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Panel on Welfare Services

**Report of the Subcommittee on Increasing the Provision of
Residential Care Places for the Elderly**

Purpose

This paper reports on the deliberations of the Subcommittee on Increasing the Provision of Residential Care Places for the Elderly (“the Subcommittee”).

Background

2. The Government’s policy objective of elderly services is to promote “ageing in place as the core, institutional care as back-up”. Accordingly, residential care services for the elderly aim to provide residential care and facilities for persons aged 65 or above, who, for personal, social, health and/or other reasons, cannot adequately be taken care of at home. Residential care homes for the elderly (“RCHEs”) in Hong Kong are run by non-governmental organizations (“NGOs”) and private organizations, and are generally classified into four types, namely, subvented homes, contract homes, self-financing homes and private homes.¹

3. Members have on various occasions expressed concerns about the long waiting time for subsidized residential care service places for the elderly, which has been a long-standing issue and will exacerbate in the face of an ageing population. Members have time and again called on the Administration to set a target waiting time for subsidized residential care services for the elderly, adopt a target-oriented approach in increasing the

¹ The operation of RCHEs in Hong Kong is governed by the Residential Care Homes (Elderly Persons) Ordinance (Cap. 459) and its subsidiary legislation, and the Code of Practice for Residential Care Homes (Elderly Persons) issued by the Director of Social Welfare under section 22(1) of Cap. 459.

supply of residential care places for the elderly, and allow more operators to run RCHEs across the border to meet service demand and provide another option for elderly persons in need.

The Subcommittee

4. To enable a more focused discussion on the Administration's effort in increasing the provision of residential care service places for the elderly, the Panel on Welfare Services decided at its meeting on 14 February 2022 to appoint the Subcommittee. The terms of reference and membership of the Subcommittee are set out in **Appendices 1 and 2** respectively.

5. Under the chairmanship of Hon CHAN Han-pan, the Subcommittee has held a total of five meetings since commencing its work in mid-May 2022. The Subcommittee has invited the public to give written views on issues relating to increasing the provision of residential care places for the elderly. A list of deputation/individual which have given views to the Subcommittee is in **Appendix 3**.

Deliberations of the Subcommittee

6. The Subcommittee has focused its deliberations on the following areas:

- (a) provision of RCHE places and the waitlisting situation;
- (b) measures to facilitate the redevelopment or expansion of sites privately owned by NGOs for providing RCHEs;
- (c) initiatives to encourage private developers to provide RCHEs in new private development projects;
- (d) the Government's strategy and plan to increase RCHE places;
- (e) relaxation of height restriction on RCHEs to increase their capacity;
- (f) provision of RCHE places for Hong Kong elderly persons in the Mainland municipalities of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area ("GBA"); and

- (g) measures to increase and enhance manpower resources for the RCHE sector.

Provision of RCHE places and the waitlisting situation

7. While the Administration has incorporated population-based planning ratios for the provision of subsidized elderly services into the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines,² members expressed grave concern about the long waiting time for subsidized RCHE places. As at 30 April 2022, there were about a total of 25 000 elderly persons being waitlisted for subsidized nursing home places and subsidized care-and-attention (“C&A”) places, and the average waiting time for the subsidized C&A places in subvented and contract homes and that for the subsidized C&A places of private homes joining the Enhanced Bought Place Scheme (“EBPS”) was 42 months and 8 months respectively. Given that those elderly persons being waitlisted have been assessed with the need for long-term residential care services through the Standardized Care Need Assessment Mechanism for Elderly Service, members urge the Administration to set specific targets and put forward a concrete work plan for shortening the waiting time for subsidized RCHE places.

8. The Administration has advised that a multi-pronged approach has been adopted for increasing the supply of RCHE places. As announced in the 2020 Policy Address, the Hong Kong Housing Authority and the Hong Kong Housing Society will reserve premises equivalent to about 5% of the total domestic gross floor area (“GFA”) in suitable public housing development projects in the future for providing government welfare facilities including RCHEs. Apart from developing RCHEs through government projects, the Administration has also been encouraging private developers or NGOs to provide RCHEs in their sites or properties in the territory. In the interim, the short-term strategy is to purchase more places from eligible private RCHEs to increase the number of subsidized RCHE places. The Social Welfare Department (“SWD”) has commenced the purchase of an additional 5 000 RCHE places under EBPS in five years starting from 2019-2020. In addition, the number of voucher that can be issued under the Residential Care Service Voucher Scheme for the Elderly (“RCSV Scheme”) has increased to 4 000 starting from April 2022.

