

# 立法會

## *Legislative Council*

LC Paper No. CB(2)1081/2023

Ref : CB2/PL/WS

### **Report of the Panel on Welfare Services for submission to the Legislative Council**

#### **Purpose**

This report gives an account of the work of the Panel on Welfare Services (“the Panel”) during the 2023 session of the Legislative Council. It will be tabled at the Council meeting of 6 December 2023 in accordance with Rule 77(14) of the Rules of Procedure.

#### **The Panel**

2. The Panel was formed by a resolution of the Council on 8 July 1998 and as amended on 20 December 2000, 9 October 2002, 11 July 2007, 2 July 2008 and 26 October 2022 for the purpose of monitoring and examining Government policies and issues of public concern relating to welfare, rehabilitation services, poverty and social enterprise. The terms of reference of the Panel are in **Appendix 1**.

3. The Panel comprises 20 members, with Hon TANG Ka-piu and Revd Canon Hon Peter Douglas KOON Ho-ming elected as its Chairman and Deputy Chairman respectively. The membership list of the Panel is in **Appendix 2**.

#### **Major Work**

##### Caring for underprivileged groups in the community

4. Caring for the underprivileged has always been of great concern to the Panel. In this session, the Panel reviewed the Administration’s support services for various vulnerable groups, including children with special needs, persons with disabilities (“PWDs”), single parents, street sleepers, elderly persons, and carers. The Panel was also briefed on the “Starting a New Chapter in Hong Kong Social Welfare” Summit, which featured discussions led by local and international experts on topics such as helping the deprived, assisting PWDs, and supporting the elders.

### Support for children with special needs

5. Recognizing the merits of the Pilot Project on Tier 1 Support Services in Kindergartens/Kindergarten-cum-Child Care Centres<sup>1</sup> in providing early intervention services for children awaiting assessment by Child Assessment Centres (“CACs”) of the Department of Health or those identified with borderline developmental issues, members suggested expanding the Pilot Project to include primary and secondary students with special educational needs. They also proposed utilizing artificial intelligence and implementing a hybrid service model to strengthen the Pilot Project and provide assistance to parents and teachers. Some members expressed concern about the delay in assessing waitlisted children at CACs and requested a timetable from the Administration to expedite the assessment process.

6. The Administration assured members of its commitment to providing timely assessment and intervention services for children with special needs. It noted members’ suggestions and provided updates on the implementation and outreach efforts of the Pilot Project, including promoting open exchange and collaboration between schools and families, utilizing a tiered approach to provide varying levels of support based on children’s needs, and leveraging online platforms to disseminate information about the Pilot Project to teachers and parents.

7. Members also raised concern about inadequate transition support for special needs children moving from preschool to primary school, as well as for special school leavers and PWDs completing higher education. Members also emphasized the importance of sign language services for hearing-impaired tertiary students and proposed incorporating sign language as a teaching language in the guide for tertiary institutions to safeguard these students’ learning rights. According to the Administration, it would provide necessary resources and services for a smooth transition of special needs children and PWDs in education. It also explained to the Panel the existing transition support mechanisms for preschoolers adapting to primary school and their parents, as well as the life planning support available for students approaching age 15.

### Review of residential child care services

8. In light of the series of child maltreatment incidents, the Panel continued to closely monitor residential child care services (“RCCS”) and received a briefing from the Administration on the “Report of the Second Phase Review of the Committee on Review of Residential Child Care and Related Services”<sup>2</sup> which covered other institutional services, including children’s homes, boys’/girls’ homes

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<sup>1</sup> The Pilot Project on Tier 1 Support Services in Kindergartens/Kindergarten-cum-Child Care Centres aims to strengthen support for pre-school children with special needs.

<sup>2</sup> The first phase of the review, which covered residential child care centres and residential special child care centres, was completed in September 2022.

and boys'/girls' hostels, and non-institutional services, including foster care service, small group homes ("SGHs") and SGHs for mildly mentally handicapped children.

9. Members expressed concern about the capacity of social workers and frontline staff in boys' and girls' homes or hostels to address the developmental needs of children with severe emotional and behavioural issues. Some members proposed lowering the admission age for boys' and girls' homes or hostels to ensure the provision of suitable services for children with diverse special needs or severe emotional and behavioural problems.

