

**For discussion on
14 February 2023**

**Legislative Council Panel on Welfare Services
Subcommittee on Increasing the Provision of
Residential Care Places for the Elderly**

**Measures to Increase and Enhance Manpower Resources
for the Sector of Residential Care Homes for the Elderly**

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on the measures implemented by the Government to strengthen the manpower supply and training for the sector of residential care homes for the elderly (RCHEs).

Background

2. The Government attaches great importance to the manpower situation of RCHEs, and has implemented various measures to strengthen the manpower supply and training for the sector, with a view to attracting and encouraging young people and other job seekers to join the welfare sector. The Government also facilitates residential care homes (RCHs), which cannot recruit suitable staff locally, to apply for importation of care workers to fill vacancies. With a rapidly ageing population and an overall decrease in low-skilled labour force locally, it is necessary for the Government to roll out new measures to address the acute manpower shortage of the sector, and to continue to implement existing measures to provide training and job opportunities for local job seekers.

New measures

Special Scheme to Import Care Workers for Residential Care Homes

3. With an increasing demand for residential care services for the elderly and those for persons with disabilities, the RCH sector will require at least 4 500

additional care workers¹ in the next three years. On the premise of safeguarding the employment priority for local workers, the Government will launch the Special Scheme to Import Care Workers for Residential Care Homes (the Special Scheme) in the second quarter of this year. The quota for importation is capped at 7 000. Taking into account some 4 000 imported care workers currently in Hong Kong, the sector may import around 3 000 additional care workers. The Special Scheme will also relax the ratio of local employees to imported care workers and streamline the vetting procedures for applications.

4. Provided that the salary of all local care workers employed by an RCH is not lower than the Median Monthly Wage², all types of RCHs may apply for quota to import care workers. At the time of application, an RCH must submit proof of local recruitment conducted through channel(s) specified by the Director of Social Welfare but had been unsuccessful in filling the vacancies. Private RCHs and self-financing RCHs (including those participating in bought place schemes) may apply to import one care worker for every full-time local employee employed (i.e. 1:1). Subvented RCHs and contract RCHs may apply to import one care worker for every two full-time local employees employed (i.e. 1:2). RCHs which successfully import care workers under the Special Scheme must pay the Employees Retraining Levy³, which is used by the Employees Retraining Board (ERB) to enhance training for local workers. RCHs must not displace local care workers it employs with imported care workers. If redundancy is necessary, imported care workers should be laid off first.

5. The Social Welfare Department (SWD) consulted the RCH sector and the Labour Advisory Board on the implementation aspects of the Special Scheme in December 2022 and January 2023 respectively. The SWD will take into consideration the feedback gathered as appropriate in finalising the implementation and operational details. After the Special Scheme is launched, all applications for quota to import care workers will be vetted by an inter-departmental liaison group comprising representatives of the Labour and Welfare Bureau, the SWD and the Labour Department, and each application will be decided by the Director of Social Welfare as the chairman of the liaison group.

¹ Including (a) around 1 600 full-time care worker vacancies in existing service units operated by non-governmental organisations, (b) around 700 additional care workers required by existing private or self-financing RCHs for complying with the statutory staffing requirement proposed in the Residential Care Homes Legislation (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2022, and (c) around 2 200 additional care workers generated by the service commencement of new RCHs and additional places under bought place schemes in phases in the next three years.

² The latest Median Monthly Wage for a care worker, as compiled by the Census and Statistics Department on a half-yearly basis, is \$14,150. The work schedule is usually nine hours (excluding meal time) per day and six days per week.

³ The prevailing levy is set at \$400 per imported worker per month.

Review on the qualification requirements of residential care home staff and establishment of a professional progression path

6. The Government plans to commission a consultant in 2023 to commence a holistic review of the skill and qualification requirements of RCH staff who provide health and rehabilitation services to residents (including health check and assessment, medicine management, infection control, special nursing care procedures, rehabilitation services, etc.). The review aims to establish professional standards and a career progression path for RCH staff, so that local health workers with suitable training can take up more health and rehabilitation work in position with more professional development and career progression. This would attract more locals to join the sector and retain the required talents.