² In accordance with the July 2022 edition of the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines, in respect of residential care services, there should be 21.3 subsidized places per 1 000 elderly persons aged 65 or above.

Increasing the supply of subsidized RCHEs places

9. As at 30 April 2022, there were 805 RCHEs³ in Hong Kong providing a total of 75 081 places, including 30 456 subsidized places and 44 625 non-subsidized places⁴. The enrolment rate of subvented homes and contract homes was about 94%, that of private homes participating in EBPS was about 84%, and that of other private homes and self-financing homes was about 70%. Members have enquired how the expansion of EBPS could achieve the aim of expeditiously increasing the supply of subsidized RCHE places, and whether the RCSV Scheme could really provide an affordable option for elderly persons currently on the Central Waiting List.

10. The Administration has advised that one of the key characteristics of EBPS was that once a private RCHE joined the scheme, the entire home (including the non-bought place portion) must satisfy the same enhanced standards. Therefore, EBPS will provide an incentive to private RCHEs to upgrade their service standards, thus increasing the number of private RCHEs with better quality. As regards the RCSV Scheme, under the principle of “users pay in accordance with affordability”, a sliding scale of co-payment at eight levels (from Level 0 to Level 7) is adopted to the effect that elderly persons who could afford less would receive more subsidy. For example, recipients of Comprehensive Social Security Assistance having opted to become voucher holders are grouped under co-payment Level 0 and the Government fully subsidizes the voucher services they received.

11. Members are of the view that the key is to expeditiously increase the supply of subsidized RCHE places. Members therefore urge the Administration to explore more ways to increase the supply of subsidized places, including providing incentives for property owners in various old districts to offer long-term leases to RCHE operators, encouraging the development of RCHEs on private land, and facilitating the setting up of RCHEs under the Residential Care Services Scheme in Guangdong (“RCS Scheme”). Members also express concerns about the disparity between the waiting time of subsidized C&A places in subvented and contract RCHEs and that of subsidized C&A places of private homes joining EBPS, and urge the Administration to consider increasing the ratio of subsidized to non-subsidized places from 6:4 to 8:2 when planning for new contract RCHEs.

³ Including 796 RCHEs licensed under the Residential Care Home (Elderly Persons) Ordinance and nine scheduled nursing homes listed under the Private Healthcare Facilities Ordinance (Cap. 633).

⁴ Of these non-subsidized places, 4 000 could be subsidized by vouchers issued under the Residential Care Service Voucher Scheme for the Elderly.

Measures to facilitate the redevelopment or expansion of sites privately owned by NGOs for providing RCHEs

12. To encourage NGOs to make better use of their sites through expansion, redevelopment or new development to provide or increase the much-needed welfare facilities (including RCHEs), Phase One and Phase Two of the Special Scheme on Privately Owned Sites for Welfare Uses (“Special Sites Scheme”) were launched in 2013 and 2019 respectively. As of May 2022, six projects were completed under the Special Sites Scheme, of which two completed projects have provided about 220 additional RCHE places. Members have expressed concerns about the progress of the remaining projects under the Special Sites Scheme and the measures taken by the Administration to expedite the progress of such projects. Some members hold the view that NGOs may not have the relevant expertise or experience in development/re-development projects of RCHEs, and therefore, the Administration should be more proactive in taking forward the projects, e.g. providing one-stop service for the NGO applicants, and collaborating with the Urban Renewal Authority to provide services to facilitate redevelopment of sites held by NGOs. Noting that some NGO applicants have taken a long time to revise the project proposals or to prepare the relevant documents and submit information to relevant departments, some members consider that the Administration should set a deadline for the NGO applicants to finalize the project proposals.

13. The Administration has advised that as at May 2022, apart from the six completed projects under Phase One, another one project has entered the construction stage, six projects were at the stage of detailed design, and 20 projects were at the stage of technical feasibility study (“TFS”). Three projects at the stage of construction/detailed design are expected to provide about 1 710 RCHE places. As for the remaining projects, SWD would be ready to support the NGO applicants to proceed with TFS having regard to the actual status of these projects. Furthermore, 25 project proposals have been received under Phase Two, and SWD has been discussing with the NGO applicants to confirm project details such as development parameters and types and number of service places to be provided. SWD has also been maintaining close contact with relevant departments such as the Lands Department, the Planning Department and the Buildings Department to provide suitable assistance and coordination to the NGO applicants regarding issues involved in individual projects, such as obtaining planning permission and modification of lease conditions.

