

**For discussion on
21 March 2017**

Paper FC 2/2017

Family Council

2017 Policy Address Family-Related Policy Initiatives of The Labour and Welfare Bureau

Purpose

We set out the Labour and Welfare Bureau's new and on-going initiatives pertaining to the welfare, labour and manpower portfolio as covered by the Chief Executive in his 2017 Policy Address to the Legislative Council Panel on Welfare Services and the Legislative Council Panel on Manpower respectively in January 2017. Relevant papers are attached at **Annex A** and **Annex B**. Paragraphs setting out family-related policy initiatives in Annex B are: paragraphs 8 to 10 (foreign domestic helpers and employment services), paragraphs 11 to 12 (statutory paternity leave) and paragraphs 27 to 29 (family-friendly employment practices and vocational training). Members are invited to note the papers.

**Labour and Welfare Bureau
March 2017**

For discussion
on 26 January 2017

Legislative Council Panel on Welfare Services

2017 Policy Address

Policy Initiatives of the Labour and Welfare Bureau

Introduction

The Chief Executive (CE) delivered his 2017 Policy Address on 18 January 2017. This paper sets out the new and on-going welfare initiatives pertaining to the Labour and Welfare Bureau (LWB) and Social Welfare Department (SWD), as set out in the 2017 Policy Address and Policy Agenda.

Summary of New Initiatives

2. The new initiatives in the 2017 Policy Address and Policy Agenda are summarised as follows:

- Add a higher tier of assistance under the Old Age Living Allowance (OALA) by providing a higher monthly allowance of \$3,435 per person for elderly singletons with assets not exceeding \$144,000 or elderly couples with assets not more than \$218,000 (see paragraph 5 below);
- Relax the asset limits for the existing OALA from \$225,000 to \$329,000 (with effect from 1 February 2017) for elderly singletons and from \$341,000 to \$499,000 (with effect from 1 February 2017) for elderly couples (see paragraph 5 below);
- Abolish the arrangement for the relatives concerned to make a declaration on whether they provide the elderly persons who apply for Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) on their own with financial support (the so-called “bad son statement”), and raise the eligible age for elderly CSSA from 60 to 65 (see paragraph 6 below);

- Invite the Community Care Fund (CCF) to implement a pilot scheme to provide transitional care and necessary support for elderly persons discharged from public hospitals after treatment (see paragraph 8 below);
- Invite CCF to implement a pilot scheme to provide home care and support services for elderly persons with mild impairment (see paragraph 8 below);
- Provide support for the elderly living alone and families of elderly couples through cross-sector collaboration, including the participation of doctors (see paragraph 8 below);
- Provide an additional 2 000 vouchers under the Second Phase of the Pilot Scheme on Community Care Service Voucher for the Elderly to support ageing in place for elderly persons with moderate or severe impairment (see paragraph 9 below);
- Implement the Pilot Scheme on Residential Care Service Voucher for the Elderly (see paragraph 10 below);
- Increase the funding for Infirmary Care Supplement (ICS) and Dementia Supplement (DS) (see paragraphs 11-12 below);
- Implement a pilot scheme under the Lotteries Fund to provide specialised residential care service for elderly persons with special needs at designated residential care homes for the elderly (RCHEs) (see paragraph 13 below);
- Extend the Pilot Residential Care Services Scheme in Guangdong for three years (see paragraphs 14-15 below);
- Exempt once again under the Guangdong Scheme (GD Scheme)¹, on a one-off basis for a one-year period, eligible elderly persons already residing in GD from the requirement of having resided in Hong Kong continuously for at least one year immediately before the date of application (see paragraphs 16-17 below);
- Introduce the Fujian Scheme (FJ Scheme) to provide monthly OAA for eligible elderly persons who choose to reside in Fujian

¹ To facilitate the choice to retire on the Mainland, the Government introduced the GD Scheme on 1 October 2013 to provide Old Age Allowance (OAA) to eligible elderly persons who choose to reside in Guangdong (GD).

(FJ) (see paragraphs 16-17 below);

- Start formulating a new Hong Kong Rehabilitation Programme Plan upon the completion of the task of formulating the Elderly Services Programme Plan (ESPP) by the Elderly Commission (EC) and make reference to the relevant experience (see paragraph 19 below);
- Convert the Pilot Scheme on On-site Pre-school Rehabilitation Services, upon its conclusion, into a regular government subsidy programme, under which 7 000 service places will be provided in phases (see paragraph 20 below);
- Waive the fees of special child care centres (SCCCs) and provide non-means-tested training subsidy for children on the waiting list for these centres (see paragraph 21 below);
- Step up the support for ex-mentally ill persons through Integrated Community Centres for Mental Wellness (ICCMWs) (see paragraph 22 below);
- Prepare for the regularisation of the Pilot Project on Peer Support Service in Community Psychiatric Service Units (see paragraph 23 below);
- Provide a special subsidy for persons with permanent stoma from low-income families to purchase medical consumables (see paragraph 24 below);
- Provide additional day care service places and strengthen outreaching services of the district support centres for persons with disabilities (DSC) to enhance support for ageing persons with disabilities (see paragraph 25 below);
- Inject additional funding of \$100 million into the Enhancing Employment of People with Disabilities through Small Enterprise Project (3E Project). The maximum funding for each social enterprise project will increase to \$3 million (see paragraph 26 below);
- Increase the level of various foster care allowances, provide 240 additional foster care places in phases, and strive to recruit more foster parents (see paragraph 27 below);

- Provide additional resources for units of day/residential child care services and pre-school rehabilitation services for enhancing the remuneration for child care staff (see paragraph 28 below); and
- Seek funding from the Lotteries Fund for injection of \$300 million into the Community Investment and Inclusion Fund (CIIF) (see paragraph 29 below).

Details of Policy Priorities/New Initiatives

Retirement Protection: Enhancing the Social Security Pillar

3. The six-month public engagement exercise “Retirement Protection Forging Ahead” ended on 21 June 2016. The independent consultant commissioned by LWB had consolidated the views collected, and submitted the draft report for Commission on Poverty’s (CoP’s) consideration in December 2016. The report has been uploaded to the dedicated website of CoP and the thematic website of the public engagement exercise on retirement protection for public reference.

