

# **立法會**

## ***Legislative Council***

LC Paper No. CB(4)1053/2023(04)

Ref : CB4/PL/HS

### **Panel on Health Services**

### **Meeting on 8 December 2023**

### **Background brief on development of District Health Centres**

#### **Purpose**

This paper provides background information on the development of District Health Centres (“DHCs”) and summarizes the major concerns recently raised by Members of the Legislative Council (“LegCo”), including members of the Panel on Health Services (“the Panel”) on the subject.

#### **Background**

2. DHC is a key component of the primary healthcare system, with a view to shifting the centre of gravity of our healthcare system from treatment-oriented institution-centric secondary/tertiary healthcare to prevention-oriented family-centric primary healthcare.<sup>1</sup>

3. DHCs focus on providing primary healthcare services for people of all ages on the three levels of disease prevention, namely primary prevention (i.e. health promotion and educational programmes), secondary prevention (i.e. health risk assessment and screening)<sup>2</sup> and tertiary prevention (i.e. chronic disease management programmes (for diabetes mellitus, hypertension, low back pain and osteoarthritic knee pain) and community rehabilitation programmes (for stroke, hip fracture and post-

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<sup>1</sup> The three-tier healthcare system refers to primary healthcare (primary), hospital and specialist care (secondary) and specialized care (tertiary). Primary healthcare is the first point of contact for individuals and families in a continuous healthcare process, which aims at improving individuals’ health conditions through health promotion, disease prevention, disease management and supportive care, thereby reducing unwarranted use of hospital resources.

<sup>2</sup> With the launch of the Chronic Disease Co-Care Pilot Scheme on 13 November 2023, DHCs/DHC Expresses will assist participants (Hong Kong residents aged 45 or above with no known medical history of diabetes mellitus or hypertension) in pairing with a family doctor for diabetes mellitus and hypertension screening and long-term follow-up.

acute myocardial infarction)). The scope of DHC service is based on the needs and the characteristics of the district.

4. The Government has set up DHCs or interim DHC Expresses of a smaller scale across the territory in 2022.<sup>3</sup> Through medical-social collaboration and public-private partnership, DHCs and DHC Expresses provide district-based primary healthcare services,<sup>4</sup> with a view to enhancing public capability in self-management of health and support patients with chronic diseases. Apart from a DHC Express Core Centre, service points will be set up for the public's convenience according to needs.

5. As recommended in the Primary Healthcare Blueprint ("the Blueprint") announced on 19 December 2022, the Government will further develop the district-based family-centric community health system based on the DHC model, with an emphasis on horizontal integration and coordination of district-based primary healthcare services through service coordination, strategic purchasing and medical-social collaboration, and vertical integration and interfacing with secondary and tertiary care services through protocol-driven care pathway for specified chronic diseases and well-trained primary care family doctors. Accordingly, the Government will progressively strengthen the role of DHCs as coordinators of community primary healthcare services, case managers to support primary healthcare doctors, as well as district services hubs that connect healthcare professionals in both public and private sector as well as different sectors in the community.

6. In November 2021, the Audit Commission conducted a review of the DHC Scheme.<sup>5</sup> The Public Accounts Committee did not hold any public hearing on this subject. Instead, it asked for written responses regarding the service performance, manpower and management of procurement-related issues of Kwai Tsing DHC, development of DHC and operation of DHC Expresses (in Appendix 11 to P.A.C. Report No. 79).

### **Major concerns recently raised by Members**

7. LegCo Members and the Panel had discussed issues relating to the development of DHCs and DHC Expresses on several occasions.

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<sup>3</sup> As at December 2023, the Government has set up seven DHCs (in Kwai Tsing, Sham Shui Po, Tuen Mun, Wong Tai Sin, Southern, Yuen Long and Tsuen Wan Districts) and 11 DHC Expresses (in Sai Kung, Kowloon City, Yau Tsim Mong, Wan Chai, North, Islands, Kwun Tong, Tai Po, Shatin, Central and Western, and Eastern Districts).

<sup>4</sup> DHCs and DHC Expresses, subsidized by the Government, are run by non-governmental organizations. The Steering Committee on Primary Healthcare Development is responsible in formulating the service model of DHC and overseeing the high-level matters related to DHCs and DHC Expresses.

