lotteries Fund or other charitable funds for improvement works. The SWD will continue to discuss and follow up with individual homes on their plans for improvement works so as to provide appropriate assistance.

Increasing Aided CCC Places

51. To further enhance day child care services, the Government has planned to provide a total of about 300 additional aided standalone CCC places in phases in North District, Kwun Tong, Kwai Tsing and Sha Tin for providing long full-day child care services for children aged below three. Among which, the SWD has planned to increase 56 places in North District, 92 places in Kwun Tong, as well as about 100 places in Shatin in 2019-20. The number of places to be increased and the implementation timetable for Kwai Tsing are yet to be confirmed.

Combating Domestic Violence

52. The Government does not tolerate domestic violence and has been dealing with the problem through a three-pronged strategy, viz. preventing domestic violence, supporting victims of domestic violence and providing specialised services and crisis intervention. The Government will continue to allocate resources in enhancing specialised and support services, including providing various support services for victims of domestic violence as appropriate as well as providing counselling and psycho-educational services for batterers to change their abusive attitude and behaviour.

Setting up Five Cyber Youth Support Teams

53. To further provide service to at-risk and hidden youths, aged six to 24, who have emotional or behavioural problems and are manifesting or engaging in various at-risk behaviours on the Internet, the SWD will provide subvention to NGOs for setting up five Cyber Youth Support Teams. The SWD has selected five NGOs to set up those five Cyber Youth Support Teams on Hong Kong Island, in East Kowloon, West Kowloon, New Territories East and New Territories West respectively. The service will commence operation on 1 December 2018.

District Support Scheme for Children and Youth Development

54. The SWD will continue to implement the enhanced measures for the District Support Scheme for Children and Youth Development to provide 10 000 annual quotas of cash assistance at the ceiling of \$2,000 so as to better

cater for the development needs of deprived children and youths at the district level.

Prevention of Youth Suicides

55. The Chief Executive asked the LWB in October 2017 to set up a cross-bureaux/departments (B/Ds) task force (Task Force) to review and coordinate the concerted effort of B/Ds to take forward the recommendations in the Final Report of the Committee on Prevention of Student Suicides (the Final Report) which was issued in 2016, and to further discuss new measures on the prevention of youth suicides. Apart from the LWB, the Task Force comprises representatives from the Education Bureau, the Food and Health Bureau, the Home Affairs Bureau, the HA, the Department of Health and the SWD. The Task Force has convened four meetings since its establishment and submitted its report to the Chief Executive in October 2018.

56. The report takes stock of existing strategies/services and the follow up actions by B/Ds pursuant to the suggestions of the Final Report in the prevention of youth suicides and proposes a number of recommendations for enhancement. The existing strategies/services are classified into three tiers, namely, (i) nurturing positive values; (ii) identifying and supporting vulnerable youth; and (iii) supporting youth with suicidal risks. The recommendations seek to better meet service gaps and the multi-faceted needs of young people and their parents, for instance by enhancing school social work services in pre-primary institutions and primary schools; strengthening life education and resilience building; improving the quality of homework and enhancing assessment literacy; enhancing mental health promotion and public education; enhancing the work of the Commission; enhancing the Student Mental Health Support Scheme; enhancing child and adolescent psychiatric service and increasing the capacity of special outpatient clinics of the HA, etc. The report also summarises the challenges in the prevention of youth suicides and point to the directions of longer term solutions in addressing the problems.

Poverty Alleviation

WFA Scheme

57. The Government launched the WFA Scheme on 1 April 2018 to implement a series of enhancement to the then Low-income Working Family Allowance Scheme as announced in the Chief Executive's 2017 Policy Address. These enhancements include extending the Scheme to cover singleton households, allowing all household members to aggregate their working hours, relaxing the income limit, raising all the rates of allowances,

etc. We will continue to actively promote the WFA Scheme, and assist eligible households to apply for WFA.

58. Separately, the Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency is upgrading its information technology system to take up the processing of the individual-based Work Incentive Transport Subsidy (WITS) applications¹ currently performed by the LD on 1 April 2019, with a view to delivering more efficient and convenient services to applicants.