4. In 20 years, one-third of Hong Kong’s population would be aged 65 or above. Moreover, with longer life expectancies, Hong Kong people’s retirement life can be as long as 20 to 30 years. As such, the community needs to be well prepared for retirement protection. After consulting the public, the Government considers the existing multi-pillar retirement protection system should continue. At the same time, we should enhance the effectiveness of each pillar while maintaining the sustainability and financial viability of the system.

5. OALA was implemented shortly after this term of the Government had assumed office. It now benefits more than 440 000 elderly persons, or around 37% of the elderly population. To strengthen the support of the social security pillar for elderly persons, the Government will enhance OALA through two measures. First, the Government will add a higher tier of assistance by providing a higher monthly allowance of \$3,435 per person, or about one-third higher than the existing rate, for elderly persons with more financial needs who are eligible for the allowance, i.e. elderly singletons with assets not exceeding \$144,000 or elderly couples with assets not more than \$218,000. Second, the Government will relax the asset limits for the existing allowance from \$225,000 to \$329,000 (with effect from 1 February 2017)

for elderly singletons and from \$341,000 to \$499,000 (with effect from 1 February 2017) for elderly couples to benefit more elderly persons with financial needs. Around 500 000 elderly persons will benefit from the two measures in the first year, and the coverage of OALA will increase to 47%. Counting in CSSA as well as the non-means-tested OAA and Disability Allowance (DA), the social security pillar will in the first year cover nearly 910 000 or 74% of elderly persons.

6. Meanwhile, while maintaining the requirement that applicants under the CSSA Scheme must apply on a household basis, the Government will abolish the arrangement for the relatives concerned to make a declaration on whether they provide the elderly persons who apply for CSSA on their own (e.g. an elderly person who does not live with his/her children) with financial support (the so-called “bad son statement”). Only the elderly applicants will be required to submit information. The eligible age for elderly CSSA will be raised from 60 to 65 to align with the direction of our population policy to extend retirement age. Elderly persons aged between 60 and 64 who are receiving CSSA before the new policy takes effect will not be affected.

Care for the Elderly

7. As regards caring for the elderly, the Government adopts a proactive approach in handling the ageing population in Hong Kong. Our objective in elderly services is to enable our senior citizens to live in dignity and provide necessary support for them to promote their sense of belonging, sense of security and sense of worthiness. The Government will continue to implement a wide spectrum of measures to strengthen elderly services on all fronts. The Government will proactively promote active ageing while taking care of the service needs for frail elderly persons. The Government strives to provide quality and cost-effective long-term care services for those who are in need under the policy of promoting “ageing in place as the core, institutional care as back-up”.

Supporting Ageing in Place for the Elderly

8. Before the completion of the report on the ESPP in the second quarter of 2017, the Government will seize each and every opportunity to improve our elderly services, particularly community care services. The Government will invite CCF to consider implementing two pilot schemes: (a) the first pilot scheme will provide transitional care and necessary support for elderly persons discharged from public hospitals after

treatment to avoid their premature admission into elderly homes. It targets at elderly persons who are not covered under the existing Integrated Discharge Support Programme for Elderly Patients.² Through medical-social collaboration, intensive transitional care (comprising temporary residential care service and/or community care and support services) will be provided for eligible elderly persons; and (b) the second pilot scheme will provide home care and support services for elderly persons with mild impairment. SWD will develop a standardised assessment tool for assessing the eligibility of elderly persons for this pilot scheme. The Government plans to brief the Panel on Welfare Services on these two new initiatives in February and March 2017 respectively. Besides, the Government will provide support for the elderly living alone and families of elderly couples through cross-sector collaboration, including the participation of doctors.

9. Meanwhile, the Government is continuing to implement the Second Phase of the Pilot Scheme on Community Care Service Voucher for the Elderly financed by the Lotteries Fund, with the quota increased to 3 000 vouchers in October 2016. SWD has issued invitation to eligible elderly persons to join the Second Phase since early September 2016, and the response has been positive with around 3 000 applications for vouchers received during a period of more than four months up to mid-January 2017. To support ageing in place for elderly persons with moderate or severe impairment and to meet the keen service demand, the Government will provide an additional 2 000 vouchers under the Second Phase of the pilot scheme. In other words, the total number of vouchers under the Pilot Scheme will reach 5 000. The additional 2 000 vouchers are estimated to be issued in the third quarter of 2017.

Implementing the Pilot Scheme on Residential Care Service Voucher for the Elderly

10. Starting from the first quarter of 2017, the Government will implement the Pilot Scheme on Residential Care Service Voucher for the Elderly by adopting a “money-following-the-user” approach. The Pilot Scheme will offer elderly persons in need of residential care service an additional choice and provide an incentive for RCHEs to improve their services. A total of 3 000 service vouchers will be issued from 2017 to

² At present, the Integrated Discharge Support Programme for Elderly Patients provides post-discharge support services to elderly patients who are assessed to be of high unplanned re-admission risk. Some patients (such as acute stroke patients and patients with hip fracture) do not meet the criterion of high re-admission risk as their medical conditions have already been stabilised.

2019 by phases under this Pilot Scheme.

Increasing the Funding for ICS and DS

11. ICS is provided as an additional resource to support frail elderly persons living in subvented RCHEs, subvented residential care homes for persons with disabilities (RCHDs) and private RCHEs participating in the Enhanced Bought Place Scheme (EBPS) who have been medically assessed to be in need of infirmary care. The eligibility of elderly persons for ICS is confirmed by the Community Geriatric Assessment Teams of the Hospital Authority (HA). ICS is to be used as an allowance for existing staff (including physiotherapists, occupational therapists, nurses, health workers, care workers and workmen) or for the employment of qualified staff, including the purchase of professional services. DS has also been provided as additional support for elderly persons with dementia in subvented RCHEs, subvented RCHDs, private RCHEs participating in EBPS and subsidised day care centres/units for the elderly. With the DS allocation, the homes may employ additional professional staff, including occupational therapists, nurses and social workers, etc., or purchase professional services.

12. In order to provide enhanced support for frail and demented elderly persons, the Government will increase the funding for ICS and DS. In 2017-18, the enhanced provision of ICS is estimated to benefit more than 1 600 elderly residents living in about 136 subvented RCHEs, subvented RCHDs and EBPS homes and the enhanced provision of DS is estimated to benefit more than 6 200 elderly residents living in about 284 subvented RCHEs, subvented RCHDs and EBPS homes. Besides, the elderly persons participating in the Pilot Scheme on Residential Care Service Voucher for the Elderly will also benefit from the enhanced provision.