14. The Administration has also advised that the implementation of projects under the Special Sites Scheme depends on various factors, including the location and surrounding environment of the sites concerned, communal and transport facilities, requirements prescribed in the land lease conditions, restrictions stipulated in the outline zoning plans on the use and development intensity, feedback received from local consultations, distribution of the existing services, as well as the demand for and supply of the proposed services. In addition, for those individual projects where the NGOs concerned have to bear the construction cost and operating expenses of the part of the premises for non-welfare uses, it takes time for the NGOs concerned to raise funds and the overall implementation of projects may therefore be affected. That said, the Administration would continue to explore how to expedite the progress of those projects.

Initiatives to encourage the provision of RCHEs in new private developments by private developers

15. The Government has launched a scheme since 2003 to encourage private developers to provide RCHE premises in new private developments, allowing concession to exempt eligible RCHE premises from payment of land premium for lease modifications, land exchange and private treaty grants, on the condition that the developer complied with certain lease conditions and obtained the support from SWD. Members expressed concern that as at December 2022, the Lands Department received only six applications, and out of them four obtained SWD's support and the other two were still being processed. Members take the view that the Administration should explore ways to provide additional incentives to private developers, and provide applicants with more facilitating measures as well as expedite the vetting and approval procedures (e.g. by providing one-stop service for applicants). Members also suggest that the Administration should consider extending the coverage of the existing measures for increasing the supply of RCHEs to include residential care homes for persons with disabilities ("RCHDs").

16. The Administration has advised that applications from private developers for the provision of RCHEs in new private developments involves different stakeholders, and the time needed to vet and approve the applications vary from case to case. The Chief Executive announced in the 2022 Policy Address that the Development Bureau ("DEVB") and the Labour and Welfare Bureau ("LWB") would put forward proposals in 2023, providing more incentives to encourage developers to provide elderly service facilities in private development projects.

17. As announced in the 2023-2024 Budget, in addition to continuing to exempt GFA of these private RCHEs from payment of premium, the Administration has decided to also raise GFA of RCHEs that can be exempted in each development project. Furthermore, the Administration has proposed to exempt such GFA from the calculation of the maximum GFA of the relevant projects. It is hoped that these enhanced measures will increase the supply of quality private RCHEs. The Administration will conduct a review after a three-year trial period. In addition, DEVB and LWB will formulate a similar scheme for RCHDs so as to encourage the market to provide more quality private RCHDs.

Government's strategy and plan to increase RCHE places

18. Given the ageing population and the shortage of residential care places for the elderly in Hong Kong, members consider that RCHEs to be provided by NGOs and private developers on non-government land are far from adequate in meeting the present and future demand for RCHE places. Members urge the Administration to conduct timely assessments of the future demand for residential care service places for the elderly in Hong Kong and review the effectiveness and progress of various measures for increasing the number of RCHE places, with a view to shortening the waiting time of eligible elderly persons for subsidized RCHE places.

19. The Administration has advised that according to the projection in the Elderly Services Programme Plan published in 2017, the projected demand for subsidized RCHE places in 2027 would be about 46 000. The Administration has been making its best endeavour to increase the number of RCHE places to meet the present and future demand. While the Administration will continue to encourage private developers or NGOs to provide RCHEs in their sites or properties, the Government's strategy in the medium to long term is to increase the number of RCHEs through government projects predominately. The development projects and measures currently being taken forward are expected to add about 6 200 subsidized places for the elderly by the end of 2027. Together with the existing 35 000 odd subsidized places, a maximum of about 41 000 elderly persons are expected to be able to receive subsidized residential care services by then. The progress of relevant measures to increase the supply of subsidized RCHE places include:

- (a) reserving premises equivalent to about 5% of the domestic GFA in future public housing development projects for different welfare uses (including RCHEs), on the premise that the public housing supply and other ancillary facilities would not be affected. The projects with construction work

commenced or funding approved are expected to provide 2 200 residential care places for the elderly, which would be made available from 2025 onwards; and

- (b) incorporating land sale conditions in suitable land sale sites to require private developers to construct specified welfare facilities. In the past five years, the net operating floor area (“NOFA”) of the projects for welfare facilities amounted to about 18 000 square metres, of which NOFA for RCHEs amounted to about 11 000 square metres (amounting to more than 1 000 RCHE places). In addition, about 550 residential care places for the elderly are expected to be provided in projects under the 2023 land sales programme.

20. Members urge the Administration to brief them in due course on the effectiveness and progress of various measures for increasing the number of RCHE places.

