

38th Meeting of the Elderly Commission **Summary for Press Briefing**

The Elderly Commission (EC) held its 38th meeting today (14 June 2004) with the following items on the agenda: -

(1) Pilot Project on Accreditation System for Residential Care Services for the Elders in Hong Kong

- To further enhance the quality standards of residential care services for the elders, the 2001 Policy Address sets out the target to research on quality assurance measures to help residential care homes for the elderly (RCHEs) to raise their standards above licensing requirements. It is considered necessary that the proposed measures should take into account the longer term strategy to meet the demand for long term care of frail elders and put emphasis on enhancing consumer education and accessibility to information on the quality of RCHEs. This points to the need for some form of quality assurance through an independent accreditation system.
- With funding from the Lotteries Fund, the Hong Kong Association of Gerontology (HKAG) has conducted a two-year “Pilot Project on Accreditation System for Residential Care Services for the Elders in Hong Kong”. The project is at an advance stage, and HKAG is preparing the final report which will be submitted to the Social Welfare Department (SWD) around end of June 2004. Members were briefed by representatives of HKAG on the latter’s major recommendations.
- During the project period, HKAG has conducted literature review on the accreditation systems of various overseas economies, carried out overseas study visits, launched two rounds of pilot accreditation exercises involving the participation of 37 RCHEs run by the private sector and non-government organizations, trained assessors for the pilot accreditation exercises, and developed a set of validated accreditation standards, system and mechanism.
- HKAG’s major recommendations include:
 - set up a voluntary accreditation system based on a set of process-and-outcome-focused accreditation instrument which provides a comprehensive assessment on the service quality of RCHEs in respect of 40 accreditation standards, and the principles of peer review and continuous improvement;
 - set up an accreditation body to undertake accreditation work, research and development, and information dissemination;
 - the accreditation body should be a non-statutory independent body; and

- since a set of accreditation standards and instruments have been developed, assessors have been trained, and the sector has demonstrated receptiveness to the proposed accreditation system, an accreditation system should be implemented as early as possible.
- HKAG will finalize the draft Executive Summary and the final report taking into account Members' comments, and submit them to the Administration for consideration. The Health, Welfare and Food Bureau (HWFB) and SWD will further consider the recommendations in detail, and come up with considered views on how to bring forward the proposals. The LegCo Panel on Welfare Services will be briefed on the report in July 2004, and the sector and other interested parties will be briefed in due course.

(2) **Conversion of Self-care Hostel and Home for the Aged Places into Long Term Care Places**

- In the value for money report on residential services for the elderly in 2002, the Director of Audit (D of A) recommended that subsidized self-care (S/C) hostel and home for the aged (H/A) places should be phased out. The LegCo's Public Accounts Committee urged the Government to follow up D of A's recommendations. EC expressed support for the recommendations at its meetings in June 2002 and January 2003, and considered the proposal in line with the strategy of encouraging and facilitating elders with no or low impairment to remain at home and age in their familiar living environment. EC reckoned that residential care services should concentrate on looking after elders with care needs. Elders' housing needs should be met through the housing programme, and their social and psychosocial needs through community support services.
- In order to bring forward the above recommendations, SWD has ceased accepting new applications for admission to S/C hostels and H/As since 1 January 2003. Meanwhile, an extensive case review was conducted to ascertain the genuine welfare needs of the elders on the waiting list and refer them to appropriate services.
- As at 1 January 2003, there were 5 607 applicants on the waiting list for S/C and H/A places. By 31 May 2004, the number of elders on the waiting list has reduced to 1 738, with 802 elders admitted to S/C hostels and H/As in the interim. There were also voluntary withdrawals from the list, such as from elders who have received other types of services.
- At present, there are 97 S/C places and 7 301 H/A places in 75 homes. They are operated by 34 NGOs.
- The Government is helping these homes to phase out their S/C and H/A places, and working towards creating an enabling environment and a fair platform for them to convert those places into LTC places.

- HWFB and SWD are working together with the sector to develop the implementation details of the conversion exercise, on the basis of the following principles and framework :
 - a) facilitate existing residents to continue to stay in their existing homes as far as possible. In-situ conversion will be the mainstream of the conversion exercise;
 - b) facilitate existing homes to upgrade their S/C and H/A places into a prescribed number of LTC places, on the basis of the current subvention amount individual homes are receiving. Homes participating in the conversion exercise will continue to receive the current subvention amount during and after the conversion exercise;
 - c) an individual home will start the conversion exercise as and when it has accumulated a prescribed number of vacancies (a vacancies-led approach); and
 - d) provide existing operators with as much flexibility and support as possible to face the challenges arising from the conversion exercise. For example, under special circumstances, homes may be allowed to undergo merging, reprovisioning and redevelopment.
- A Task Group comprising representatives from HWFB and SWD, the management of a variety of operating agencies, an academic and a representative from the Hong Kong Council of Social Service was set up to advise on the implementation details, with a view to working out the details in the coming few months.

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