#### *Addressing manpower shortage*

10. To reinforce the workforce and address staffing issues in the child care sector effectively, members put forward several suggestions, including attracting graduates of Master's degree programmes in Counselling and Psychology to join the welfare sector; implementing flexible resource deployment for paramedical services; improving the manning ratio in SGHs; and lowering the manning ratio for RCCS units catering to children with special needs. The Administration noted these suggestions and would increase manpower in residential child care centre ("RCCCs"), as well as arrange relevant curriculums and fieldwork placements at RCCS units for tertiary institutions.

#### *Service monitoring*

11. Members noted the 12-month surveillance period imposed on the Children's Residential Home ("CRH") due to its substandard performance. Concerns were raised regarding CRH's compliance with performance standards during its transition from a non-time defined funding and services agreement ("FSA") to a 12-month FSA and the Administration's monitoring measures to evaluate CRH's operations and implementation of improvement measures. Members also emphasized the need to evaluate the appropriate duration of FSA for other service providers to ensure the maintenance and enhancement of service quality. According to the Administration, it had been closely monitoring the services of CRH through a dedicated professional team and unannounced site visits. It also highlighted the responsibility of CRH to provide quarterly updates on the progress of improvements. In terms of the duration of FSAs, members noted that all new FSAs would be set on a time-defined basis. Members were pleased to note that the Administration would implement Artificial intelligence ("AI") technologies for surveillance purposes in RCCCs. Close circuit television systems were installed in all RCCCs, and AI technologies were tested in two RCCS units.

#### *Shortening waiting time for services*

12. Members expressed concern about the prolonged waiting time for admission to SGH for Mildly Mentally Handicapped Children. The average waiting time was

reported as 15.1 months, with an occupancy rate of 98% during the 2021-2022 period. Members enquired about the measures being taken to alleviate the waiting time and reduce the burden on families. The Administration advised that it would increase the supply of RCCS places by reserving premises in public housing projects and incorporating conditions on land sale sites for private developers to construct welfare facilities. Members were pleased to note the commencement of a new SGH that provided additional places. They were also informed that another SGH would be made available in the near future, further expanding the capacity to accommodate children in need.

### *Enhancing foster care services*

13. Members raised concern about the growing withdrawal of foster families and the decline in newly registered ones. This had led to an average waiting time of 1.7 months in 2021-2022. To tackle this issue, the Administration was recommended to relax the allocation standards for public rental housing families committed to long-term foster care and provide better remuneration to foster families. Members were pleased to note that the Chief Executive's 2023 Policy Address ("2023 PA") announced a significant increase in the incentive payment for foster families, starting from April 2024. Furthermore, additional support will also be provided to foster families caring for children with special learning or care needs, including early assessments and appropriate professional rehabilitation therapy and training.

### Support for single-parent families

#### *Strengthening family services*

14. Members recognized the problems faced by single-parent families, including financial difficulties, child care, psychological well-being, social support, and employment. They proposed strengthening family services through expanding Integrated Family Service Centre ("IFSC") services, establishing more Specialized Co-parenting Support Centres ("SCSCs"), and formulating policies to support non-governmental organizations ("NGOs") and voluntary groups in delivering district-based specialized services for single-parent families, especially those facing separation, divorce, or post-divorce situations involving custody and access arrangements for children. The Administration advised that resources would be directed towards needy single-parent families. It highlighted that the five SCSCs had offered comprehensive services to assist separated, divorcing, and divorced parents in fulfilling their parental responsibilities and prioritizing the well-being of the child.

### *Financial and accommodation support*

15. To tackle the difficulties encountered by divorcees in collecting maintenance payments, members urged the Administration to establish a maintenance board or dedicated team and review current legislation. According to the Administration, it had implemented improvement measures, including publicity and education programmes to raise awareness of the responsibilities of maintenance payers, the rights of maintenance payees, and available support services. The Labour and Welfare Bureau (“LWB”) would collaborate with the Home and Youth Affairs Bureau to enhance the collection of maintenance payments and enforcement of maintenance orders.