Providing Specialised Residential Care Services for Elderly Persons with Special Needs

13. To provide better support for elderly persons with special needs, the Government will implement a pilot scheme under the Lotteries Fund to provide specialised residential care services for elderly persons with special needs at designated RCHEs. The pilot scheme will target at frail elderly persons from ethnic minorities and those with disabilities (e.g. persons with hearing and speech impairment). Participating RCHEs will provide these elderly persons with specialised services, including special diets, sign language interpretation and other support services, to facilitate

their living in RCHEs.

Extending the Pilot Residential Care Services Scheme in Guangdong

14. SWD has since June 2014 been implementing the Pilot Residential Care Services Scheme in Guangdong to provide elderly persons waiting for subsidised care-and-attention places with an option to live in the two elderly homes located in Shenzhen and Zhaoqing, namely 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, which are run by Hong Kong non-governmental organisations (NGOs). As at end-December 2016, a total of 138 elderly persons had participated in the pilot scheme and, 112 of them were still residing in the two elderly homes³.

15. The Government has completed a review of the pilot scheme. On the whole, the pilot scheme has been running smoothly since its commencement in June 2014 with steady growth in the number of admissions. Elderly residents were generally satisfied with the living environment of and services provided by the two homes, and they were willing to continue retiring on the Mainland. The Government will extend the pilot scheme for three years starting from January 2017 with the earmarked funding provision unchanged.

The GD Scheme and the FJ Scheme

16. To facilitate the choice to retire on the Mainland, the Government proposes to introduce two new initiatives. First, under the GD Scheme, the Government will once again, on a one-off basis for a one-year period, exempt eligible elderly persons already residing in GD from the requirement of having resided in Hong Kong continuously for at least one year immediately before the date of application. SWD plans to implement the above initiative shortly after the passage of the Appropriation Bill 2017. Second, making reference to the design of the GD Scheme, the Government will introduce the FJ Scheme to provide monthly OAA for eligible elderly persons who choose to reside in FJ and will, on a one-off basis for a one-year period, exempt eligible elderly persons already residing in FJ from the requirement of having resided in Hong Kong continuously for at least one year immediately before the date of application. Taking into account the selection and appointment of an

³ The Government has since 2014-15 earmarked a recurrent provision of about \$32 million for the provision of 400 places under the pilot scheme. Actual expenditure would depend on the number of intake of elderly persons.

implementation agent, SWD envisages that the FJ Scheme would be implemented at the beginning of the 2018-19 financial year.

17. Whether eligible elderly persons will apply for allowance through the above two initiatives depends on their individual circumstances and situation. It is difficult to provide an accurate assessment for the time being. Based on the past take-up rate of the GD Scheme and the age distribution of Hong Kong elderly persons in GD and FJ, it is assumed that, for planning purpose, an additional 5 000 elderly persons would benefit from the GD Scheme; and 5 900 elderly persons would benefit from the FJ Scheme. The additional recurrent allowance payments for the GD Scheme and the FJ Scheme are about \$77 million and \$91 million respectively. Further information on the two initiatives is set out at **Annex 1**.

Support for the Disadvantaged

18. Some people in the community are in need of temporary or more long-term assistance from the community owing to various factors such as financial or family circumstances. Different welfare services are one of the ways to support them. The Government will continue to offer appropriate financial assistance to people in need through the CSSA Scheme and Social Security Allowance Scheme, and to strengthen the support for people or families with special needs. The Government will also continue to develop client-centred, family-focused and community-based services that provide integrated and cross-sector support.

Formulating a new Hong Kong Rehabilitation Programme Plan

19. The Hong Kong Rehabilitation Programme Plan was last reviewed and updated in 2005-2007. The Government will commence the work of formulating a new Hong Kong Rehabilitation Programme Plan upon completing the task of formulating the ESPP by EC, by making reference to the relevant experience.

Supporting Children with Special Needs and Their Parents

20. The Government has launched in phases in November 2015 a two-year Pilot Scheme on On-site Pre-school Rehabilitation Services for around 2 900 children with special needs who are studying in kindergartens or kindergarten-cum-child care centres to obtain the

required rehabilitation services as early as possible. The Government has earmarked an annual recurrent expenditure of \$460 million to regularise the scheme and to provide 7 000 places in phases with a view to bringing the waiting time down to almost zero. The Government is conducting a comprehensive review of the pilot scheme to help determine the mode of operation when the scheme is regularised.

21. At present, children who are on the waiting list for subvented pre-school rehabilitation services could apply for a means-tested Training Subsidy Programme (TSP) to acquire self-financing pre-school rehabilitation services. The Government has, starting from 2016-17, increased the number of training hours per month under the TSP for eligible children on the waiting list for SCCCs. Starting from 2017-18, the Government will provide non-means-tested training subsidy for children on the waiting list for SCCCs and waive the service fees of SCCCs.

Enhancing Support for the Ex-mentally Ill Persons

22. Since October 2010, ICCMWs have been providing one-stop and district-based community support services ranging from prevention to risk management for discharged mental patients, persons with suspected mental health problems, their family members and carers and residents living in the districts concerned. In 2016-17, Government's annual allocation to ICCMWs amounts to about \$286 million. In 2017-18, the Government will further increase the number of social workers and support staff at ICCMWs to provide more in-depth support to ICCMW members for their re-integration into the community.

23. Besides, the Government will continue to implement the two-year "Pilot Project on Peer Supporter Service" in Community Psychiatric Service Units. The Pilot Project, funded by the Lotteries Fund, was launched in March 2016 for trained ex-mentally ill persons to serve as peer supporters to provide support and encouragement for other persons in rehabilitation through sharing their recovery experience. The Government will make preparation for its regularisation by reviewing the implementation of the Pilot Project and its effectiveness.

Strengthening Community Support for Persons with Disabilities

24. The Government has been providing various subvented community care services for persons with disabilities and their carers. In 2017-18, the Government will invite CCF to consider implementing a

pilot scheme for providing a special subsidy for persons with permanent stoma from low-income families to purchase medical consumables.

