

The 62nd Meeting of the Elderly Commission

Press Summary

The Elderly Commission held its 62nd meeting today (4 March 2010) with the following items on the agenda: -

(1) Briefing on relevant initiatives in the 2010-11 Budget

- The Commission welcomed the new welfare initiatives on supporting elders proposed in the Financial Secretary's 2010-11 Budget. These include additional funding of about \$160 million to provide more than 1 000 subsidised residential care places; \$5 million to launch a visiting pharmacist scheme for residential care homes for the elderly (RCHEs); about \$9 million to provide 115 subsidised day care places; \$4 million to extend the "District-based Scheme on Carer Training" to Neighbourhood Elderly Centres; and \$55 million to try out tailor-made home care services for frail elders who are staying at home waiting for nursing home places.
- The Commission considered that the new initiatives on increasing subsidised residential care places and enhancing the support for RCHEs would help respond to elders' service demand. The Commission welcomed in particular the various new initiatives to support elders who were staying at home. In this connection, the Commission would also embark on a consultancy study to see how community care services could better serve elders. Findings should be available early next year.
- The Commission was also glad that the Government increased the expenditure on health to about 16.1% of the Government's recurrent expenditure in 2010-11. The increased expenditure includes the allocation of \$872 million to the Hospital Authority (HA) to meet new service needs; \$161 million to HA to implement other new and ongoing initiatives; \$395 million to the Food and Health Bureau to take forward various health care service reform initiatives; and about \$105 million to enhance vaccination programmes (including pneumococcal and seasonal flu vaccination for elderly aged 65 or above) and implement other initiatives.

(2) Consultation Paper on the Introduction of the Concept of Advance Directives in Hong Kong

- The Commission supported the introduction of the concept of advance directives and advance care planning in Hong Kong, and that these concepts should be promoted as part of end-of-life care.
- The Commission considered that the draft information package for the public as set out in the consultation paper was sufficient for helping individuals concerned make informed decisions. The Commission also considered that there should be general guidelines on making, altering and revoking advance directives for medical and legal practitioners.
- The Commission agreed that Hong Kong people are not yet familiar with the concept of advance directives, and therefore it would be premature to formulate a statutory framework or embark on any legislative process for advance directives until there was greater public awareness of the issues involved.

(3) Elderly Portal : Progress update

- In mid-2009, the Administration openly invited interested organisations to submit proposals for developing the Portal. The Administration eventually accepted the proposal from The Hong Kong Society for the Aged (SAGE) and provided a sponsorship of \$2.8 million to SAGE to support the first phase of the Portal project.
- The Commission was pleased to note that the Portal project was progressing smoothly, and believed that upon its official launch in end May/early June of this year, the Portal would be an important milestone of digital inclusion for the elderly, helping the elderly learn about the Internet and use it effectively to keep abreast of the latest social development.

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