16. Members noted that financial constraints had forced some divorcing parents to share accommodations, which could potentially contribute to domestic violence cases. They called for closer collaboration between Social Welfare Department (“SWD”) and the Housing Department (“HD”) to address the housing issues specifically for divorcing couples. In response, the Administration emphasized zero tolerance for domestic violence, urging prompt reporting to the Police. Divorcing families facing domestic violence could seek welfare support from IFSCs or SWD’s Family and Child Protective Services Units. SWD’s social workers would arrange temporary accommodation, and HD would provide special housing assistance as needed. Regarding members’ enquiry about cases where one parent refused IFSC services, the Administration clarified that the presence of both parents was not required for accessing IFSC support.

### *Employment support*

17. Members emphasized the need for dedicated employment support services for single parents, particularly single mothers, and urged for the implementation of family-friendly employment policies. They specifically pointed out the need for standard working hours and encouraged employers to adopt practices such as providing on-site after-school care services. According to the Administration, it had provided a range of services, such as employment support services through job and recruitment centres, particularly for single parents; after school care programme to assist working parents; sharing of job openings with parents using after-school care services; and enhancing after-school care through the School-based After School Care Service Pilot Scheme, to facilitate single parents’ workforce participation. Furthermore, SWD had engaged NGOs to establish three ethnic minority (“EM”) outreach teams tasked with identifying vulnerable EM individuals and referring them to mainstream welfare services.

### *Emotional support*

18. Members called for comprehensive mental health support for single parents, including EM families, to mitigate their emotional strain. Members noted the

availability of emotional counseling services provided by IFSCs but emphasized the need to categorize families based on risk levels and enhance coordination between SWD and the Home Affairs Department (“HAD”) to better address the specific needs of EM families. The Administration explained that to address the growing demand, the number of social workers at IFSCs was increased by 30%. IFSCs had enhanced mental health services for families in need by closely collaborating with healthcare professionals, aligning with the recommendations put forth by the Advisory Committee on Mental Health.

#### Support services for street sleepers

19. Street sleeping is a multifaceted social issue that requires the collaboration of various Government Bureaux and Departments (“B/Ds”). During this session, the Panel followed up with the Administration on the social welfare support services provided by SWD for street sleepers.

20. Members pointed out that the lack of a comprehensive policy on homelessness was a significant contributing factor to the rise in the number of street sleepers. They emphasized the need for the formulation of policies, legislation, and the establishment of a dedicated department to effectively address relevant issues. The Administration explained that relevant B/Ds were working together to provide support for street sleepers, including transitional housing, public health information, employment support, financial assistance, and help with social security applications.

21. Members stressed the need to provide NGOs with advance notice regarding clearance operations to ensure timely assistance for affected street sleepers. The Administration explained that SWD was responsible for coordinating welfare services, while HAD handled clearances. Members were assured that SWD would promptly inform the Integrated Services Teams for Street Sleepers in such cases.

22. Members further recommended reviewing and extending the maximum accommodation period in short-term hostels operated by NGOs and providing more subsidized hostel places in different areas. The Administration explained the need to set a duration of stay to facilitate street sleepers’ transition back into the community, but extensions could be considered based on individual needs.

#### Support for carers

23. Carers play a vital role in supporting elderly persons and PWDs to live within the community. Appreciating the sacrifices made by caregivers, members recommended the provision of comprehensive support services and resources to assist them in their caregiving responsibilities.

24. Members urged the Administration to broaden the definition of carers to include those caring for individuals with diverse needs. Members also expressed

concern about the restriction that prevented individuals from receiving both the carer allowance and other social security allowances, resulting in a limited number of beneficiaries for the Living Allowance Schemes.<sup>3</sup> Members urged the Administration to reassess the eligibility criteria for these schemes to increase the number of recipients and provide better assistance to carers in need. The Administration assured members that it would make adjustments to these schemes if deemed necessary.

25. To enhance the accessibility of support services for carers, members proposed automatically granting them membership in community centres, while also providing an opt-out option. The Administration advised that it had implemented a number of measures, including the establishment of a centralized information gateway for carers, setting up dedicated carer hotlines, and the involvement of the District Services and Community Care Teams (“Care Teams”) in distributing welfare service information.