Relaxation of height restriction on RCHEs to increase their capacity

21. Section 20 of the Residential Care Homes (Elderly Persons) Regulation (Cap. 459A) stipulates that no part of an RCHE should situate at a height more than 24 metres above the ground, while also empowering the Director of Social Welfare (“DSW”), with sufficient justifications, to authorize any part of the RCHE to be situated at a height more than 24 metres above the ground. Given the acute demand for RCHE places, members take the view that the said height restriction should be relaxed with a view to increasing the capacity of RCHEs and optimizing land use. Members have also enquired whether there are similar restrictions in other jurisdictions.⁵

22. The Administration has advised that the objective of legislating the height restriction on RCHEs is to ensure the safety of elderly residents. As many RCHE residents are wheelchair-bound or bedridden, in the event of fire or other emergencies, fire and other supporting personnel needs to spend considerable time and overcome various difficulties when evacuating a large number of immobile frail elderly persons to safe locations. The Fire Services Department (“FSD”) has made extensive reference to fire safety guidelines, codes of practice and other research literature on elderly homes and relevant premises in the Mainland and overseas countries. The relevant height restrictions vary in these

⁵ The Research Office of the Secretariat has conducted studies on the current situation of residential long-term care services for the elderly in selected places. The findings are set out in the three fact sheets on Japan ([FS01/2023](#)), Singapore ([FS02/2023](#)) and South Korea ([FS03/2023](#)) respectively.

jurisdictions, e.g. 32 metres in the Mainland and 16 metres in Australia, depending on its demographic distribution, population density, building codes and social needs, etc.

Relaxation of height restriction for parts of RCHEs used for non-dormitory purpose

23. Noting that as at June 2022, there were only four RCHEs with some parts of their facilities authorized to be situated at a height more than 24 metres above the ground, members have enquired whether the small number of cases is due to a small number of applications or a low percentage of applications having been granted approval. The Administration has advised that under the prevailing mechanism, if an RCHE operator can prove that there is a need for any part of the RCHE to be situated at a height more than 24 metres above the ground, and can properly address fire safety issues, DSW would consider to approve the application after seeking FSD's professional advice. FSD would give fire safety advice to DSW on a case-by-case basis when considering if the relaxation of the height restriction of the RCHE should be approved. In general, if those parts of the RCHE to be situated at a height higher than 24 metres above the ground are used for non-dormitory purposes and the operator provides satisfactory evacuation and contingency plans, DSW may consider approving such non-dormitory parts of the RCHE to be situated higher than 24 metres above the ground.

24. Members are of the view that given that the objective of the height restriction is to protect the safety of RCHE residents in the event of fire or other emergencies, those parts of RCHE that are used for non-dormitory purpose (such as kitchens, laundry rooms, offices and staff changing rooms) should in general be authorized to be situated at a height more than 24 metres above the ground, and the relevant information should be provided to RCHE operators to facilitate their planning and preparation for applications.

25. At the request of the Subcommittee, the Administration has undertaken to review whether to update the Code of Practice for Residential Care Homes (Elderly Persons) ("CoP"). The CoP was updated in August 2022 to set out clearly that if an RCHE has in place facilities for fire safety, evacuation and rescue to the satisfaction of DSW, and possesses appropriate evacuation, contingency and fire drill plans, DSW may approve its ancillary facilities to which elderly residents normally do not have access (e.g. kitchen, laundry room, office and staff resting room) to be situated at a height of more than 24 metres above the ground.

Relaxation of height restriction for parts of RCHEs used for dormitory purpose

26. Members are pleased to note that the Administration has preliminarily selected the welfare service complex in Tseung Kwan O Area 72 as the pilot project to explore placing the whole RCHE at a height more than 24 metres above the ground. The Administration has advised that to ensure fire safety of the project, the building fire safety design would be enhanced, and the RCHE(s) concerned would be required to formulate a fire safety management plan and ensure sufficient staff to assist residents to evacuate in the event of emergency. The pilot project is expected to be completed in 2029, and thereafter, the Administration will assess the overall effectiveness of the pilot project, including the extra GFA of the RCHE involved, related construction cost as well as the extra manpower required, resulted from going beyond the statutory height limit, in order to consider if similar designs and related measures should be adopted in other suitable development projects initiated by the Government. Meanwhile, consideration could be given on a case-by-case basis whether exemption to purpose-built RCHEs not funded by the Government should be granted.

27. Members are of the view that before the completion of the pilot project, if other RCHE development projects meet the same conditions, such projects should be authorized to place RCHE(s) at a height more than 24 metres above the ground. Therefore, it is desirable if details of the required architectural designs (e.g. in the form of mock-up unit) and management conditions could be made available to RCHE operators for reference. In response to members' views, SWD and FSD conducted jointly a briefing session on 29 December 2022 to brief the RCHE sector on the additional fire safety requirements for placing the dormitory portion of RCHE more than 24 metres above the ground. Besides, SWD, in consultation with FSD, has updated the CoP to incorporate the aforesaid additional fire safety requirements for the sector's reference and compliance.