25. In addition, to enhance support for ageing persons with disabilities and their carers, the Government will provide additional day care service places at 16 DSCs in 2017-18. The Government will also increase the number of social workers at DSCs for providing outreaching services, with a view to conducting needs and risk assessments for persons with disabilities and their carers who are living in community but lack support; and providing suitable community support services or making referrals to other service units according to their actual needs for early intervention.

Injecting Additional Funding of \$100 Million into the 3E Project

26. Subsidising NGOs to set up social enterprises to create more work opportunities for persons with disabilities through the 3E Project is one of the Government's measures to promote employment for persons with disabilities. Since the inception of the 3E Project in September 2001, a grant of about \$105 million has been approved to set up 110 social enterprises, creating some 1 100 jobs, of which about 800 jobs were specially created for persons with disabilities. With the funding balance of around \$49 million as at December 2016, additional funding is required to sustain the operation of the 3E Project in the years to come. In 2017-18, the Government will inject an additional funding of \$100 million into the 3E Project for the continued operation and expansion of the 3E Project; to increase the maximum funding for each social enterprise from \$2 million to \$3 million; and to extend the monitoring period from five years to six years, to encourage NGOs to set up more social enterprises for directly creating more employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. The Government plans to implement the above measures in the fourth quarter of 2017. It is estimated that the proposed injection could create around 800 additional employment opportunities for persons with disabilities.

Supporting the Families in Need

27. The Government has been providing subsidies to NGOs to provide various types of residential child care services to support children who cannot be adequately cared for by their families or young persons having behavioural and/or emotional problems. To further support the needy families, the Government will increase the level of various foster

care allowances and provide 240 additional foster care places in phases so that children in need can be taken care of in a family environment. Meanwhile, to further publicise foster care service to the general public and recruit more suitable foster parents, the Government will enhance service promotion in 2017 through a territory-wide publicity campaign on foster care service by means of television and radio Announcements in the Public Interests as well as posters, so as to encourage more suitable persons to become foster parents.

Helping Women Balance Family and Work Commitments

28. In view of the implementation of the free quality kindergarten education policy by the Education Bureau in the 2017/18 school year, the Government acknowledges the sector's concern about the effects on the operation of day/residential child care services and pre-school rehabilitation services, especially the challenge arising from the subsidy to the child care services, remuneration of child care workers and manning ratio, etc. In order to relieve the recruitment and brain drain problem of child care services, the Government will provide additional resources for units of day/residential child care services and pre-school rehabilitation services in 2017-18 for enhancing the remuneration for qualified child care staff, so as to retain and attract the qualified child care staff.

Community Development

29. CIIF was established in 2002, and \$432 million out of the total commitment of \$500 million has since been committed to support 323 projects. More than 650 000 persons, including over 80 000 volunteers and 8 700 collaborative partners, have directly participated in the projects, together building over 2 000 mutual help networks. CIIF conducted a three-year evaluation from 2013 to 2016 on the impact of social capital, and the results showed that CIIF had been highly effective in building social capital and enhancing the culture of care and love. The Government will seek funding from the Lotteries Fund for injection of \$300 million into CIIF. The aim is to continue to support social capital development projects and build up mutual help networks in the community through cross-sector collaboration.

On-going Initiatives

Poverty Alleviation

Implementing the Low-Income Working Family Allowance (LIFA)

30. The LIFA Scheme has been implemented since May 2016. The policy objective of the LIFA Scheme is to encourage self-reliance of working poor families through employment and to ease intergenerational poverty. As at 13 January 2017, a total of over 55 100 applications have been received, of which over 36 000 applications have been approved with the total amount of allowance approved over \$428 million. Around 105 100 persons have benefited from the Scheme. Of these persons, around 46 000 are children or youths. The Government has decided to abolish the absence rule with effect from 6 December 2016, i.e. removing the requirement for all household members included in a LIFA application not to be absent from Hong Kong for more than 30 days in any six-month claim period. A comprehensive policy review on the LIFA Scheme will be conducted in mid-2017. Comments received from the public and concern groups on the Scheme will be considered in the review in a holistic manner.

Continuing to Implement Child Development Fund (CDF)

31. Since its establishment in 2008, CDF has provided suitable support to underprivileged children to widen their horizons and enhance their exposure, help them develop a saving habit and plan for the future, with a view to helping them overcome inter-generational poverty. Up till now, CDF has rolled out five batches of NGO-run projects and three batches of school-based projects, benefiting more than 10 000 underprivileged children. The Government will continue to roll out new projects. The sixth batch of NGO-run projects will be rolled out in the second quarter of 2017 to benefit about 2 700 new participants.

Elderly Services

Formulating the ESPP

32. EC is conducting the third-stage public engagement exercise of the ESPP. Preliminary observations show that the public and stakeholders generally support the policy of “ageing in place as the core, institutional care as back-up”, reckoning that community care services

should be strengthened. The report on the ESPP is expected to be completed in the second quarter of 2017. The Government will make specific arrangements for implementation upon receipt of the report.

Supporting Carers

33. In support of the carers of elderly persons, the Pilot Scheme on Living Allowance for Carers of the Elderly Persons from Low Income Families, funded by CCF, was introduced in June 2014 to provide a living allowance for 2 000 carers of the elderly persons from low income families. In October 2016, the Government rolled out Phase II to benefit an additional 2 000 eligible carers, making a total of 4 000 beneficiaries in the two phases of the Pilot Scheme. Meanwhile, the Government will continue to provide training programmes and other support services for carers in need through subvented district elderly community centres and neighbourhood elderly centres.

34. The Government will continue to provide elderly persons and their carers with different types of support and care service at the community level. One of the attempts is to implement a pilot scheme under the Lotteries Fund to enhance the training for foreign domestic helpers with a view to enhancing their knowledge and skills in taking care of elderly persons.

Implementing Improvement Programme of Elderly Centres (IPEC)

35. The Government will continue to implement IPEC to enhance the physical setting and facilities of 237 elderly centres. As at December 2016, the Lotteries Fund Advisory Committee had endorsed 175 applications. Relevant works have commenced in succession, with 99 elderly centres completed renovation works and re-opened for service with a new look.