26. To strengthen the effectiveness of designated carer hotlines and face-to-face counselling services, members suggested engaging former or fellow carers in providing support. They also emphasized the importance of prompt follow-up actions within 24 hours of receiving calls from carers to address their immediate needs and concerns more effectively. Members further recommended enhancing the capacity of Care Teams and addressing the underutilization of respite services for the elderly through incorporating trained volunteers into the respite care system. This would help alleviate the burden on existing resources and provide additional support to elderly individuals in need of respite care. The Administration assured members that they would make necessary adjustments in response to these concerns raised by members.

#### Support for persons with disabilities

27. The Panel expressed support for the Administration’s policy of promoting the overall well-being and integration of PWDs within the community. During the session, members discussed the key welfare and support services for PWDs, at two meetings, including a special meeting to listen to the views of deputations.

#### *Setting up a dedicated committee for persons with disabilities*

28. Some members called for greater government support and proposed that a high-level dedicated committee, preferably led by Secretaries of Departments and with significant participation from PWD representatives, should be established to advise the Government on policy development and support for PWDs. According

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<sup>3</sup> The Schemes include the Scheme on Living Allowance for Carers of Elderly Persons from Low-income Families, and the Scheme on Living Allowance for Low-income Carers of Persons with Disabilities.

to the Administration, the Rehabilitation Advisory Committee (“RAC”), which included representatives from parents of PWDs and medical practitioners, had been fulfilling this role. It further explained that, as announced in the 2023 PA, the number of representatives of PWDs and carers in RAC would be increased from 2024 onwards to enhance understanding of their needs.

### *Employment support*

29. Members voiced concern over the low employment rate of PWDs and called on the Administration to lead by example through increased public sector employment of PWDs. In response, the Administration outlined its programmes to support PWD employment, including personalized employment services and the Work Orientation Placement Scheme that provided incentives to employers. It further highlighted its commitment to equal opportunities and implementation of measures to facilitate the employment of PWDs in the Civil Service.

### *Improving waiting time for residential and day care services*

30. Members expressed concern about the long waiting time for residential care services (“RCS”) and day care services (“DCS”) for PWDs, particularly hostels for those with severe and moderate mental disabilities. They urged the Administration to enhance monitoring of demand and provide additional private residential care homes to mitigate the waiting time. The Administration explained that to increase available placements, it had implemented various measures, including expanding rehabilitation services, reserving space for welfare facilities in public housing, and offering incentives to promote the development of more private residential care homes (“RCHs”).

### *Financial assistance*

31. Members raised concern about the financial eligibility for the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (“CSSA”) Scheme, under which both household income and assets were taken into account. Pointing out that this mechanism had discouraged PWDs from seeking employment to protect their family’s CSSA eligibility, members suggested the introduction of an independent subsidy scheme tailored for non-CSSA PWD recipients. As advised by the Administration, a blanket policy change disregarding household income might not be suitable for CSSA households with PWD members, given their diverse circumstances. Instead, SWD would assess individual cases as needed. To promote employment, as announced in the 2023 PA, funding would be sought from the Community Care Fund to launch a three-year pilot scheme to provide an additional monthly subsidy of \$500 to working disabled recipients of CSSA.

32. To alleviate the financial burden on PWDs and their families, members suggested introducing cost-effective equipment (such as wheelchairs and hearing



aids) with similar functionalities from the Mainland. According to Administration, it had been engaging with developers and relevant organizations through conferences, exhibitions, and meetings to explore the introduction of Mainland products that offered higher cost-effectiveness.

### Caring for the elderly

33. The Government's policy direction for elderly services is "Ageing in place as the core, institutional care as back-up". The Panel has been monitoring community-level care and support services for the elderly to ensure that they can spend their golden years in a familiar environment and facilitate ageing in place.

### *Ageing in place*

34. Members suggested that the Administration should formulate strategies to achieve the policy objective of ageing in place, whether it involved delaying institutionalization of elderly individuals or facilitating frail elderly persons to spend their twilight years at home through services and technology. Considering the preference of many elderly persons to retire in the Mainland, and in light of the recently signed Memorandum of Cooperation on Care for the Elderly,<sup>4</sup> members urged the Administration to leverage the strengths of both Hong Kong and the Mainland to enhance the quality of life for the elderly.