Provision of RCHE places for Hong Kong elderly persons in the Mainland municipalities of GBA

28. In view of the ageing population and the shortage of RCHE places in Hong Kong, members take the view that facilitating elderly persons to retire in the Mainland would be a preferred option. Under the RCS Scheme, the Administration currently purchases services from two RCHEs⁶ to

⁶ These two RCHEs are The Hong Kong Jockey Club Shenzhen Society for Rehabilitation Yee Hong Heights and The Hong Kong Jockey Club Helping Hand Zhaoqing Home for the Elderly.

provide an additional option for elderly persons waitlisted for subsidized C&A places and interested in retiring in the Mainland. With 133 elderly persons residing in the aforesaid two RCHEs as at September 2022, there has been an unspent balance in the Government's funding earmarked for the RCS Scheme. Members therefore urge the Administration to step up publicity, including arranging site visits for eligible elderly persons and their family members to the RCHEs in the Mainland.

29. Members also urge the Administration to review the various factors that may discourage eligible elderly persons from joining the RCS Scheme, such as the requirement for Hong Kong elderly persons who were public rental housing ("PRH") tenants to surrender their PRH units or who are family members of the PRH tenancies to delete their names from the PRH tenancies upon admission to an RCHE in the Mainland. Besides, as elderly persons residing in RCHEs in the Mainland municipalities of GBA have a keen demand for local healthcare services, members urge the Administration to endeavour to ensure an appropriate access to healthcare services by the elderly persons participating in the RCS Scheme, such as helping them to obtain drugs prescribed by Hong Kong doctors and expanding the coverage of eligible Hong Kong drugs and medical devices to be used in designated healthcare institutions in the Mainland municipalities of GBA.

30. The Administration has advised that eligible elderly persons who choose to participate in the RCS Scheme will be offered immediate placement in the RCHEs and fully subsidized by the Government for the home fees, including fees for board and lodging, nursing and personal care services, and basic medical services. In the event of their return to Hong Kong for good, eligible elderly persons concerned could either be offered a refurbished PRH unit upon fulfillment of the eligibility criteria for PRH application at the time of redemption and other conditions set out in the Letter of Assurance ("LA") issued by the Hong Kong Housing Authority or have their names reinstated provided the tenancies of the PRHs still exist.⁷ Besides, the Health Bureau would maintain liaison with the Mainland on the initiative to expand the coverage of eligible Hong Kong drugs and medical devices to be used in designated healthcare institutions

⁷ To assure future accommodation of tenants who vacate their PRH units due to admission to hospital, sheltered workshop hostels or RCHEs, or joining the Portable Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme for Elderly Persons Retiring to Guangdong & Fujian Province, Guangdong Scheme or Fujian Scheme, the Hong Kong Housing Authority would, upon request, issue LA to the tenants concerned who voluntarily surrender the PRH unit without breaching the Tenancy Agreement in the course of flat recovery. For elderly persons who are living with family members, they can apply for a Letter of Reinstatement upon deletion of their names from the tenancies.

in the Mainland municipalities of GBA.

Proposed extension of the RCS Scheme

31. To facilitate elderly persons to retire in the Mainland, the Administration has been exploring to extend the coverage of the RCS Scheme to include other RCHEs in the Mainland municipalities within GBA. Members consider that the Administration should set out clearly the ways to facilitate the RCHE sector in Hong Kong to provide services in the Mainland, such as the number of additional places to be provided and the locations of RCHEs to be added. Members also urge the Administration to adopt a more proactive approach to support the sector in setting up RCHEs in the Mainland municipalities of GBA, and consider purchasing places from local RCHE operators in the Mainland municipalities of GBA to provide more choices for Hong Kong elderly persons.

32. Some members suggest that the Administration could consider relaxing the application threshold for the RCS Scheme to facilitate participation by Hong Kong elderly persons who wish to retire in Mainland municipalities of GBA. Although elderly persons generally prefer residing in municipalities that are closer to Hong Kong, some of them may also consider residing in their hometowns or Mainland municipalities where their relatives and friends live, such as Shantou and Fujian Province. This should be taken into account when examining possible enhancements to the RCS Scheme.