Care for the Elderly

Enhancing Dementia Care

59. The Government is actively implementing a series of measures to enhance dementia care and support at the community level. The measures include regularising the Dementia Community Support Scheme since February 2019, and allocating more resources to service units providing community care and support services for the elderly from October 2018 onwards to enhance the provision of dementia care service and related staff training. The Government has also organised a three-year territory-wide public education campaign, titled the Dementia Friendly Community Campaign, since September 2018 to enhance public understanding of dementia and encourage members of society to support and care about demented persons and their carers.

Promoting Gerontechnology

60. The Government plans to launch the \$1 billion Innovation and Technology Fund for Application in Elderly and Rehabilitation Care in December 2018 to subsidise elderly and rehabilitation service units to try out and procure/rent technology products, so as to improve the lives of service users as well as reduce the burden and stress on care staff and carers.

Implementing the Pilot Scheme on Residential Care Service Voucher for the Elderly

61. The Government will continue to implement the Pilot Scheme on Residential Care Service Voucher for the Elderly by adopting “money-following-the-user” approach with a view to offering elderly persons in need of residential care service an additional choice and providing an incentive for RCHEs to improve their services. The SWD has commissioned a

¹ With effect from 1 April 2018, the WITS Scheme only accepts individual-based applications. The Government abolished the household-based WITS at the time of implementing the WFA Scheme.

consulting team to assist in conducting an evaluation. The evaluation is expected to be completed in mid-2019.

Considering to Allow Subsidised Elderly Service and Rehabilitation Service Units Flexibility in the Importation of Carers

62. Individual sectors, particularly the elderly care service sector, have long been encountering human resources shortage and recruitment difficulties. However, with the extremely tight overall labour force and rapidly ageing population, the elderly care service sector experiences particularly acute shortage of manpower supply. The 2017 Policy Address proposed that on the premise that local workers' priority for employment would be safeguarded, consideration might be given to allowing greater flexibility for subsidised elderly service and rehabilitation service units to import carers. The Government has, through a number of measures, been helping the subsidised elderly care service sector to employ additional manpower. But given the increasing need for additional subsidised elderly care services, we will review the practical circumstances and determine when and how to implement the importation of carers.

Strengthening the Monitoring of RCHEs and Residential Care Homes for Persons with Disabilities (RCHDs) and Enhancing their Service Quality

63. The SWD continues to review the Residential Care Homes (Elderly Persons) Ordinance, the Residential Care Homes (Persons with Disabilities) Ordinance and the related codes of practice. The SWD is also actively preparing to launch a number of measures to strengthen the monitoring of RCHEs and RCHDs and enhance their service quality on a sustained basis. The measures include providing visiting medical practitioner services for residents of all RCHEs and RCHDs in the territory since October 2018; planning to launch by phases starting from the first quarter of 2019 a five-year scheme to provide full subsidies for home managers, health workers and care workers of all RCHEs and RCHDs in the territory to enroll in Qualifications Framework-based training courses; planning to launch in the first quarter of 2019 a five-year scheme to provide full subsidies for all private RCHEs to join accreditation schemes; launching a four-year pilot scheme in the first quarter of 2019, at the earliest, whereby district-based professional teams will be set up to provide outreach services for residents in private RCHEs and RCHDs, so as to support their social and rehabilitation needs; and planning to commence a consultancy study in 2019-20 to review the existing licensing and regulatory regimes for RCHEs and RCHDs, which includes exploring the feasibility of formulating performance indicators for quality assurance.

Implementing the Government Public Transport Fare Concession Scheme for the Elderly and Eligible Persons with Disabilities

64. The LWB will continue to implement the popular Government Public Transport Fare Concession Scheme for the Elderly and Eligible Persons with Disabilities, with a view to building a caring and inclusive society by encouraging elderly persons and eligible persons with disabilities to participate more in community activities. In the past six months (from February to July 2018), the number of average daily passenger trips made on the Mass Transit Railway, franchised buses, ferries and green minibuses under the Scheme was around 1 288 000, with about 88% (some 1 131 000 trips) made by elderly persons² and about 12% (some 157 000 trips) made by eligible persons with disabilities³. In 2018-19, the estimated reimbursement of revenue forgone to public transport operators by the Government under the Scheme is around \$1.31 billion. The LWB will conduct a review on the Scheme in 2018/19.

