

For discussion on  
13 February 2023

**Legislative Council Panel on Home Affairs, Culture and Sports**  
**Support for Athletes with Disabilities**

**Purpose**

This paper briefs Members on the Government's work in supporting athletes with disabilities (AWDs) and the initiative to enhance support for them.

**Background**

2. The Government is committed to promoting sports development and encouraging people of all ages and abilities, including people with disabilities (PWDs), to participate in sports activities and build up a habit of regular exercise. Promoting participation in sports by PWDs is one of the crucial initiatives in sports development taken forward by the Government. To promote participation in sports by PWDs and support AWDs in a more comprehensive manner, the Government commissioned a consultancy study on this subject in 2015. Based on the recommendations made in the consultancy report on "Sport for People with Disabilities in Hong Kong" promulgated in 2016 and comments received from the public consultation, we<sup>1</sup> had developed a detailed work plan in collaboration with the stakeholders on various measures to promote the development of disability sports. We have been implementing these measures by phases together with the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) and the Hong Kong Sports Institute (HKSI), including the initiatives for enhancing the support for AWDs. In recent years, the Government has considerably increased the resources put into the development of disability sports. For 2022-23, the estimated total expenditure exceeds

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<sup>1</sup> Prior to 1 July 2022, the disability sports portfolio was overseen by the former Home Affairs Bureau (HAB).

\$110 million<sup>2</sup>, representing an increase of over 150% as compared to that of around \$44 million five years ago (i.e. 2017-18), and about 70% of the overall expenditure goes to supporting AWDs.

### **Related Measures to Support AWDs**

3. Hong Kong athletes have attained remarkable achievements at various international sports events in recent years and brought honours to Hong Kong, including the capture of 48 medals (including 11 gold, 16 silver and 21 bronze) at the 2018 Asian Para Games (APG) as well as two silver and three bronze medals at the Tokyo Paralympic Games held in 2021. Over the years, the Government has been implementing various measures to help AWDs unleash potential and improve performance. The existing key measures are summarised in the ensuing paragraphs.

#### *(1) Elite Vote Support Scheme for Para Sports*

4. To strengthen support for AWDs, the Government introduced through the HKSI the Pilot Scheme for Elite Vote Support System (EVSS) for Disability Sports (Pilot Scheme) in December 2017, providing for the first time direct financial support and other support services to full-time and part-time AWDs. Under the Pilot Scheme, full-time and part-time elite AWDs can receive direct financial support every month. Achievements of athletes at international competitions will be used as the criterion to identify Tier A and Tier B Para sports to be supported by the HKSI for a period of four years. As for other support services provided by the HKSI to Tier A and Tier B Para sports, AWDs of each Tier A sport are provided with training venues and accommodation by the HKSI, as well as comprehensive sports science support, including scientific conditioning, sport biomechanics and technology, sport nutrition monitoring, sports psychology and sports medicine, so as to identify different training problems and provide more effective training advice. As for Tier B sports, the HKSI provides funding and support to relevant “national sports associations” (NSAs). As the results of the 2018 APG showed that the Pilot Scheme had effectively improved the performance of athletes, the

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<sup>2</sup> The figure includes the related expenditures incurred under the former HAB, the Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau and LCSD; and the funding provided under the Elite Athletes Development Fund, Arts and Sport Development Fund (Sports Portion), Hong Kong Athletes Fund and Hong Kong Paralympians Fund.

Government, with the support of the Sports Commission, regularised Pilot Scheme, which in turn became the EVSS for Para Sports in April 2019.

5. The Government has reviewed the EVSS after the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games, including the EVSS for Para Sports. The Sports Commission was of the view that the EVSS for Para Sports was conducive to the development of elite Para sports and supported the Government's proposed refinements to the assessment criteria of elite Para sports. The revised assessment criteria for the EVSS for Para Sports have been implemented in 2022-23, details are set out at the [Annex](#).

6. With the development over the past years, the EVSS currently includes six Tier A and three Tier B elite Para sports<sup>3</sup>. The Sports Commission has all along supported the Government in further improving direct financial support for full-time elite AWDs. The maximum amount of direct financial support that full-time elite AWDs can receive per month has increased from \$20,000 under the Pilot Scheme to \$40,000 in 2022-23. In 2022-23, the HKSI has more than 118 elite AWDs, of which about 46 are full-time athletes.

(2) *Athlete Education and Personal Development Support*

7. The Government established the Hong Kong Athletes Fund (HKAF) in 1996 to provide financial support for the education of current and retired elite athletes, and to offer financial support for retired athletes. In 2020, the Government further injected \$250 million into the HKAF to increase scholarship awards in support of the dual career development of elite athletes, and provide more cash incentives for full-time elite athletes when they retire. The education grant under the HKFA provides grants for educational and other academic training to individual athletes to allow them to pursue excellence in their chosen sports and to provide them with the opportunity to develop alternative careers upon retirement. The Elite Athletes Performance Recognition Scheme aims to support athletes' pursuit of a second career after retirement by providing a one-off cash grant. Since the inclusion of AWDs in elite support, they have likewise been eligible to the education and personal development support above.