<sup>5</sup> Chapter 2 of the Director of Audit's Report No. 79.

Major concerns recently raised by Members are summarized in the ensuing paragraphs.

#### Specific timetable for setting up District Health Centres

8. Members noted that the Government indicated in the 2018 Policy Address that to ensure service stability, it would reserve premises for DHCs within Government properties, but would first rent suitable premises to enable early service delivery. Besides, DHC Express services would migrate as appropriate to the local DHC at a later stage. Some Members raised concern about the specific timetable for setting up various DHCs.

9. The Administration advised that it had identified suitable government premises or sites for the development of DHCs in 18 districts, and had already consulted the respective District Councils in 13 of the districts. Among these projects, the funding proposals in relation to the construction of the Wan Chai, Eastern and Kwun Tong DHCs had been approved by LegCo's Finance Committee in January, June and October 2021 respectively. They would be completed progressively in the next few years. Besides, with Yau Tsim Mong District Council's endorsement, the Ex-Mong Kok Market site was handed over to the Urban Renewal Authority and its contractor in the first quarter of 2023 for carrying out retrofitting works for Yau Tsim Mong DHC with target completion in the fourth quarter of 2024. The Government would continue to take forward the projects for the long-term development of DHCs in all 18 districts as early as possible, and would seek LegCo's funding approval in due course.

#### Service scope

10. Some Members enquired whether the Administration had any plan to further expand the service scope of DHCs or DHC Expresses, such as ophthalmology or dentistry, apart from diabetes mellitus and hypertension screening, so as to reduce the pressure on the public healthcare system.

11. The Administration advised that based on the recommendations of the Steering Committee on Primary Healthcare Development, DHCs are currently directing resources to tackle the most prevalent health risk factors and chronic diseases that consume the most substantial medical resources, including hypertension, diabetes mellitus and musculoskeletal disorder. DHCs also provide health assessments and organize health promotion activities (including health education on eye, dental and oral care), and play the role of a primary healthcare resource hub in the district, connecting different healthcare professions in the community (including dentists and optometrists), coordinating and making referrals for persons in need.

12. Expressing support for the pilot scheme to be launched by the Administration in 2024 at three DHCs to provide people with mental health assessment in collaboration with community organizations for early follow-up and referral of high-risk cases, some Members enquired about the details of the scheme.

13. The Administration pointed out that initially, DHCs' service teams launching the pilot scheme would focus on persons with mental health training to provide mental health assessment services to members of the public residing or working/studying in the districts with common mild-to-moderate mental health needs, with a view to identifying and intervening at an early stage. The relevant DHCs would also collaborate with community organizations to follow up and make early referrals of high-risk cases to prevent deterioration of mental health problems.

#### Setting performance targets or indicators

14. Some Members expressed concern as to whether the Administration would set performance targets/indicators for DHCs. Some other Members asked if it had assessed the effectiveness of DHCs and DHC Expresses in relieving the pressure on specialist and hospital services of the public sector.

15. The Administration advised that as recommended in the Blueprint, the Government would progressively transform the Primary Healthcare Office currently under the Health Bureau into the Primary Healthcare Commission which would be empowered to oversee primary healthcare service delivery, standard setting, quality assurance and training of primary healthcare professionals under one roof. Besides, the Government would explore other measures for quality assurance such as review and evaluation of clinical practice, as well as performance indicators for primary healthcare services (e.g. DHCs). The Primary Healthcare Office had also started reviewing the need of service adjustment and enhancement for the future operating contract.

16. The Administration further advised that the Chinese University of Hong Kong was commissioned to conduct the Monitoring and Evaluation Study to assess the extent to which the objectives of DHCs were met and the overall performance including the quality and effectiveness of various services provided by DHCs, impact of DHC services on individuals and the community, as well as the cost effectiveness of DHCs. The said study was expected to be completed in December 2023.

#### Enhancing the promotion of the services of District Health Centres

17. Expressing concern that many people in the community considered that the positioning and services provided by DHCs were unclear,

some Members enquired whether the Administration would consider enhancing the promotion of the services provided by DHCs.