Enhancing OALA

65. To strengthen the retirement protection system, the Government announced two enhancements to OALA in early 2017. The SWD relaxed the asset limits⁴ of Normal OALA on 1 May 2017. Separately, the SWD implemented the Higher OALA⁵ since 1 June 2018, which takes retrospective effect from 1 May 2017. Eligible elderly persons who submit application on or before 31 December 2018 would receive payment dating back to 1 May 2017 at the earliest.

Implementing OAA under the GD Scheme and FJ Scheme

66. In addition to extending OALA to the GD Scheme and FJ Scheme (see paragraphs 33 to 34 above), the Government will continue to provide monthly OAA to eligible elderly persons who choose to reside in the two Provinces under the GD Scheme and FJ Scheme. In this connection, the FJ Scheme was launched on 1 April 2018. The special one-off arrangement (to waive the OYCR in Hong Kong requirement) in its first year of implementation will end on 31 March 2019.

² Elderly persons refer to those aged 65 or above.

³ Eligible persons with disabilities are recipients under the CSSA Scheme aged below 65 with 100% disabilities and recipients of Disability Allowance in the same age group.

⁴ For Normal OALA (currently at \$2,600 per month), the prevailing asset limits for elderly singleton and elderly couple are \$334,000 and \$506,000 respectively, while the monthly income limits are \$7,820 and \$12,770 respectively.

⁵ For Higher OALA (currently at \$3,485 per month), the prevailing asset limits for elderly singleton and elderly couple are \$146,000 and \$221,000 respectively. The income limits are the same as those applicable to Normal OALA.

Implementing the Opportunities for the Elderly Project (OEP) and Elder Academy (EA) Scheme

67. The Government will continue to encourage elderly persons to actively take part in community affairs and lead a fruitful elderly life through participating in activities under OEP, such as those related to elderly volunteer service and inter-generational harmony. As at end-August 2018, a total of 340 projects were approved for the 2018-20 period.

68. Separately, the Government will continue to implement the EA Scheme to encourage the setting up of EAs in primary schools, secondary schools and post-secondary institutions through the collaboration of school sponsoring bodies and organisations providing elderly services, so as to enable elderly persons to pursue life-long learning. About 140 EAs have since been set up. These EAs altogether provide more than 10 000 learning places each year.

Building Age-friendly Communities

69. Having regard to the diverse characteristics and needs of the 18 districts in Hong Kong, the Government encourages each district to implement age-friendly community projects at the district level. There are now 13 districts with the World Health Organization's 'age-friendly community' accreditation, an addition of four districts since October 2017.

Support for Women

Enhancing Child Care Services

70. To remove the barriers for women to enter or stay in employment and to further respond to the community demand for child care services, the Government will continue to implement the following measures to enhance child care services :

- (a) from 2015-16 onwards, increasing, by phases, the provision of Extended Hours Service by about 5 000 places at aided CCCs and KG-cum-CCCs in districts with high demand. About 1 200 of such places have been provided since September 2015; and
- (b) incorporating CCCs as one of the types of social welfare services under the new phase of the Special Scheme. Besides, the Government will also explore, on a pilot basis, the feasibility of providing about 100 NGO-operated child care service places for

staff members in the proposed Government Complex in Tseung Kwan O.

Facilitating the Development of Women

71. To enable women to fully realise their due status, rights and opportunities in all aspects of life, the Government, in collaboration with the Women's Commission (WoC) and the community as a whole, will continue to promote the well-being and interests of women through a three-pronged strategy, namely the provision of an enabling environment, empowerment of women and public education. The Government will continue to promote the concept of gender mainstreaming when formulating policies and programmes.

72. The Government will continue to coordinate the efforts of all parties in promoting women employment. Under the WoC's Funding Scheme for Women's Development, from 2014 to the first round of application of 2018, the theme "Women's Employment" has been adopted, inviting women's groups and NGOs to organise various programmes and activities that could help unleash women's potential, enhance their employability and/or create an environment that enables women to work.

Support for the Disadvantaged

Continuing to implement the Child Development Fund (CDF)

73. Since its establishment in 2008, a total of \$900 million has been injected into the CDF to provide suitable support to underprivileged children to widen their horizons, enhance their exposure, and help them develop a saving habit and plan for the future, with a view to alleviating inter-generational poverty. The CDF has rolled out six batches of NGO-run projects and four batches of school-based projects, benefiting more than 14 000 grassroots children. The fifth batch of school-based projects and the seventh batch of NGO-run projects will be rolled out in November 2018 and December 2018 respectively, which are expected to benefit more than 3 000 new participants.

