

**For discussion
on 19 April 2023**

Legislative Council Panel on Health Services

**Pilot Scheme for Supporting Patients of the Hospital Authority
in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area**

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on the Administration’s proposal to launch a “Pilot Scheme for Supporting Patients of the Hospital Authority in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area” (Pilot Scheme) (支援粵港澳大灣區醫院管理局病人先導計劃), and seeks Members’ views on the proposed alteration of the scope of an earlier approved commitment item to support the Pilot Scheme.

Background

Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Bay Area (Greater Bay Area)

2. The development of the Greater Bay Area is a key national development strategy in the country’s reform and opening up in the new era, as well as a further step in enriching the practice of “One Country, Two Systems”. The objectives of the development of the Greater Bay Area are to further deepen cooperation amongst Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao, fully leverage the composite advantages of the three places, facilitate in-depth integration within the region, and promote coordinated regional economic development, with a view to developing an international first-class bay area ideal for living, working and travelling.

3. In terms of the development of medical services, the Hong Kong SAR Government has been following the principles of “complementarity and mutual benefits” and the premise that both the Mainland and Hong Kong’s healthcare systems will be benefited to enhance cooperation with various cities of the GBA, so as to improve the policy measures that facilitate Hong Kong citizens to develop and reside in the Mainland.

Special Support Scheme for Chronic Disease Patients of the Hospital Authority Residing in Guangdong Province (Special Support Scheme)

4. Due to the compulsory quarantine measures imposed on both Hong Kong and the Mainland during the COVID-19 epidemic, many chronic disease patients of the Hospital Authority (HA) residing in Guangdong province were unable to return to Hong Kong for medical follow-up at HA’s Specialist Out-patient clinics (SOPCs) / General Out-patient Clinics (GOPCs). To ensure that the medical conditions of these patients can be effectively monitored and timely intervened, the Hong Kong SAR Government appointed the University of Hong Kong – Shenzhen Hospital (HKU-SZH) to provide subsidised follow-up consultations for patients with scheduled appointments at designated SOPCs/ GOPCs in the HA starting from November 2020 through the Special Support Scheme. Under the Scheme, eligible patients have to co-pay Renminbi (RMB) 100 for each subsidised out-patient consultation and the balance of the fee charged by HKU-SZH will be subsidised subject to a fixed cap¹. We also obtained the approval of the Legislative Council for a commitment of \$103.8 million for the Scheme in September 2020².

¹ The fixed cap has been adjusted several times in light of the extension of the Special Support Scheme. In general, the subsidy for each patient is RMB 2,000 per year.

² A commitment of \$103.8 million for the Special Support Scheme was approved under Head 140 Government Secretariat: Food and Health Bureau (Health Branch) (retitled to Government Secretariat: Health Bureau upon the re-organisation of the Government Secretariat with effect from 1 July 2022) Subhead 700 General non-recurrent by the Finance Committee on 28 September 2020. Please refer to FCR(2020-21)71 (<https://www.legco.gov.hk/yr19-20/english/fc/fc/papers/f20-71e.pdf>) for details.

5. In light of the epidemic development, the Special Support Scheme was extended four times with the latest extension up to 9 May 2023³. As of end February 2023, the HKU-SZH scheduled over 65 600 medical appointments for nearly 13 200 patients, of which more than 54 500 attendances have been made. The total expenditure incurred up to February 2023 for the Scheme is around HK\$31.5 million with details set out at **Annex I**.

6. Since the launch of the Special Support Scheme, positive feedback has all along been received from patients appreciating such continuity of care arrangement amidst cross-border travel restrictions due to COVID-19. A mid-term review was conducted by the HA in May 2021 to evaluate the initial outcome of the Scheme and provide useful information for the Government to plan the way forward for the Scheme. The result showed that most of the patients participating in the Scheme were generally satisfied with the services provided by HKU-SZH. In general, patients supported to continue the Scheme with increase in subsidy amount, expansion of service scope as well as coverage of more cities in GBA. Overall speaking, the Special Support Scheme served as a positive reference for further development of cross-border collaboration initiatives to address the healthcare service needs of Hong Kong citizens residing in the Mainland.

Pilot Scheme for Supporting Patients of the Hospital Authority in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area

7. As mentioned, the nature and scope of the Special Support Scheme was confined to cater the needs of HA patients affected by the compulsory quarantine requirements. Given the resumption of normal cross-boundary travel between Hong Kong and the Mainland in early 2023 and the Government's long term goal of supporting the medical needs of

³ <https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202204/14/P2022041300575.htm>

Hong Kong citizens residing in the Mainland, particularly in the Greater Bay Area, it is proposed that the “Pilot Scheme for Supporting Patients of the Hospital Authority in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area” be launched upon expiry of the Special Support Scheme on 9 May 2023.