35. Members raised concerns about the limitations in eligibility for the Community Care Service Voucher ("CCSV") Scheme for the elderly, the Innovation and Technology Fund for Application in Elderly and Rehabilitation Care, and the service scope of the Health Care Voucher Scheme. To enable more elderly persons to access gerontechnology products for aging in place, members proposed relaxing the eligibility criteria and expanding the service scope to include non-frail elderly persons and those with mild impairment receiving home support services. Members also called for collaboration among SWD, Hospital Authority ("HA"), and Care Teams to effectively address the gerontechnology needs of the elderly.

36. According to the Administration, it had introduced a simplified assessment tool for elderly persons with mild impairment and involved district elderly community centres ("DECCs") and new neighbourhood elderly centres ("NECs") in service referrals. Non-frail elderly individuals in need could rent gerontechnology products from the Jockey Club "age at home" Gerontech Education and Rental Service Centre. Promotion of gerontechnology was also included in subvented elderly centres' service scope. The Administration further

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<sup>4</sup> At the "Starting a New Chapter in Hong Kong Social Welfare Summit" held on 29 May 2023, the Labour and Welfare Bureau and the Department of Civil Affairs of Guangdong Province signed the Memorandum of Cooperation on Care for the Elderly, on behalf of the two governments, on cooperation in the provision of elderly care services.

advised that it would evaluate the effectiveness of the Enriched ICT Training Programme for the Elderly.

### *Community Care Service Voucher Scheme for the Elderly*

37. Some members suggested increasing the subsidy amount under the CCSV Scheme to ease the financial burden on low-income elderly persons. According to the Administration, it adopted a “money-following-the-user” approach in the CCSV Scheme, taking into account household income in determining co-payment categories. There were six co-payment categories, and subsidies could cover up to 95% of the voucher value. The Administration would maintain the principle of “affordable users pay” to ensure sustainability and review co-payment levels as necessary.

38. Given the low utilization of service vouchers, members urged the Administration to assess the service needs of the CCSV Scheme participants and adopt measures to optimize voucher utilization, such as issuing the vouchers exclusively to elderly persons with genuine service needs. Members noted that the Administration would monitor the utilization status of CCSV and invite elderly persons on the waiting list for subsidized community care services to join the CCSV Scheme if the quota remained unused. Noting that SWD would visit and interview some selected recognized services providers (“RSPs”), some members proposed conducting a questionnaire survey to collect feedback on the performance of RSPs from all service users to complement the monitoring efforts of SWD and provide a comprehensive assessment of RSPs’ service quality.

### *Supporting high-risk families and hidden elderly*

39. Members expressed concern about the insufficient support for high-risk families, including singletons/doubletons elderly households, elderly carers, and disabled elderly carers. Expressing sadness regarding the occurrence of unnoticed deaths among elderly living alone at home, members called for better collaboration between SWD and HD and the installation of safety detection devices in elderly housing units to provide timely assistance to those vulnerable elderly. According to the Administration, it had launched the “Support for Carers Project” to train property management personnel in identifying elderly persons and carers in need. Several funding schemes were implemented to support pilot programmes for elderly persons by NGOs.

40. To offer focused assistance to high-risk families and the elderly, members proposed a comprehensive approach that included implementing case management, promoting medical-social collaboration through platforms such as District Health Centres, and automatically granting DECC/NEC membership (with opt-out option) to elderly individuals receiving subsidized welfare or residing in public housing. The Administration advised that IFSC had provided case

management services, and medical social workers in HA hospitals had followed up on high-risk family cases. The Integrated Discharge Support Programme for Elderly Patients also offered transitional support services and had been expanded.

41. Members recommended the establishment of community-based elderly canteens to address the dietary and nutritional requirements of the elderly. The Administration advised that DECCs/NECs had been providing meal services for service users. It would explore members' recommendation by studying the experiences of other places in providing meal services for elderly persons.