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<sup>3</sup> Tier A Para sports (6 sports): Boccia (Physical Disability) (PD), Para Table Tennis (PD), Wheelchair Fencing (PD), Para Table Tennis (Intellectual Disability) (ID), Para Swimming (ID), Para Badminton (PD).  
Tier B Para sports (3 sports): Para Lawn Bowls (PD), Para Tenpin Bowling (PD) and Para Athletics (ID).

(3) Preparation for and participation in major international sports games

8. We have been providing funding under the Arts and Sport Development Fund (Sports Portion) (ASDF (Sports Portion)) to support athletes' preparation for and participation in major international sports events and other high level competitions. For the period from 2017-18 to 2021-22, a total of 32 applications for funding under the ASDF (Sports Portion), amounting to \$32.5 million, were approved for supporting AWDs' preparation for and participation in various major international sports events and the total attendance of AWDs at these events is 2 250.

9. Besides, LCSD provides subvention to relevant NSAs under the Sports Subvention Scheme for the promotion and development of disability sports, including funding support for the provision of squad training programmes to AWDs and their participation in local and overseas competitions. For 2022-23, over \$35 million of subvention was provided to relevant NSAs, including the Hong Kong Sports Association for the Physically Disabled (HKSAPD), the Hong Kong Sports Association for Persons with Intellectual Disability, the Hong Kong Sports Association of the Deaf, the Hong Kong Equestrian Federation, the Hong Kong, China Rowing Association and the Karatedo Federation of Hong Kong, China.

(4) Other Support Services

10. With the assistance of the Government, the Hong Kong Paralympic Committee (HKPC) was formally established as an independent organisation in April 2022<sup>4</sup>. We provide subvention to the HKPC to cover its personnel, office and programme expenses and the amount of subvention provided for 2022-23 is \$9.3 million. After becoming an independent organisation, the HKPC can support AWDs in a more focused and systematic manner, including the handling of matters relating to the classification of Para sports, promotion

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<sup>4</sup> Prior to 1 April 2022, the HKPC&SAPD played the dual role of being an NSA which organises and promotes sports for persons with physical disability as well as the sole organisation in Hong Kong recognised as the "National Paralympic Committee" by the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) and authorised to select athletes (including those with intellectual disability) for the Hong Kong representative team to participate in the Paralympic Games and other world and regional events sanctioned by IPC. Referring to the consultancy report as mentioned in paragraph 2 above, one of the recommendations therein was to update the structure of the HKPC&SAPD and segregate it into two independent bodies so as to allay the concerns of some PWDs and organisations over its dual role. The Government therefore assisted the HKPC&SAPD in its segregation into two separate entities to become the HKPC and the HKSAPD.

and development of different kinds of Para sports of the Paralympic Games, etc. To ensure a level playing field, classification has been a crucial and integral part of disability sports. All Para sports events are classified according to the health condition of athletes and the characteristics of individual sports.

11. The HKPC is also dedicated to enhancing the professional knowledge of supporting personnel in the sports sector on Para sports, in particular on Para sports coaching development and disability sports classification, with an aim to train up more specialised supporting personnel to support AWDs in a professional and appropriate manner. In addition, the HKPC organises foundation courses on Para sports coaching for people who are interested in pursuing a career in Para sports coaching; it also collaborates with a local university to develop a curriculum framework on Para sports coaching courses with a plan to launching courses which are equivalent to Qualifications Framework Level 2 within two years. The courses will, inter alia, provide the participants with the professional knowledge on disability sports classification.

### **New Initiative to Support AWDs**

12. While the measures for supporting retired athletes as mentioned in paragraph 7 above are also applicable to AWDs, we see a need to introduce a dedicated career and education programme for AWDs in view of their health condition and practical needs. Hence, it was announced in the 2022 Policy Address the launch of a 5-year pilot programme on career and education for AWDs (the Pilot Programme) to equip them with the knowledge and skills necessary for transformation and development after retirement, and to provide them with placement opportunities.

13. We will roll out the Pilot Programme in collaboration with the HKPC with an aim to equipping AWDs with knowledge, skill sets and career planning skills so as to facilitate their integration into society and post-athletic transformation for their second-career development. We hope that the Pilot Programme can reduce apprehensions of AWDs so that they can devote themselves completely to training and competitions, focus on improving their skills and striving for excellence. Based on the initial proposal, the Pilot Programme will provide services to AWDs in the following three aspects:

(a) Career Support

To provide AWDs with career support through workshops and seminars on career guidance and job interviewing skills, job matching services, internship programmes and retired athletes transformation programme; to promote social inclusion and facilitate AWDs' integration into the community; to collaborate with different enterprises and organisations to provide diversified career support to AWDs; and to assist them in planning for their career path during the transitional period.

(b) Education Support

To provide comprehensive educational support for AWDs for further studies and education scholarship programmes for vocational training, post-secondary education, undergraduate, postgraduate and master courses, with an aim to helping AWDs with different academic qualifications to pursue further studies after retirement according to their own needs and interests and develop a diversified career path.