33. The Administration has advised that the objective of the RCS Scheme is to provide an additional option for elderly persons who have been assessed by the Standardized Care Need Assessment Mechanism for Elderly Services as needing long-term residential care services and are waitlisted for subsidized C&A places. In view of the need for the Hong Kong's RCHE sector to understand the Mainland's business environment and market operation before operating RCHEs there, the Administration planned to liaise with the relevant Mainland authorities as soon as possible, and would conduct on-site visits with the sector to understand the situations and policies of different municipalities. The extended RCS Scheme will be promoted on SWD's website and invitation will be issued to potential eligible operators in Hong Kong. To ensure the quality of participating RCHEs, the RCHEs concerned must be operated by Hong Kong NGOs or private organizations with a good track record in the provision of

subsidized RCS in Hong Kong.⁸ Before the launch of the extended RCS Scheme, stakeholders including RCHE operators, social welfare service organizations making referrals for elderly persons and the Elderly Commission, would also be briefed on the details of the extended RCS Scheme.

Measures to increase and enhance manpower resources for the RCHE sector

34. Members take the view that apart from increasing the supply of RCHEs, the Administration should step up its efforts in addressing the continued shortage of manpower supply in the sector. Given that young people are often reluctant to join the sector as care workers and health workers, members consider that the Administration should step up its effort in supporting young people who were interested in joining the sector, e.g. by providing financial incentives and assisting them to enrol in part-time training programmes. In addition, improvement should be made to employees' remuneration and working condition in order to effectively attract and retain talents in the sector.

35. Members have also expressed concern about the effectiveness of various ongoing measures, such as the Navigation Scheme for Young Persons in Care Services ("Navigation Scheme") and the Enrolled Nurse Training Programme for the Welfare Sector ("Training Programme") in attracting and retaining young talents in the sector. Under the Navigation Scheme, trainees receive on-the-job training in elderly or rehabilitation service units and are subsidized to pursue a two-year part-time diploma course concurrently. Among the 1 158 trainees recruited in 2015-2020, 603 trainees have completed the diploma course. Members urge the Administration to explore ways to enhance the attractiveness of the Navigation Scheme, such as introducing more incentives and facilitation measures to encourage young people to join the scheme.

36. The Administration has advised that in 2020-2021, SWD enhanced the Navigation Scheme to expand the age range of trainees, reduce the number of weekly working hours, raise the salaries and provide incentive allowance for the trainees. The trainees would receive a \$6,000 incentive allowance for each six-month on-the-job training period completed, with the total amount up to \$24,000 for completion of the 24-

⁸ Factors to be considered include record of provision of subsidized residential care services by the applicant organization in Hong Kong; operation and service quality of the Mainland RCHE concerned; involvement of the applicant organization in the daily operation of the RCHE concerned (e.g. staffing arrangement, bed allocation, fee charging, etc.); and monitoring of the service quality of the RCHE by the applicant organization.

month training. In addition, the Administration would continue to monitor the remuneration of staff in subsidized residential care homes (“RCHs”) and make adjustments as appropriate with a view to maintaining the attractiveness of these posts in the market while private and self-financing RCHs would have the autonomy to determine the remuneration of their staff based on market conditions.

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

37. While members are pleased to note that the Administration will 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 with a view to establishing professional standards and a career progression path for RCH staff (“the Review”), members are concerned that the Review is expected to be completed in 18 months. Members urge the Administration to expedite the review process so that the corresponding policies and funding arrangements based on the recommendations of the Review could be put in place as early as practicable.

38. Members also consider that during the interim period when the Review is underway, it is desirable for the Administration to put forward short- to medium-term measures to increase the manpower supply in the sector. In addition, the Administration should proactively discuss with the sector and stakeholders on the establishment of a professional progression path for RCH staff. Members also consider that the Review should also study the long-term manpower needs of the sector such that the Administration could draw up concrete plans and implement appropriate measures to meet such needs accordingly.

39. The Administration has advised that the Review, which aims to enhance the division of work among RCH staff and to establish professional standards and career progression paths for them, will cover RCHs and RCHDs of various care levels and modes of operation. In view of the scale and complexity of the Review, sufficient time should be given to enable the Administration to have an accurate grasp of the actual situation in the RCH sector and the labour market in order to formulate feasible plans and implement effective measures to increase and enhance the respective manpower resources. The Review would commence in 2023 and the Administration would endeavour to expedite the process as far as practicable.

40. The Administration has also advised that the Vocational Qualifications Pathway (“VQP”) setting out the roadmap for progression

in learning and employment in the elderly care service industry has been developed under the Hong Kong Qualifications Framework. The Administration would continue to enhance the VQP to introduce more senior posts (e.g. Senior Health Worker) having regard to the outcome of the Review, with a view to providing more opportunities for professional progression. For instance, local health workers with suitable training might take up more health- and rehabilitation-related professional work in RCHs. It is envisaged that the proposed enhancements would attract more locals to join such professions and help the RCH sector retain the required talents.