#### *Expanding cross-boundary elderly care options*

42. Members expressed concern about the low occupancy rate of residential care homes for the elderly ("RCHEs") in Shenzhen and Zhaoqing under the Residential Care Services Scheme in Guangdong ("the GD RCS Scheme"). They suggested encouraging retirement in the Mainland by engaging recognized RCHEs to promote elderly care services; launching a trial scheme for short-term stays; and implementing family-friendly measures such as providing hostels near RCHEs to increase family interaction with the residents. According to the Administration, the eligibility of GD RCS Scheme was relaxed in July 2023, allowing experienced Hong Kong organizations (including private organizations and NGOs) with a good track record in providing subsidized RCS for the elderly to participate. It would further extend the Scheme within 2024 to specific RCHEs operated by Mainland organizations, and subsidize CSSA recipients choosing GD RCS Scheme's RCHEs, to better support Hong Kong elderly persons with greater financial needs who preferred to retire in the Mainland cities of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area ("GBA").

#### Manpower for residential care services

43. Manpower supply and professionalism within the RCS sector has consistently been a significant concern for the Panel. During this session, members closely monitored the manpower situation at RCHEs and residential care homes for persons with disabilities ("RCHDs") and received an update from the Administration regarding subsidized training opportunities in nursing, occupational therapy and physiotherapy, commencing in 2023-2024. In addition, the skill and qualification requirements for staff in RCHs were discussed.

#### *Supply of nursing staff*

44. Noting that SWD had organized the Enrolled Nurse Training Programme for the Welfare Sector ("EN Programme") since 2006 to address the nursing shortage in the welfare sector, members suggested involving more institutes, according priority to experienced health workers for enrolment, and providing uniform training for community nurses to enhance their career advancement. The

Administration advised that it had expanded the 2023-2024 EN Programme, doubled training places to 427 and added two participating institutes.<sup>5</sup> Funding of \$587 million was allocated to accommodate over 1,700 additional students, and \$447 million was earmarked to sponsor 750 more occupational and physiotherapy students through the Training Sponsorship Scheme for Programmes in Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy in the next five years.

45. The Administration further explained that it had requested institutes to prioritize graduates of the Navigation Scheme for Young Persons in Care Services, considering their work experience when evaluating applications for the EN Programme. Successful cases were identified where care workers in RCHs progressed to become ENs. In response to members' concern about the low retention rate of Navigation Scheme graduates in the welfare sector, the Administration explained its measures to improve enrolment, including raising the upper age limit from 25 to 29, reducing working hours from 44 to 40 per week, and increasing salaries. Some members suggested further relaxing the upper age limit to address the issue.

#### *Supply of care worker*

46. During the session, the Panel received a briefing on the Special Scheme to Import Care Workers for Residential Care Homes. Members held different views on the scheme. Some members supported its implementation, urging the Administration to expedite the process and reduce application processing time to meet the urgent manpower needs of RCHs. They also considered it necessary to enhance training to improve the quality of services provided by imported care workers. However, some members expressed reservations about the scheme, particularly regarding its application to subsidized RCHs. They were concerned that allowing these homes to import care workers could have a negative impact on local employment opportunities and hinder improvements in the remuneration of care workers.

#### *Skill and qualification requirements of staff providing health and rehabilitation services*

47. The Government announced in the 2022 Policy Address its plan to conduct a comprehensive review of the skill and qualification requirements for staff in RCHEs and RCHDs with a view to establishing professional standards and a clear career progression path for these staff. The Administration provided a briefing to the Panel in May 2023 on the progress of this review.

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<sup>5</sup> The Social Welfare Department commissioned the Hong Kong Metropolitan University to provide fully-subsidized Enrolled Nurse (General) training places each year from 2017-2018, and commissioned two more institutes, i.e. the Caritas Institute of Higher Education and the Tung Wah College from 2023-2024 to provide more subsidized training places.

48. Members considered that the review should focus on attracting and retaining talents in RCH sector. They suggested exploring the introduction of a new senior health worker rank and creation of promotion ranks for care workers, taking their work experience into account for promotions. The review should also address salary levels for the newly created ranks, mutual recognition of qualifications between RCH staff in the Mainland and Hong Kong, and recruitment strategies for talents outside Hong Kong. The Administration explained that the review would study the enhancement of the career progression paths for RCH staff providing health and rehabilitation services at all ranks and provide feasible recommendations on the establishment of professional standards and career progression paths.