Partnership Fund for the Disadvantaged (PFD)

74. Since the inception of the PFD in 2005, the Government has been promoting cross-sectoral collaboration and providing grants that match donations from business organisations to subsidise welfare projects helping the disadvantaged. A total of \$1.2 billion (comprising the \$800 million for

the regular portion and the \$400 million for the dedicated portion for after-school learning and support programmes) has been injected into the PFD. The PFD has launched 11 rounds of application under the regular portion, approving matching grants of about \$434.7 million to implement 920 welfare projects and benefiting more than 1 million disadvantaged persons. The PFD has also launched four rounds of application under the dedicated portion, approving matching grants of about \$153.3 million to implement 203 projects and benefiting about 100 000 primary and secondary school students. A new round of application for the regular portion and the dedicated portion will be launched by end of 2018.

Extending the Short-term Food Assistance Service Projects (service projects)

75. The service projects have been implemented since 2009, aiming at providing low-income persons who have temporary difficulties in meeting their basic food expenditure with short-term and basic food items for generally not more than eight weeks each time. The funding allocation for the service totals \$600 million. The Government has provided an additional funding of \$447 million in 2018-19 to extend the service until 2021. Through invitation for proposals, the SWD has selected service operators to implement eight projects in a new round for three years with effect from 1 August 2018. At the same time, as poverty alleviation measures introduced by the Government in recent years may overlap with the service projects in terms of objectives and service targets, the Government will conduct a comprehensive review on the positioning of and way forward for the service projects, and carefully consider the views of stakeholders in the process.

Review on Enhancement of Lump Sum Grant Subvention System

76. The Task Force for Review on Enhancement of Lump Sum Grant Subvention System (the Task Force) was set up in November 2017 to conduct a comprehensive review on how to optimise the Lump Sum Grant Subvention System (LSGSS). The Task Force comprises a wide range of representatives, including Members of the Legislative Council; representatives from the Hong Kong Council of Social Service, NGO management, staff side, service users, LSGSS-related committees, independent parties from the community, the LWB and the SWD. In June 2018, the Task Force formally established the following eight areas as the scope of the review:

- (a) Operating environment of NGOs under the LSGSS;
- (b) Review of staffing establishment and subvention benchmarks;

- (c) Use of Lump Sum Grant/Provident Fund reserve and financial planning;
- (d) Pay structures, staff turnover rate and vacancies;
- (e) Funding and Service Agreement (FSA)-related activities and flexibility provided for NGOs;
- (f) Mechanisms for reviewing FSAs and NGOs' service performance assessment;
- (g) Transparency and public accountability; and
- (h) Communication and participation of stakeholders.

77. For carrying out the review on areas (e), (f), (g) and (h), the Task Force had already sent out questionnaires to NGOs in July 2018 to collect relevant information and data for analysis and as a basis for detailed deliberation in future. The SWD also hired a consultancy firm early this month to assist the Task Force in carrying out data collection and research work for carrying out the review on areas (a), (b), (c) and (d). The Task Force will continue to collect the views of the stakeholders during the upcoming sector consultation sessions and focus groups, and will consider them in detail in its future meetings and make recommendations. The entire review is expected to be completed by mid-2020.

Welfare Premises Planning

78. In view of the acute demand for welfare services and scarce land resources, the Government will continue to encourage private developers to provide in their development projects various welfare facilities, including day CCCs, residential CCCs, day care centres for the elderly and RCHEs. Besides, the SWD will continue to explore the feasibility of purchasing premises for the operation and provision of elderly and rehabilitation services to address the shortage of premises.

Conclusion

79. The Government attaches great importance to social welfare services and has been investing substantial resources in this area. Recurrent expenditure on social welfare in the financial year of 2018-19 is estimated to

be \$79.8 billion, accounting for 19.6% of the recurrent expenditure of the Government as a whole. The Government will continue to plan for and deliver suitable social welfare services through strengthening collaboration with different sectors of the community.

Labour and Welfare Bureau
October 2018