8. Riding on the successful experience of the Special Support Scheme while ensuring smooth transition of the existing services, it is proposed that the Pilot Scheme be launched on 10 May 2023. The Pilot Scheme, which will initially operate up to 31 March 2024, will follow the existing service scope, framework and arrangements of the Special Support Scheme. Details are set out at **Annex II**. Such arrangement would allow us to further study the usage pattern of HA and HKU-SZH services after full resumption of normal travel between Hong Kong and the Mainland, its effects on the Hong Kong public healthcare system, and accordingly facilitate analysis and evaluation for further development of the Pilot Scheme, including but not limited to –

- (a) scope of services; and/or
- (b) extension to other hospitals or healthcare service providers in the GBA having regard to (i) the clinical standards of such providers and (ii) their affiliation to Hong Kong.

Such initial period would also allow the parties to ramp up necessary IT and supporting systems to sustain longer-term operation of the Pilot Scheme.

9. In terms of financial arrangement, it is proposed to alter the scope of the existing commitment item for the Special Support Scheme, such that its remaining commitment balance can be used to support the Pilot Scheme. We will seek the Finance Committee’s approval on the proposal.

10. For patients currently enrolled in the Special Support Scheme, proper arrangement will be in place by HA and HKU-SZH to ensure smooth transition of these patients to the Pilot Scheme should they wish so. Otherwise, arrangement will also be made to facilitate their continuity of care at HA in Hong Kong as appropriate.

Advice Sought

11. Members are invited to note the content of this paper and give their views on the proposed “Pilot Scheme for Supporting Patients of the Hospital Authority in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area”, including expanding the scope of an earlier commitment to fund such Pilot Scheme. Subject to Members’ views, we will seek the Finance Committee’s approval for alteration of scope of the originally approved commitment item of the Special Support Scheme for the use of the Pilot Scheme.

Health Bureau
Hospital Authority
April 2023

Annex I

Special Support Scheme for Hospital Authority Chronic Disease Patients Living in the Guangdong Province

Expenditure summary and service statistics for the period from 10 November 2020 to 28 February 2023

Expenditure summary

Expenditure	From 10 November 2020 to 28 February 2023 (In HK\$'000)
Fees to HKUSZH	
Consultation fee	6,562
Drug fee	24,368
Investigation fee	7,987
Other fees (e.g. blood taking fee)	171
Less: Patients' co-payment	(5,935)
Less: Additional payment by patients	(2,727)
Sub-total	30,426
Charges for supporting services	1,025
Total	31,451

Breakdown of subsidised consultations by specialty in HKU-SZH

Specialty	Number of consultations
Family Medicine Clinics (Chronic Diseases)	39 345
Medicine Clinic	9 120
Surgery Clinic (including Otorhinolaryngology, Cardiothoracic Surgery, Neurosurgery)	2 354
Ophthalmology Clinic	1 510
Oncology Clinic	738
Orthopedic Clinic	683
Pediatric Clinic	358
Gynaecology and Obstetrics Clinic	387
Anesthesiology (Pain Clinic only)	7
Total	54 502

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Programme Details of the First Phase

Service Provider	The University of Hong Kong – Shenzhen Hospital
Eligibility	Hong Kong citizens who have a follow-up appointment with the HA’s GOPCs or designated SOPCs, including anaesthesia (including pain clinic), cardio-thoracic surgery, clinical oncology, ear, nose & throat, ophthalmology, gynaecology, internal medicine, neurosurgery, obstetrics, orthopaedics & traumatology, paediatrics and surgery
Scope of Services	Subsidised out-patient services including but not limited to medical consultations, prescribed drugs, routine imaging, investigation and laboratory tests; episodic illnesses, in-patient, day patient and accident & emergency services excluded
Subsidy Amount	RMB 2,000 will be credited into each eligible patient’s account for use up to 31 March 2024. Fees beyond the amount will be paid by patients to HKU-SZH directly.
Medical Record Sharing	Application for joining the Pilot Scheme includes application for registration in the Electronic Health Record (eHR) Sharing System and submission of Data Access Request to the eHR Registration Office such that patients’ electronic health records can be shared with relevant medical staff of HKU-SZH for providing patients with appropriate services.
Governance	The Joint Project Committee (JPC) comprising representatives from the Health Bureau of the Government, HA and HKU-SZH set up earlier for the Special Support Scheme will continue to

	<p>function as a governance body to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) steer all matters related to the Pilot Scheme; (ii) endorse the implementation plan of the Pilot Scheme; (iii) review key risk areas and advise on matters related to the Pilot Scheme; and (iv) oversee the progress of the Pilot Scheme.
Administration	<p>HA appointed earlier as an agency of the Special Support Scheme will continue to support and administer the Pilot Scheme on behalf of the Government.</p>