49. Members also suggested establishing a standardized pay scale and promotion system for staff of NGOs under the Lump Sum Grant Subvention System, and exploring the feasibility of implementing an alternative funding model for RCHs to provide incentives to retain staff and attract talents to the sector. According to the Administration, the current funding mode for subvented RCHs would no longer apply to new government-developed RCHs. Instead, open tendering would be used to invite both NGOs and private operators to operate these new facilities through contracts. The Administration would purchase places from private RCHs to effectively utilize their resources and provide incentives for them to enhance their standards.

#### Measures to provide premises for welfare and residential care services

50. Hong Kong's ageing population and advancements in medical technologies have led to an increased demand for residential care facilities. To meet the diverse demand for elderly care services, the Administration briefed the Panel on its enhanced measures to the "Incentive Scheme to Encourage Provision of Residential Care Homes for the Elderly Premises in New Private Developments" which aimed at utilizing market forces to develop high-quality RCS facilities. Members expressed concerns about the completion time, locations, and capacity of the RCS facilities under the scheme and suggested setting key performance indicators to monitor the progress.

51. The Administration provided members an update on the supply of non-subsidized residential care places, with six SWD-supported projects expected to offer around 1,400 places. The Administration had utilized various strategies to increase the supply of subsidized RCHEs, including reserving about 5% of the total domestic gross floor area in public development projects for social welfare facilities, and assisting NGOs in utilizing sites for welfare purposes under the Special Scheme on Privately Owned Sites for Welfare Uses. Key performance indicators had been set for the provision of these subsidized residential places. Enhanced measures had been implemented by June 2023 to incentivize developers to include RCHEs in new private development projects.

52. Members suggested a change in approach, proposing that the Administration should require the inclusion of RCHEs and RCHDs in major private development projects by incorporating conditions in land sale sites. This approach would integrate these facilities into the planning process and effectively meet community needs. Furthermore, members proposed that developers be required to construct comprehensive residential care communities or complexes to offer residents convenient one-stop services.

53. The Administration clarified that conditions had already been included in suitable land sales to require the provision of welfare facilities, resulting in over 100 000 sq m of care home spaces across 18 projects from 2018 to 2023. Successful bidders for three upcoming land sales would also be required to include RCHs. In addition, developers might be encouraged to include RCHs when applying for planning or land exchange. However, imposing new conditions on existing private land was not feasible. The enhanced measures therefore aimed to incentivize developers to voluntarily include care homes in new sites.

#### Welfare facility projects funded by the Lotteries Fund

54. The Panel was briefed by the Administration in April 2023 on its plans to seek funding from the Lotteries Fund (“LF”) for the new welfare facility projects in the 2023-2024 financial year and the latest development of the welfare facility projects which were included in the annual briefing for the Panel in April 2022.

55. Members enquired about the slow progress of projects under the Special Scheme on Privately Owned Sites for Welfare Use. The Administration explained that the pace of progress was influenced by various factors, including administrative procedures and the need for NGOs to review the facilities. Members were assured that the Administration had been closely monitoring the projects and providing necessary assistance to NGOs to accelerate the projects.

56. Members expressed concern about the availability of adequate funding support from LF, particularly in light of the growing number of new welfare facility projects seeking LF funding. The Administration assured members that new welfare projects would only commence once full funding commitments from LF were secured. Furthermore, the construction costs of welfare facilities in public housing developments, with estimated costs up to \$50 million each, would be covered by allocations from the Capital Works Reserve Fund.

#### Appointment of subcommittees under the Panel

57. Two subcommittees were formed under the Panel, namely Subcommittee on Issues Relating to Policy on Monitoring Child Protection Agencies, chaired by Hon Judy CHAN Kapui, which held three meetings between May and

November 2023, and the Subcommittee on Promoting Carer-centric Policies, chaired by Hon Stanley LI Sai-wing, which held four meetings during the same period. Both Subcommittees will continue their work in the next session.

### Other issues

58. The Panel also discussed the following proposals submitted by the Administration:

- (a) the proposal on the creation of (i) one supernumerary Administrative Officer Staff Grade C (D2) post for five years to pursue the policy portfolio of targeted poverty alleviation and provide secretariat support to the restructured Commission on Poverty; and (ii) one supernumerary Principal Economist post (D2) for three years to conduct poverty-related analyses and researches for supporting the Government's policy deliberations on targeted poverty alleviation and welfare issues;
- (b) the proposal of making permanent one time-limited/supernumerary post of Assistant Director of Social Welfare to enhance the service quality of RCHEs and RCHDs, and to license/register and regulate RCHs, child care centres and drug dependent persons treatment and rehabilitation centres; and
- (c) annual adjustment to social security payment rates under the CSSA Scheme and the Social Security Allowance Scheme, and issues relating to the CSSA rent allowance and municipal solid waste charging subsidy.

