

## **The 66th Meeting of the Elderly Commission**

### **Press Summary**

The Elderly Commission held its 66th meeting today (10 March 2011), and was briefed by the Government on relevant initiatives in the 2011-12 Budget.

#### **Elderly care services**

- The Commission welcomed the various new initiatives to enhance elderly care services proposed in the Budget. These include additional recurrent funding of about \$131 million to provide a total of about 1 300 additional subsidised residential care places; \$40 million to raise the unit subsidy of EA1 places under the Enhanced Bought Place Scheme (EBPS), so that the private residential care homes for the elderly (RCHEs) concerned can arrange physiotherapy treatment and rehabilitation training for their residents; \$45 million to increase the Dementia Supplement (DS) and Infirmary Care Supplement for subvented RCHEs and EBPS homes, and to provide DS to day care centres/units for the first time; \$76 million to provide 1 500 Enhanced Home and Community Care Services (EHCCS) places and 185 day care service places for the elderly; and \$148 million to extend the coverage of the Integrated Discharge Support Programme for Elderly Patients (IDSP) from the current three districts (Kwun Tong, Kwai Tsing and Tuen Mun) to all districts within 2011-12, and to make it a regular service.
- The Commission considered that the above initiatives could help address the growing demand for subsidised residential and community care services amid the trend of an ageing population, and further enhance the quality of elderly care services. The Commission welcomed in particular the new initiatives to support elders who age at home, i.e. the substantial increase in EHCCS places and the full implementation of the IDSP. In fact, the Commission is working on a consultancy study to examine how to enhance community care services to better serve the elderly. Findings would be available later this year.

## **Healthcare**

- The Commission was pleased to note that the Government further increased its expenditure on health to about 16.5% of the Government's recurrent expenditure in 2011-12. Recurrent expenditure on health amounts to \$39.9 billion, representing a 9% increase over the revised estimate for 2010-11. The increased expenditure includes additional recurrent funding to the Hospital Authority (HA) for meeting new service needs and implementing new and ongoing initiatives, including extension of the psychogeriatric outreach services to cover about 80 additional RCHEs. In 2011-12, the Government will allocate \$112 million to continue administering vaccination programmes that provide free or subsidised pneumococcal and seasonal flu vaccination for elders aged 65 or above.

### ***(a) Elderly Health Care Voucher***

- The Commission welcomed the Government's initiative to extend and enhance the Elderly Health Care Voucher Pilot Scheme having regard to the interim review findings, and was pleased to note that the Financial Secretary would allocate \$1 billion to implement the proposal as announced in the 2011-12 Budget.
- The Commission welcomed the proposed extension of the Scheme for another three years starting from 1 January 2012, and supported the proposal to double the voucher amount from \$250 to \$500 per year per eligible elderly person.
- The Commission agreed that the Scheme could encourage the elderly in seeking private primary care services in their neighbourhood. The Commission also considered that promoting health check among the elderly with a view to enhancing preventive care would be conducive to the health and well-being of the elderly.
- The Commission noted that improvement would be made to strengthen the operation of the Scheme, including stepping up monitoring over the use of health care vouchers.

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### ***(b) Tobacco control***

- The Commission noted the Government's established policy on tobacco

control to seek to discourage smoking, contain the proliferation of tobacco use, and protect the public from passive smoking to the maximum extent possible, through a step-by-step and multi-pronged approach comprising publicity, education, legislation, enforcement, taxation and smoking cessation. It also noted that for public health considerations, the Government has proposed increasing tobacco duty by \$0.5 per stick, while duties on other tobacco products will be increased by the same percentage. The Commission welcomed the Government's substantial input on provision and promotion of smoking cessation services, especially with regard to the enhancement of free smoking cessation services provided by community organisations.

### **Social security**

- The Commission welcomed the Budget proposal to extend the coverage of the Community Living Supplement to include elderly recipients of Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) who lived in the community and to increase the monthly rate to \$250. The Commission considered that this would better support CSSA elders' stay in the community.
- The Commission also welcomed the provision of extra allowance to recipients of CSSA, Old Age Allowance and Disability Allowance, which would help ease the pressure of inflation and rising prices faced by elders in receipt of these payments.

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