Importation of care workers for residential care homes

41. As regards the Administration's plan to launch the Special Scheme to Import Care Workers for Residential Care Homes ("the Special Scheme") in the second quarter of 2023 with a view to alleviating the manpower shortage and meeting the additional manpower requirements of the sector in the next few years, members have expressed concern whether the employment opportunities and promotion prospects of local care workers will be affected. Members have also urged the Administration to put in place mechanisms to closely monitor the situation and safeguard the employment priority for local workers, and to foster an environment conducive to the stable provision of manpower resources for the sector.

42. The Administration has advised that it has all along attached great importance to promoting the employment of local workers and protecting their rights and benefits. On the premise of safeguarding the employment priority for local workers, the quota for importation under the Special Scheme will be capped at 7 000. Given that some 4 000 imported care workers are currently working in Hong Kong, the RCH sector may import around 3 000 additional care workers. The additional imported workforce will alleviate to a certain extent the sector's imminent demand for at least 4 500 additional care workers in the next three years arising from the care worker vacancies in existing service units operated by NGOs, additional care workers required by existing private or self-financing RCHs for complying with the enhanced statutory staffing requirements proposed in the Residential Care Homes Legislation (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2022, and additional care workers generated by the service commencement of new RCHs and additional places under bought place schemes in the coming three years.

43. To balance the interests among local care workers, RCH operators and other stakeholders concerned, the Administration will put in place an array of measures under the Special Scheme.⁹ 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 LWB, SWD and the Labour Department.

Other issues relating to the operation of RCHEs

Quality of life of RCHE residents

44. Some members have expressed concern about the quality of life of RCHE residents. For example, as it has been reported that RCHEs often adopt the use of restraint on residents with dementia. Members have suggested that the Administration should consider setting up RCHEs which would provide specialized and restraint-free services for elderly persons with dementia, and consider strengthening the collaboration between the welfare service sector and the community in new development areas such as the Northern Metropolis.

45. The Administration has advised that given that the health condition of elderly persons changed over time, it is common for RCHEs to concurrently provide services for residents requiring different levels of care in actual operation. The CoP stipulates that RCHEs should avoid using restraint, and if the use of restraint is considered necessary, RCHEs should follow the guidelines, procedures and standards set out therein. Subvented RCHEs and contract homes are also required to comply with the basic service requirements under the Funding and Service Agreements and the staffing requirements set out in the service contracts respectively, which include services provided by registered social worker and professional therapist (such as physiotherapist, occupational therapist and speech therapist). Furthermore, Dementia Supplement has been provided for subvented RCHEs and private RCHEs participating in EBPS to strengthen their manpower to provide better care and training to demented

⁹ Such measures include: (a) the salary of all local care workers employed by an RCH must not be lower than the Median Monthly Wage as compiled by the Census and Statistics Department on a half-yearly basis (the latest of which as at mid-May 2023 was \$14,500); (b) at the time of application, an RCH must submit proof of local recruitment conducted through channel(s) specified by DSW but has been unsuccessful in filling the vacancies; (c) different ratios on the maximum number of imported care workers will be applicable to different types of RCHs; (d) RCHs which successfully import care workers under the Special Scheme must pay the Employees Retraining Levy for the Employees Retraining Board (“ERB”) to enhance training for local workers; and (e) RCHs must not displace local care workers they employ with imported care workers. Imported care workers should be laid off first if redundancy was necessary.

elderly cases. Since mid-February 2019, SWD has launched the Pilot Scheme on Multi-disciplinary Outreaching Support Teams for the Elderly through commissioning NGOs to set up district-based professional teams, which comprise social workers, physiotherapists, occupational therapists and speech therapists, to provide outreach services for residents of private RCHEs.

Application of gerontechnology

46. Members have noted that as at June 2022, a total of \$430 million were approved under the \$1 billion Innovation and Technology Fund for Application in Elderly and Rehabilitation Care (“I&T Fund”), subsidizing about 1 400 eligible units to procure or rent over 11 000 items of technology products. Members consider that the Administration should endeavour to ensure that the I&T Fund would deliver value for money and that such technology products could improve the quality of life of service users.

47. The Administration has advised that the I&T Fund was set up in December 2018 to subsidize eligible elderly and rehabilitation service units to try out, procure or rent technology products with a view to improving the quality of life of service users and reducing the burden and pressure on care staff and carers. An Assessment Panel had been set up to examine and advise on the applications for the I&T Fund and recommend the amount of grants. The Administration would review and update the reference list of “Recognized Technology Application Products” as and when appropriate through continuous collaboration with the Hong Kong Council of Social Service and collection of feedback from the stakeholders as well as recommendation from the Expert Group of the I&T Fund and the Assessment Panel. The reference list includes a wide range of hardware (such as special feeding equipment, shower and bath trolley/bench/bed, and hoist/raiser/lifter/climber.) and software (such as computer software for managing drug use and recording the health conditions/medical records of service users).