### Visit outside Hong Kong

59. The delegation of the Panel and the delegation of LWB jointly conducted a two-day duty visit from 30 to 31 August 2023 to Mainland cities of GBA, including Guangzhou and Foshan.<sup>6</sup> The duty visit aims to (a) gather first-hand information on elderly and rehabilitation services in the Mainland as well as understand the needs of Hong Kong residents who retire there; (b) exchange views with service providers in Mainland cities of GBA regarding the challenges and practices in delivering such services; and (c) explore collaboration opportunities in areas such as elderly care, rehabilitation services and social welfare with Mainland cities of GBA. The report on the duty visit was issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(2)915/2023.

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<sup>6</sup> The delegation initially planned to visit three Mainland cities, namely Guangzhou, Foshan and Zhaoqing from 30 August to 1 September 2023. With Super Typhoon Saola edging closer to Hong Kong, the delegations returned early to Hong Kong on the afternoon of 31 August after completing the itinerary in Guangzhou and Foshan.

## **Meetings held**

60. During the period between January and November 2023, the Panel held a total of 11 meetings, including a special meeting to review the welfare support for PWDs and a joint meeting with the Panel on Manpower to consider a staffing proposal. The Panel has scheduled another meeting on 11 December 2023 to receive the Administration's briefing on the (a) implementation of Elderly Services Programme Plan and Standardised Care Need Assessment Mechanism for Elderly Services, and (b) expansion of the Residential Care Service Voucher Scheme for the Elderly.

Council Business Division 2  
Legislative Council Secretariat  
29 November 2023



**Legislative Council**

**Panel on Welfare Services**

**Terms of Reference**

1. To monitor and examine Government policies and issues of public concern relating to welfare, rehabilitation services, poverty and social enterprise.
2. To provide a forum for the exchange and dissemination of views on the above policy matters.
3. To receive briefings and to formulate views on any major legislative or financial proposals in respect of the above policy areas prior to their formal introduction to the Council or Finance Committee.
4. To monitor and examine, to the extent it considers necessary, the above policy matters referred to it by a member of the Panel or by the House Committee.
5. To make reports to the Council or to the House Committee as required by the Rules of Procedure.

**Panel on Welfare Services**

**Membership list for the 2023 session\***

<b>Chairman</b>	Hon TANG Ka-piu, BBS, JP
<b>Deputy Chairman</b>	Revd Canon Hon Peter Douglas KOON Ho-ming, BBS, JP
<b>Members</b>	Hon Michael TIEN Puk-sun, BBS, JP Hon CHAN Han-pan, BBS, JP Hon LUK Chung-hung, JP Hon Doreen KONG Yuk-foon Hon Stanley LI Sai-wing, MH, JP Ir Hon LEE Chun-keung, JP Dr Hon TIK Chi-yuen, SBS, JP Hon Stanley NG Chau-pei, SBS, JP Hon CHAU Siu-chung Dr Hon David LAM Tzit-yuen Hon LAM So-wai Hon Kenneth LEUNG Yuk-wai, JP Hon CHAN Pui-leung Hon Judy CHAN Kapui, MH, JP Ir Hon Gary ZHANG Xinyu Hon Lillian KWOK Ling-lai Dr Hon NGAN Man-yu Hon Adrian Pedro HO King-hong  (Total: 20 members)
<b>Clerk</b>	Ms Joyce KAN
<b>Legal adviser</b>	Ms Clara WONG

\* Changes in membership are shown in Annex to Appendix 2.

**Annex to Appendix 2****Panel on Welfare Services****Changes in membership  
(Year 2023)**

<b>Member</b>	<b>Relevant date</b>
Dr Hon Priscilla LEUNG Mei-fun, SBS, JP	Up to 18 January 2023
Ir Hon LEE Chun-keung	Since 19 January 2023