18. The Administration advised that a series of promotion activities had been conducted to strengthen the promotion on primary healthcare and DHC service. The public awareness promotion campaign had been launched since November 2021 through multi-media channels, including Announcements in the Public Interest on television and radio, television and radio programme, feature articles in newspaper, cross promotion on social media and mass transportation system to promote healthy lifestyle and DHC services. Promulgation of DHC program delivery to service providers and public would be channeled via DHCs institution on- site, on-line, crossover promotion and via district based partners. The Government would consider the ongoing promotion of DHCs in view of their new role delineation under the Blueprint.

### **Motions passed at Council meetings and relevant papers**

19. At the LegCo meeting on 26 January 2022, Members passed a motion on “Ten-year plan for primary healthcare” urging the Administration to, among other things, expedite the extension of DHCs to all the 18 districts in Hong Kong.

20. In addition, Members passed a motion on “Actively promoting the development of Chinese medicine to alleviate the pressure on the healthcare system” at the LegCo meeting on 14 June 2023 urging the Administration to, among other things, introduce Chinese medicine prevention and health maintenance services at DHCs in the 18 districts.

21. The hyperlinks of the motions and other relevant papers are in the **Appendix**.

### **Recent development**

22. The Administration will brief the Panel on 8 December 2023 on the Administration’s proposal to set up a DHC at Kwai On Factory Estate Public Housing Development, with a view to enhancing district-based primary care services in Kwai Tsing District.

## Development of District Health Centres

## List of relevant papers

Committee	Date of meeting	Paper
Panel on Health Services	26 March 2018	<a href="#">Agenda</a> Item I: District Health Centre Pilot Project in Kwai Tsing District <a href="#">Minutes</a>
	16 July 2018	<a href="#">Agenda</a> Item II: District Health Centre Pilot Project in Kwai Tsing District <a href="#">Minutes</a> <a href="#">Follow-up paper</a>
	20 March 2020	<a href="#">Agenda</a> Item III: Development of primary healthcare and setting up of DHC Express <a href="#">Minutes</a> <a href="#">Follow-up paper</a>
	13 November 2020	<a href="#">Agenda</a> Item V: Development of a District Health Centre at the Caroline Hill Road Site <a href="#">Minutes</a> <a href="#">Follow-up paper</a>
	9 April 2021	<a href="#">Agenda</a> Item V: Health centre and social welfare facilities building in Siu Sai Wan <a href="#">Minutes</a>
	17 November 2023	<a href="#">Agenda</a> Item III: Briefing by the Secretary for Health on the Chief Executive's 2023 Policy Address
Finance Committee	13 April 2023	<a href="#">Administration's written replies to initial questions raised by Members on the Estimates of Expenditure 2023-2024</a>

Committee	Date of meeting	Paper
		(Reply Serial Nos. : HHB019, HHB024, HHB060, HHB159, HHB184, HHB185, HHB192, HHB195 and HHB230)
Public Accounts Committee	-	<a href="#">Chapter 2 of the Director of Audit's Report No. 79</a> <a href="#">P.A.C. Report No. 79</a> (Appendix 11) (15 February 2023) <a href="#">Government Minute</a> (paragraph 34) (24 May 2023)

Council meeting	Paper
21 October 2020	<a href="#">Question 12</a> : Development of primary healthcare
16 December 2020	<a href="#">Question 22</a> : Primary healthcare services
24 March 2021	<a href="#">Question 16</a> : District Health Centres
26 January 2022	<a href="#">Motion on “Ten-year plan for primary healthcare”</a> <a href="#">Progress Report</a>
30 November 2022	<a href="#">Question 7</a> : Primary healthcare services
29 March 2023	<a href="#">Question 21</a> : District Health Centres
3 May 2023	<a href="#">Question 5</a> : Supporting children and adolescents with mental health needs
14 June 2023	<a href="#">Motion on “Actively promoting the development of chinese medicine to alleviate the pressure on the healthcare system”</a> <a href="#">Progress Report</a>
28 June 2023	<a href="#">Question 15</a> : Support for ethnic minorities