7. The review will cover RCHEs and residential care homes for persons with disabilities (RCHDs) of various care levels and modes of operation. The consultant will visit respective types of RCH to collect service data on site, and will collect feedback from RCH operators, staff, training institutes and other relevant stakeholders to understand the actual situation in the sector and labour market. We expect that the review will take around 18 months.

Enrolled Nurse Training Programme for the Welfare Sector

8. Currently, nurses in RCHEs are generally responsible for infection control, nursing care, nursing administration, and training other staff in personal care and nursing care skills. To alleviate the shortage of nurses in RCHs and to meet the demand of the sector in the foreseeable future, the Government will subsidise an additional 1 700 or more students to enrol in Enrolled Nurse (EN) (General) training in the next five years (2023-24 to 2027-28 academic years) under the EN Training Programme for the Welfare Sector. Students, who complete the training programme and are qualified to register as EN, are reimbursed their tuition fees in full and are required to work as EN (General) in non-governmental or private organisations providing elderly, rehabilitation and other welfare services recognised by the SWD for a continuous period of no less than three years.

9. The 2023-24 EN Training Programme for the Welfare Sector is opened for applications. The training institutes, i.e. the Hong Kong Metropolitan University, the Tung Wah College and the Caritas Institute of Higher Education, provide a total of 427 places in EN (General) training, more than doubling the number of places from the previous academic year. Since its launch, the EN Training Programme for the Welfare Sector has remained popular among students. Among the 558 graduates who were admitted from 2017-18 to 2019-20

academic years, 496 worked as EN (General) in the welfare sector during the undertaking period, of which 391 worked in RCHEs. The SWD conducted a survey among the 186 graduates who were admitted in 2017-18 academic year and had completed or would complete the undertaking period. Among the 139 graduates who responded, 116 were working as EN (General) in the welfare sector, including 93 in RCHEs

Ongoing measures

Navigation Scheme for Young Persons in Care Services

10. The SWD has implemented the Navigation Scheme for Young Persons in Care Services (the Navigation Scheme) since July 2015 to encourage young people to join the elderly and rehabilitation care services. Apart from receiving on-the-job training in elderly or rehabilitation service units (including RCHEs and RCHDs), the trainees are subsidised by the Government to pursue a two-year part-time diploma course at the same time. Course fees are reimbursed annually to trainees upon their successful completion of the course each year. The Navigation Scheme recruited a total of 1 158 trainees in the first five years and among them 603 trainees have completed the two-year part-time diploma course. The SWD enhanced the Navigation Scheme in 2020-21, which would provide a total of 1 200 training places in five years. The enhanced Navigation Scheme has recruited a total of 993 trainees so far.

First-Hire-Then-Train Scheme

11. The ERB has implemented the First-Hire-Then-Train Scheme (FHTT Scheme) in the healthcare sector since 2015-16, which assists mainly middle-aged women and homemakers to work in RCHEs as care worker trainees. The ERB adjusted the scheme in 2021-22 to encourage RCHs to provide vacancies with more flexible training and work hour arrangement. Since 2015-16, around 400 persons have been recruited by RCHEs through the FHTT Scheme. The Government will continue to encourage RCHEs to join the scheme and provide employment and training opportunities to local job seekers aspiring to join the residential care services sector.

Training Subsidy Scheme for Staff of Residential Care Homes

12. The SWD launched a five-year scheme in 2019 to provide full subsidies for home managers, health workers and care workers of RCHEs and RCHDs to enrol in Qualifications Framework-based training courses. The SWD also provides training subsidies to the RCHs concerned so that these RCHs can

make appropriate staffing arrangements to maintain home operation while their health workers and care workers are attending courses. As at 31 December 2022, a total of 2 533 RCHE staff and 912 RCHD staff had enrolled in training courses under this scheme.

Advice Sought

13. Members are invited to note the contents of this paper.

**Labour and Welfare Bureau
Social Welfare Department
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