Strengthening Inspection and Monitoring of RCHEs and RCHDs

36. SWD plans to set up a new Licensing and Regulation Branch with additional manpower for strengthening the inspection and monitoring of RCHEs and RCHDs. SWD will continue to step up efforts to carry out targeted monitoring in respect of RCHEs and RCHDs with poor track records; handle complaints against RCHEs and RCHDs; review the RCHE and RCHD legislations as well as the codes of practice and formulate care-related guidelines; enhance training for the staff of RCHEs and RCHDs; step up law enforcement; and increase

transparency, etc.

Increasing Higher Quality Subsidised Places under EBPS

37. SWD launched the EBPS in 1998 with a view to upgrading the service standard of private RCHEs through enhanced service requirements in terms of staffing ratio and per capita space standard. The scheme also helps increase the supply of subsidised places so as to shorten elderly persons' waiting time for subsidised care-and-attention places. A major characteristic of EBPS is that once a private RCHE participates in the scheme, the same enhanced standards (e.g. staffing and bed spacing requirements) will apply to the entire home (including non-subsidised places), thus making the scheme an effective means of encouraging private RCHEs to enhance their service quality. SWD is continuing with the conversion of some existing EA2 places under EBPS to about 1 200 higher quality EA1 places so as to increase the supply of higher quality subsidised places and improve the overall quality of private RCHEs.

Increasing Subsidised Residential Care Places for the Elderly

38. The Government will continue to increase the supply of subsidised residential care places for the elderly through a multi-pronged approach. In tandem with the implementation of the Special Scheme on Privately Owned Sites for Welfare Uses (Special Sites Scheme) as described in paragraph 66 below, the Government will make better use of space in subvented homes and construct new contract homes for provision of more subsidised places. The Government will also continue to explore the option of converting or redeveloping the Wong Chuk Hang Hospital, which mainly provides extended care, into an RCHE with more places and other welfare facilities.

Training Nurses for the Welfare Sector

39. To alleviate the problem of nurse shortage in the welfare sector, SWD, in collaboration with HA, has since 2006 run a two-year full-time programme to train Enrolled Nurses (General) / Enrolled Nurses (Psychiatric) for the welfare sector. Altogether 14 training classes have been organised so far, providing a total of about 1 800 training places. Another 920 training places will be provided in the coming years. The training programme is fully subsidised by the Government. Each trainee is required to sign an undertaking to work in the welfare sector for two consecutive years after graduation from the programme. Among the

graduates of the first 13 classes, over 90 per cent have joined the welfare sector after graduation.

Enhancing Support for Elder Academies (EAs)

40. Implemented since early 2007, the EA Scheme encourages the setting up of EAs in primary schools, secondary schools and tertiary institutions to enable elderly persons to pursue life-long learning through the collaboration of school sponsoring bodies and welfare organisations providing elderly services. Subsequently, the Government allocated by two phases a total of \$60 million to the Elder Academy Development Foundation (EADF) for the continued development of the EA Scheme. The Committee on EADF was established under EC in 2009 to devise strategies and measures relating to the set-up, curriculum design, extra-curricular activities and development of EAs, etc. Hitherto, about 130 EAs have been set up in primary schools, secondary schools and tertiary institutions. These EAs altogether provide more than 10 000 learning places each year. The Committee on EADF will continue to promote the EA Scheme.

Creating an Age-friendly Community

41. Given the diverse characteristics and needs of the 18 districts in Hong Kong, the Government encourages each district to implement age-friendly community projects at the district level. Three of the districts (namely Tsuen Wan, Kwai Tsing and Sai Kung) obtained the World Health Organisation's (WHO's) "age-friendly community" accreditation in 2015, and the Southern District obtained WHO's accreditation in 2016.

Implementing the Opportunities for the Elderly Project (OEP)

42. For better use of resources, the Government merged the Neighbourhood Active Ageing Project and OEP in 2016. Under the merged OEP, the Government will continue to encourage elderly persons to actively take part in community affairs and continue contributing to society, and to lead a fruitful elderly life by joining elderly volunteer service as well as activities relating to community education and inter-generational harmony.

Continuing to Implement the Government Public Transport Fare Concession Scheme for the Elderly and Eligible Persons with Disabilities

43. LWB will continue to implement the popular Government Public Transport Fare Concession Scheme for the Elderly and Eligible Persons with Disabilities, with a view to building a caring and inclusive society by encouraging elderly persons and eligible persons with disabilities to participate more in community activities.

44. In the past six months (from June to November 2016), the number of average daily passenger trips made on Mass Transit Railway, franchised buses, ferries and green minibuses under the Scheme was around 1 130 000, with about 87% (some 983 000 trips) made by elderly persons⁴ and about 13% (some 143 000 trips) made by eligible persons with disabilities⁵. In 2016-17, the estimated reimbursement of revenue forgone to public transport operators by the Government under the Scheme is around \$1,100 million.

Rehabilitation Services

Providing Additional Places for Rehabilitation Services

45. The Government will continue to adopt a multi-pronged approach to actively identify suitable sites to provide more service places. The Government will in parallel provide more rehabilitation service facilities through the Special Sites Scheme as described in paragraph 66 below with a view to relieving the service demand and shortening the waiting time.

Implementing the Relevant Improvement Measures under the DA Review

46. As mentioned by the CE in the 2016 Policy Address, the Inter-departmental Working Group on Review of the DA (the Working Group), coordinated by LWB, completed the review in 2016 and put forward a number of recommendations with a view to providing better support to persons with disabilities. The Government is progressively implementing the relevant improvement measures, among which SWD introduced three pilot projects under CCF in October 2016 to further encourage persons with disabilities to engage in employment and support

⁴ Elderly persons refer to those aged 65 or above.

⁵ Eligible persons with disabilities are recipients under the CSSA Scheme aged below 65 with 100% disabilities and recipients of DA in the same age group.

their carers. Starting from 21 December 2016, doctors have been adopting a standardised approach in conducting medical assessment for DA applicants on the basis of their condition without the use of rehabilitation and mechanical devices (including prosthesis, hearing aids and artificial cochlea). The progress of implementing the Working Group's recommendations is set out at **Annex 2**.