(c) Life Skills Training

To provide support and encourage AWDs to acquire knowledge in different disciplines for their future career development; to provide life skills training programmes to equip AWDs with the knowledge and skill sets necessary to cope with the challenges that they will face in their future career through various courses and offer them the opportunities to acquire knowledge about different professions and explore their interests.

14. The support services to be provided under the Pilot Programme are largely modelled on those provided under the Hong Kong Athletes Career and Education Programme run by the Sports Federation and Olympic Committee of Hong Kong, China, with the exception that the Pilot Programme will provide one-to-one counselling services for participants receiving life skills training as appropriate. Considering the challenges to be faced by AWDs during their career transformation as well as their health condition, we hope that the one-to-one counselling services would help AWDs to better cope with the changes.

15. We plan to launch the Pilot Programme in the first half of 2023 and provide career and education support and life skills training for at least 100 AWDs every year. We will review the effectiveness of the Pilot Programme with a view to formulating long-term measures to support AWDs.

## **The Way Forward**

16. The Government will continue to provide suitable support for AWDs in various aspects, with a view to helping them unleash their full potential and enhance their competitiveness, thereby enabling them to scale new height at major international sports events, including the upcoming Hangzhou APG to be held in October 2023.

## **Advice Sought**

17. Members are invited to note the content of this paper and comment on the measures to support for AWDs.

**Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau**  
**February 2023**

**Elite Vote Support System (EVSS) for Para Sports – Generic Scoring Table**

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Rating</b>					
International-level performance record in previous two years –	4-8 (> 24 entries) or_ <u>Top 1/3 (≤ 24 entries)</u> International Invitation Tournament International Open Competitions Regional Championships	4-8 (> 24 entries) or_ <u>Top 1/3 (≤ 24 entries)</u> Asian Cup Series National Championships Special Olympics	4-8 (> 24 entries) or_ <u>Top 1/3 (≤ 24 entries)</u> Asian Championships National Games Asian Cup (Finals) IPC World Cup Series Non-IPC World Cup (Finals) INAS Global Games	4-8 (> 24 entries) or_ <u>Top 1/3 (≤ 24 entries)</u> Asian Para Games IPC World Cup (Finals) Non-IPC World Championships	4-8 (> 24 entries) or_ <u>Top 1/3 (≤ 24 entries)</u> Paralympic Games IPC World Championships	<u>Medal (Minus-one Rule)</u> Paralympic Games
	Medal (> 9 entries) or <u>Top 1/3 (≤ 9 entries)</u> Inter-port / Inter-City Competition	Medal (> 9 entries) or <u>Top 1/3 (≤ 9 entries)</u> International Invitation Tournament International Open Competitions Regional Championships	Medal (> 9 entries) or <u>Top 1/3 (≤ 9 entries)</u> Asian Cup Series National Championships Special Olympics	Medal (> 9 entries) or <u>Top 1/3 (≤ 9 entries)</u> Asian Championships National Games Asian Cup (Finals) IPC World Cup Series Non-IPC World Cup (Finals) INAS Global Games	Medal (> 9 entries) or <u>Top 1/3 (≤ 9 entries)</u> Asian Para Games IPC World Cup (Finals) Non-IPC World Championships	Medal (> 9 entries) or <u>Top 1/3 (≤ 9 entries)</u> IPC World Championships
	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]	[6]

The final score (the average of the EV points of **four** best senior athletes) of a particular para sport will be used to decide if the sport will be supported as a Para Tier A Sport or a Para Tier B Sport:

**Prerequisite**

**Para Tier A Sport:**

- Total score 4 points or above; and
- Para sports competed or will compete in recent or current Paralympic Games (“PG”)

**Para Tier B Sport:**

- Total score 3 points or above; and
- Para sports competed or will compete in recent or current PG or Asian Para Games



### **Scoring Criteria / Guidelines**

1. The final score of the sport will be calculated based on the average of the best results from four senior athletes.
2. Each result, including results of doubles events and team events in individual sports, would only be counted once.
3. Results in demonstration or exhibition events will not be counted.
4. Only results of athletes fulfilling the 3-year residency criteria will be counted.
5. For team events, whether in individual or “Team only” sports, all members of the team must fulfill the 3-year residency requirement; for Para Tier A Sports, all members should be eligible to represent Hong Kong in the Asian Para Games or Paralympic Games.
6. Due to a lack of uniformity in the ranking systems for different sports, international ranking will not be used as an assessment parameter.
7. Only results in competitions sanctioned, recognised or endorsed by the relevant international or Asian federation will be considered, except for the National Games and National Championships.
8. For Paralympic Games medal results, the “minus-one rule” (i.e. beaten at least one competitor in the competition) will be applied.
9. Only results in events with the participation of four or more countries or regions, will be counted.
10. International opens or professional events with the participation of six or more current world top ten ranking athletes will be considered equivalent to an event at the 4/5-point level.