

24th Meeting of the Elderly Commission
Summary for Press Briefing

The Elderly Commission (EC) held its 24th meeting today (21 June 2001) with the following 3 items on the agenda:

(1) Senior Citizen Residence Scheme

- The Government has invited the Hong Kong Housing Society to undertake a pilot Senior Citizen Residence (SEN) Scheme which aims at providing affordable, purpose-built accommodation with integrated care and supportive services to elderly people who have the financial means to live independently.
- This SEN Scheme will be operated on self-financing and user-pays principles.
- Two sites, in Ngau Tau Kok and Tseung Kwan O have been granted to the Housing Society at nominal premium for the construction of a total of 567 units and construction work is in progress. The Sheng Kung Hui Diocesan Welfare Council and the Haven of Hope Christian Service will take up the building management and provision of care and support services for the tenants in the two projects respectively.
- The Housing Society has worked out the proposed eligibility criteria, entry contributions and other details of the Scheme. Upon approval by Government as necessary, applications for the units may be invited in October 2001.

(2) Financial Support for Older Persons

- The Health and Welfare Bureau (HWB) has made a presentation today on “Financial Support for Older Persons” to examine the existing social security schemes for elders in Hong Kong, the financial disposition of local elders, and the overseas experience in this area.
- Currently, needy elders may obtain assistance from the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) and Old Age Allowance (OAA) Schemes. The Government notes that there has been a rising reliance on CSSA by elders. The take-up rate of CSSA by elders has doubled from 7-8% in 1993/94 to the current 15%. On the other hand, the take-up rate of OAA has been decreasing since the mid 90’s.

- A survey has been conducted in the summer of 2000 on our current and next generation of older persons about their socio-demographic, health and economic profiles. The main observations on their economic profile are:
 - (a) The family continues to serve as the main provider for elders though its role has been diminishing. Although our elders have limited means in general, most of them considered their income as sufficient in meeting expenses;
 - (b) The next generation of elders seems to be financially better off, in terms of their income, assets and retirement protection. 30% of them are working with/have worked with employers who provide voluntarily some form of retirement benefits;
 - (c) The Government has identified a group of elders in both the current generation of older persons who, because of little personal savings, inadequate family support and not applying for CSSA, need additional assistance apart from that currently provided by OAA.

- The HWB has conducted research on overseas practices in providing financial support for older persons. Reference has been drawn from the three-pillar approach recommended by the World Bank:
 - (a) First pillar of a compulsory public plan for poverty alleviation and prevention
 - in Hong Kong, the CSSA and OAA are examples of such plans.
 - (b) Second pillar of a compulsory private managed pension plan for income maintenance
 - in Hong Kong, the Mandatory Provident Fund (MPF), is such a plan which ties benefits to contributions.
 - (c) Third pillar of a voluntary savings-annuity plan to supplement the two above
 - this involves investment in financial products offered by the market, and is meant to supplement retirement income.

- With the MPF scheme now in place as our second pillar, the Government recognizes the need to review policies to improve the first pillar to provide targeted and enhanced protection to the older persons in need.

(3) Long Term Care for the Frail Elders

- It is the priority of the Government to provide quality long term care to frail elders in Hong Kong. Building on the policy of “ageing in place”, the Government will continue to provide the appropriate home and community care services to encourage frail elders to live at home for as long as possible. For those elders who can no longer be supported at home, the Government will continue to provide quality residential care services.

- The Government would pursue the following initiatives in developing an integrated and comprehensive long term care system for elders in Hong Kong:
 - (a) *Implementation of Care Need Assessment Mechanism*
The Government will continue to apply the standardized care need assessment mechanism to ensure provision of appropriate services to elders with care needs. The assessment results also provide the basis for care planning;
 - (b) *Emphasis on Home and Community Care Services*
The Government will continue to strengthen and re-engineer home and community care services for frail elders living at home. The Government will further expand the enhanced home and community care services to benefit more elders;
 - (c) *Development of Comprehensive and Integrated Care Infrastructure*
The Social Welfare Department will commission some pilot projects in integrated mode this year. Flexibility and innovation in service planning and delivery would be encouraged. The objective is to develop over time a care infrastructure in the community which can facilitate provision of comprehensive and integrated long term care services;
 - (d) *Implementation of concept of 'Continuum of Care' in Residential Care Homes for the Elderly*
The Government is already piloting the 'Continuum of Care' concept in three subvented residential care homes. The Government aims to apply this concept to more homes in future so that elders do not need to leave their familiar environment even when their health conditions deteriorate;
 - (e) *Development of Quality Assurance Measures*
The Government will consider quality assurance measures to further upgrade the standards of long term care services, in particular in the residential setting with all private residential care homes achieving licensing standards by March 2001. For clinical management such as skin care and fall prevention, the Government will encourage adoption of well-researched care protocols and the application of client care outcome measures;
 - (f) *Strengthening of Support and Training for Family Carers*
The Government will continue to strengthen various support services, such as training and respite service, to enable families to continue to take care of their frail elders effectively;
 - (g) *Better Interface between Medical/Health System and Long Term Care System*
The Government will continue to pursue measures to ensure adequate medical and allied health support is provided to the long term care system; and

(h) *Enhancement of Manpower Training*

In the long term care sector, the Government will strengthen training for our professional and non-professional staff through a multi-disciplinary approach. In the medical and health sectors, the Government needs to enhance the role and the training of practitioners and nurses in the provision of long term care. The Government will work together with the sectors concerned to improve and develop the training programmes.

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