Continuing to Promote Employment for Persons with Disabilities

47. The Government's policy objective is to provide skill training and support services for persons with disabilities to enable them to find appropriate jobs on the basis of their abilities rather than disabilities and, at the same time, provide assistance for employers and strive to promote an inclusive society. The measures include providing on-the-job training and various vocational rehabilitation services; providing job matching services for persons with disabilities in open market; setting up social enterprises for creating more work opportunities for persons with disabilities; and promoting an inclusive society.

48. The Government will continue to implement the two pilot schemes funded by CCF launched since 3 October 2016 to further encourage employment for persons with disabilities. The two pilot schemes include raising the maximum level of disregarded earnings for disabled recipients under CSSA scheme from existing \$2,500 to \$4,000 per month; and providing additional subsidy of \$5,000 per month for Higher Disability Allowance recipients in paid employment for hiring carers. The Labour Department will also continue to implement a pilot scheme to strengthen the counselling services for job seekers with disabilities.

49. LWB, in collaboration with the Rehabilitation Advisory Committee, the Hong Kong Council of Social Service and the Hong Kong Joint Council for People with Disabilities, will continue to take forward the Talent-Wise Employment Charter and Inclusive Organisations Recognition Scheme to mobilise the Government, business sector as well as public and subvented bodies to promote the employment of persons with disabilities.

Continuing to Implement Community Support Services and Schemes for Persons with Disabilities

50. The Government will continue to develop and enhance day care and residential care services, and provide subsidies to persons with severe

physical disabilities living in the community for renting respiratory support medical equipment and acquisition of medical consumables. To facilitate their continued living and integration into society, case managers will coordinate and arrange appropriate services for them according to their needs. Meanwhile, the Government will continue to provide one-stop community support services in a case management service approach for persons with disabilities and their family members/carers through 16 DSCs, with a view to providing service users with more comprehensive and user-friendly support.

51. The Government will continue to implement the two support schemes, including the Lotteries Fund-funded pilot project, launched since April 2016, to strengthen support for persons with autism and their parents/carers; and the two-year CCF-funded Pilot Scheme on Living Allowance for Low-income Carers of Persons with Disabilities, implemented since 3 October 2016, to provide a monthly allowance of \$2,000 to each eligible carer of person with disabilities.

Support for Women

Helping Women Balance Family and Work Commitments

52. To support parents who are unable to take care of their children temporarily because of work or other reasons, SWD has all along been providing subsidies to NGOs to run a variety of child care services for children below the age of six. To remove the barriers for women to enter or stay in employment and to further respond to the community demand for child care services, the Government will continue to launch the following measures to enhance child care services –

- (a) from 2015-16 onwards, increasing, by phases, the provision of Extended Hours Service by about 5 000 places at aided child care centres and kindergarten-cum-child care centres in districts with high demand. About 1 200 of such places have been provided since September 2015;
- (b) planning to provide about 100 additional aided long full-day child care places for children aged below three in Sha Tin in 2018-19;
- (c) inviting those NGOs participating in the Special Sites Scheme mentioned in paragraph 66 below to consider establishing

work-based child care centres when they are making use of their land for expansion, redevelopment or new development. Three NGOs have responded positively, proposing to provide a total of about 160 self-financing places on implementation. The Government will also explore, on a pilot basis, the feasibility of providing about 100 NGO-operated child care places for staff members in the proposed Government Complex in Tseung Kwan O;

- (d) commissioning a consultancy study to advise on the long-term development of child care services; and
- (e) implementing the Pilot Project on Child Care Training for Grandparents. This two-year pilot project, launched in March 2016, aims at reinforcing family support between generations, enhancing child care to support women in fulfilling work and family commitments; as well as promoting active ageing of grandparents.

Facilitating the Development of Women

53. To enable women to fully realise their due status, rights and opportunities in all aspects of life, the Government, in collaboration with the Women's Commission (WoC) and the community as a whole, will continue to promote the well-being and interests of women through a three-pronged strategy, namely the provision of an enabling environment, empowerment of women and public education. Gender mainstreaming has been extensively adopted by bureaux and departments since 1 April 2015. WoC and LWB have implemented a pilot scheme to encourage NGOs in the social welfare sector to refer to the Gender Mainstreaming Checklist adopted by the Government and apply gender mainstreaming when formulating policies and programmes. To further promote the concept of gender mainstreaming and raise the awareness of gender-related issues in the business community, the Government has established a Gender Focal Point network among listed companies at end 2016, following the setting up of such a network among Government bureaux/departments, District Councils and NGOs in the social welfare sector.

54. In addition, LWB as well as other bureaux and departments will continue to facilitate more women to participate in the work of Government advisory and statutory bodies (ASBs) with a view to attaining the 35% gender benchmark. As at June 2016, the women's

participation rate of ASBs with Government-appointed non-official members was 31.7%.

55. On the other hand, the Government will continue to coordinate the efforts of all parties in promoting women employment. From 2014 to 2017, WoC adopted “Women’s Employment” as the theme of the Funding Scheme for Women’s Development, inviting women’s groups and NGOs to organise various programmes and activities that could help unleash women’s potential, enhance their employability and/or create an environment that enables women to work.

Children Services

Strengthening Residential Child Care Services

56. To support and protect children who cannot be adequately cared for by their families, as well as young persons with behavioural or emotional problems, the Government is increasing by phases the number of residential child care places in non-institutional small group homes and institutional residential homes for children to provide temporary accommodation and emotional support for children and young persons who have been abused or affected by domestic violence or other family problems.

Enhancing After-School Care Services

57. Supportive after-school care services have been provided by NGOs for children aged 6 to 12 so that children whose parents are unable to care for them during after-school hours owing to work, job-search or other reasons could receive proper care. Through the Fee Waiving Subsidy Scheme for After School Care Programme, SWD provides assistance to needy families by waiving or reducing the fee of after-school care services. The Government has strengthened the After School Care Programme by extending the service hours on weekday evenings, Saturdays, Sundays and school holidays in some after-school care centres and provided additional fee-waiving and fee-reduction quotas since December 2014, with a current provision of 462 full fee-waiving places at 35 after-school care centres.

58. The Government has also provided \$200 million matching funds under the Partnership Fund for the Disadvantaged to encourage the business sector to work with organisations and schools to implement

more after-school learning and support programmes for primary and secondary school students from grassroots families. SWD launched the first and the second rounds of applications under the dedicated portion of the fund in January and December 2015 respectively for after-school learning and support programmes. About 150 after-school learning and support programmes have been approved so far, involving matching grants of about \$117 million and benefiting over 60 000 primary and secondary school students. With the donations from commercial entities and matching grants under the fund, the overall funding for these after-school learning and support programmes exceeds \$230 million. SWD is inviting the third round of applications on after-school learning and support programmes under the dedicated portion of the fund from December 2016 to March 2017.