Recommendations

48. The Subcommittee is pleased to note that various views and concerns expressed by members have been taken into account by the Administration in formulating measures to increase the provision of RCHE places, such as relaxing the height restriction for parts of RCHEs used for non-dormitory purpose, and encouraging the provision of RCHEs in new private developments by private developers.

49. The Subcommittee recommends that the Administration should:
- (a) continue to explore more ways to increase the supply of subsidized RCHE places, such as providing incentives for property owners in various old districts to offer long-term leases to RCHE operators, increasing the ratio between subsidized to non-subsidized place from 6:4 to 8:2 when planning for new contract RCHEs, and strengthen the collaboration between the welfare service sector and the community in new development areas such as the Northern Metropolis;
 - (b) be more proactive in taking forward the projects under the Special Sites Scheme, e.g. providing one-stop service for the NGO applicants, seeking collaboration with the Urban Renewal Authority to provide services to facilitate redevelopment of sites held by NGOs, and setting a deadline for the NGO applicants to finalize the project proposals;
 - (c) provide additional incentives for private developers to provide RCHE premises in new private developments and provide more facilitating measures as well as expediting the vetting and approval procedures, e.g. by providing one-stop service for applicants;
 - (d) facilitate the sector to meet the required architectural designs and management conditions for placing parts of RCHEs used for dormitory purpose at a height more than 24 metres above the ground, e.g. by updating the relevant parts of CoP and providing mock-up units for the sector's reference and compliance;
 - (e) facilitate elderly persons to reside in RCHEs in the Mainland, such as stepping up publicity for the RCS scheme, ensuring an appropriate access to healthcare services by the elderly persons participating in the RCS Scheme, and purchasing places from local RCHE operators in the Mainland municipalities of GBA under the RCS Scheme;
 - (f) expedite the review on the skill and qualification requirements for residential care home staff with a view that the corresponding policies and funding arrangements based on the recommendations of the review could be put in place as early as practicable;

- (g) step up its effort in supporting young people who are interested in joining the RCHE sector (e.g. providing financial incentives and assisting them to enrol in part-time training programmes) and improving employees' remuneration and working condition to effectively attract and retain talents in the sector; and
- (h) brief the Panel on Welfare Services in due course on the progress made in increasing the number of RCHE places and in enhancing manpower resources for the sector.

Advice sought

50. The Panel on Welfare Services is invited to note the deliberations and recommendations of the Subcommittee.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
3 July 2023

Panel on Welfare Services

**Subcommittee on Increasing the Provision of
Residential Care Places for the Elderly**

Terms of reference

To study and follow up on measures to increase the provision of residential care places for the elderly and make recommendations.

Panel on Welfare Services

**Subcommittee on Increasing the
Provision of Residential Care Places for the Elderly**

Membership list *

Chairman	Hon CHAN Han-pan, BBS, JP
Deputy Chairman	Hon LAM So-wai
Members	Hon Doreen KONG Yuk-foon Hon Stanley LI Sai-wing, MH, JP Dr Hon TIK Chi-yuen, SBS, JP Hon CHAU Siu-chung Hon Judy CHAN Kapui, MH, JP Hon Lillian KWOK Ling-lai Revd Canon Hon Peter Douglas KOON Ho-ming, BBS, JP Hon TANG Ka-piu, BBS, JP Dr Hon NGAN Man-yu
	(Total : 11 members)
Clerk	Mr Richard WONG
Legal Adviser	Ms Clara WONG

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

Panel on Welfare Services

**Subcommittee on Increasing the Provision of
Residential Care Places for the Elderly**

Changes in membership

Member	Relevant date
Prof Hon Nelson LAM Chi-yuen, JP	Up to 18 June 2022
Hon Maggie CHAN Man-ki, MH, JP	Up to 10 January 2023
Hon Benson LUK Hon-man	Up to 10 January 2023

For **changes in Membership of the Seventh Legislative Council**, please refer to the link below:

(<https://www.legco.gov.hk/en/members/legco-members/changes-in-legco-membership.html>)

Panel on Welfare Services

**Subcommittee on Increasing the Provision of
Residential Care Places for the Elderly**

List of deputation/individual which/who has submitted written views to the
Subcommittee

1. The Elderly Services Association of Hong Kong
2. A member of the public