Youth Services

59. SWD will continue to provide subventions for NGOs to offer young persons a series of preventive, developmental and remedial welfare services, such as Integrated Children and Youth Services Centres, school social work and youth outreaching social work, with a view to fostering a sense of responsibility among them so that they may contribute to society. Meanwhile, the Government hopes to identify needy youth early and provide timely support through cross-sector and inter-departmental collaboration.

60. In addition, to offer more employment options for young persons and to address the acute demand for care work manpower in the welfare sector, SWD is implementing the Navigation Scheme for Young Persons in Care Services (Navigation Scheme), providing a total of 1 000 training places in several years starting from 2015-16, to attract young persons to join the elderly and rehabilitation care services (see paragraph 67 below).

Family Services

Promoting “Parental Responsibility Model”

61. In its Report on Child Custody and Access, the Law Reform Commission has recommended the introduction of a new “parental responsibility model” (the Model) into Hong Kong’s family law to replace the custody and access arrangements under the existing family law. LWB conducted public consultation on the draft Children

Proceedings (Parental Responsibility) Bill (the draft Bill) and relevant support measures between November 2015 and March 2016. LWB is studying the views received from public consultation and considering the legislative timetable for taking forward the Bill. Meanwhile, the Government will initiate appropriate support measures through co-operation with NGOs, and continue to conduct promotion and public education work in respect of the Model to promote the continuing parental responsibility of divorced/separated parents towards their children, so as to serve the best interests of the children.

62. With funding of \$7.58 million from the Lotteries Fund, SWD launched a two-year Pilot Project on Children Contact Service through an NGO in September 2016, to facilitate the arrangement of child contact with separated/divorced parents and to strengthen support for separated/divorced families, so that children need not be torn between divorced parents. SWD will conduct evaluation to examine its effectiveness, so as to explore the direction of future service development.

63. In 2017-18, SWD will continue to organise different publicity/education activities, including thematic website and short-term psycho-education programme, etc., and to strengthen the training for front line social workers (including those working in Family and Child Protective Services Units and Integrated Family Service Centres (IFSCs)/Integrated Services Centres (ISCs)) for enhancing their understanding of the concept and knowledge of parenting coordination, family mediation and co-parenting, so as to facilitate them to provide appropriate counselling and support service to separated/divorced families.

Providing the Services of IFSCs and ISCs

64. Currently, the 65 IFSCs over the territory and the two ISCs in Tung Chung have been providing a spectrum of preventive, supportive and remedial welfare services for individuals and families in need, including counselling, crisis intervention, family life education, parent-child activities, enquiry service, volunteer training, support/mutual help groups and referral service, etc. so as to strengthen family's functioning and assist those individuals and families in difficulties to deal with adversities. Social workers of IFSCs/ISCs will comprehensively assess service users' needs through different work strategies, such as early identification and intervention, service integration and partnership with other service stakeholders etc., so as to provide them with appropriate

service.

Combating Domestic Violence

65. The Government does not tolerate domestic violence and has been dealing with the problem through a three-pronged strategy, viz. preventing domestic violence, supporting victims of domestic violence and providing specialised services and crisis intervention. The Government will continue to allocate resources in enhancing the specialised and support services, including providing various support services for victims of domestic violence as appropriate as well as providing counselling and psycho-educational services for batterers to change their abusive attitude and behaviour. At the same time, SWD will increase the number of places and manpower for refuge centre for women and Family Crisis Support Centre.

Social Welfare Planning

Implementing the Special Sites Scheme

66. LWB and SWD are actively following up on some 60 projects under the Special Sites Scheme to encourage NGOs to make better use of their sites through expansion, redevelopment or new development to provide or increase those welfare facilities considered by the Government as being in acute demand, in particular to increase elderly and rehabilitation service places. Based on the rough estimation of the applicant NGOs, if all the projects under the Special Sites Scheme could be implemented smoothly, a range of welfare facilities would be provided, including about 17 000 additional service places for the elderly and persons with disabilities, comprising around 9 000 places for elderly services and around 8 000 places for rehabilitation services. Among the projects, one project has come into service. Five other projects have entered the construction stage, four of which are expected to be completed by 2017-18, and the other one in 2018-19. These six projects provide various welfare services, including about 240 additional elderly service places and about 1 030 additional rehabilitation service places. Separately, the Lotteries Fund has provided funding support for six other projects to proceed with technical feasibility studies and will continue to do so in respect of other more mature projects in 2016-17 and 2017-18.

Developing Manpower Resources in Care Services

67. To encourage young persons to join the elderly long-term care sector, a “first-hire-then-train” pilot project was launched in 2013 with an allocation under the Lotteries Fund. Young persons were recruited to provide care services in RCHEs. Apart from receiving on-the-job training, these young employees were provided with subsidies from the Government to pursue a two-year part-time diploma course in community healthcare. Having regard to the response to the pilot project, the Government has earmarked approximately \$147 million to implement a Navigation Scheme, providing a total of 1 000 training places in several years starting from 2015-16 to encourage young persons to join the elderly and rehabilitation care services. SWD has selected five NGOs to implement the Navigation Scheme, and the NGOs started recruitment of trainees in July 2015 or April 2016. As at December 2016, 555 trainees had been recruited under the Navigation Scheme.

Conclusion

68. The Government attaches great importance to social welfare and has been investing substantial resources in this area. Recurrent expenditure on social welfare in this financial year (i.e. 2016-17) is estimated to be \$66.2 billion, accounting for 18.1% of the recurrent expenditure of the Government as a whole, and representing an increase of 55% as compared to four years ago. The Government will continue to plan for and deliver suitable social welfare services, through strengthening collaboration with different sectors of the community.

Labour and Welfare Bureau
Social Welfare Department
January 2017

The Guangdong Scheme and the Fujian Scheme

To facilitate the choice to retire on the Mainland, as announced in the 2017 Policy Address, the Government will once again exempt under the Guangdong Scheme (GD Scheme), on a one-off basis for a one-year period, eligible elderly persons already residing in Guangdong (GD) from the requirement of having resided in Hong Kong (HK) continuously for at least one year immediately before the date of application (one-year continuous residence in HK requirement); and introduce the Fujian Scheme (FJ Scheme) to provide monthly Old Age Allowance (OAA) for eligible elderly persons who choose to reside in Fujian (FJ). This annex briefs Members on these two initiatives.

The GD Scheme

2. The Government introduced the GD Scheme on 1 October 2013 to provide OAA¹ to HK elderly persons who choose to reside in GD. The GD Scheme adopts essentially the same features of OAA in HK, except that –

- (a) while OAA in HK and the GD Scheme are both open for application by elderly persons aged 70 or above on non-means-tested basis, HK elderly persons aged 65 to 69 who choose to reside in GD may be eligible for the GD Scheme after passing a means test, which is the same as that applicable to the Old Age Living Allowance (OALA) in HK²; and
- (b) during receipt of the allowance, the recipients are required

¹ The non-means tested OAA under the Social Security Allowance Scheme provides monthly allowance to elderly persons aged 70 or above to meet their special needs arising from old age. An eligible OAA applicant must have been a HK resident for at least seven years; and satisfy the one-year continuous residence in HK requirement. During the receipt of the allowance, a recipient may receive full-year payment if he/she resides in HK for at least 60 days in a year. With effect from 1 February 2017, the monthly amount of OAA is \$1,325.

² In April 2013, the Government introduced OALA for elderly persons in HK aged 65 or above subject to an income and asset test. With effect from 1 February 2017, the monthly income and asset thresholds applicable to elderly singletons are \$7,750 and \$225,000 respectively, while the corresponding thresholds for elderly couples are \$12,620 and \$341,000 respectively.

to reside in GD (instead of HK) for at least 60 days for obtaining a full-year payment of the allowance.

3. The same one-year continuous residence in HK requirement (i.e. the requirement that an applicant must have resided in HK continuously for at least one year immediately before the date of application³) is applicable to the GD Scheme as in the case of OAA in HK, so as to ensure that OAA is only granted to people who have had a genuine, long-term connection with HK. It is intended to strike a balance between the interests of various sectors of the community having regard to the long-term sustainability of our social security system and the need for a rational basis on which our public resources are allocated. Applying the requirement would mean that some HK elderly persons who had resided in GD would need to come back to stay in HK for one year in order to be eligible. The Government understood their difficulties, and was aware that if they all returned to stay in HK for one year at the same time, there would be considerable pressure on local public resources and services. With this in view, the Government introduced in the first year of the implementation of the GD Scheme, i.e. from 1 October 2013 to 30 September 2014, a special one-off arrangement to allow applicants who had resided in GD continuously for one year (with a grace period of 56 days) immediately before the date of application to benefit from the GD Scheme without the need to comply with the one-year continuous residence in HK requirement, provided that they would meet all other eligibility criteria under the GD Scheme. As at end-December 2016, there were about 15 000 recipients under the GD Scheme.

4. After the special one-off arrangement had ceased to apply on 1 October 2014, there have been repeated calls from the community for repeating the arrangement to facilitate more elderly persons already residing in GD, in particular the eligible elderly persons who had not applied during the above-mentioned arrangement for various reasons, to be eligible for OAA under the GD Scheme. The arrangement would also benefit those who had settled in GD when the GD Scheme was introduced but were ineligible at that time owing to various reasons (e.g. age threshold and means test requirement) and are now eligible for the GD Scheme because of changed circumstances.

³ The elderly persons may be absent from HK up to 56 days during the one-year period.

5. The Government proposes to, once again, exempt under the GD Scheme, on a one-off basis for a one-year period, eligible elderly persons already residing in GD from the one-year continuous residence in HK requirement. Applicants should, in addition to satisfying all other eligibility criteria for OAA except the one-year continuous residence in HK requirement, provide documentary proof of their residence in GD and declare that they have resided in GD continuously for at least one year (with a grace period of 56 days) immediately before the date of application. The Social Welfare Department (SWD) plans to implement the proposed special one-off arrangement shortly after the passage of the Appropriation Bill 2017.

The FJ Scheme

6. There have been repeated calls from stakeholders for extending OAA to FJ based on broadly the arrangements under the GD Scheme. Having reviewed the socio-economic ties between HK and FJ and other relevant considerations, the Government proposes to extend OAA to FJ. The Government will implement the FJ Scheme making reference to the arrangements applicable to the GD Scheme (see paragraph 2 above), including the introduction of a special one-off arrangement at the initial stage of the implementation of the FJ Scheme (see paragraph 3 above), to allow HK elderly persons who satisfy all other eligibility criteria, except for the one-year continuous residence in HK requirement, to be eligible for the FJ Scheme without having to return to stay in HK for one year⁴.

7. Present recipients of OAA in HK, or eligible elderly persons who intend to apply for OAA, may opt for the FJ Scheme. For those elderly persons who are receiving allowance under the GD Scheme, they may switch to the FJ Scheme if and when they have moved to FJ for permanent residence and the one-year continuous residence in HK requirement would not apply. During receipt of the allowance under the FJ Scheme, the recipients are required to reside in FJ for at least 60 days for obtaining a full-year payment of the allowance.

⁴ The special one-off arrangement will be in operation in the first year of implementation of the FJ Scheme. Applicants are required to provide documentary proof of their residence in FJ and declare that they have resided in FJ continuously for at least one year (with a grace period of 56 days) immediately before the date of application.

8. Applicants for the FJ Scheme should approach SWD to complete the application procedures in person. For applicants who are residing in FJ and with mobility or other problems in returning to HK (including those who intend to benefit from the special one-off arrangement), SWD may allow them to apply by mail or through proxy, subject to documentary proof. An implementation agent will be appointed to assist in processing applications, conducting case reviews and providing services under the FJ Scheme. Similar to the GD Scheme, SWD would conduct vetting of applications received and regular data-matching with other government departments to ensure the continued eligibility of the recipients in order to safeguard the proper use of public resources.

9. Taking into account the selection and appointment of the implementation agent, SWD envisages that the FJ Scheme would be implemented at the beginning of the 2018-19 financial year.

Financial Implications

10. It would be difficult to provide an accurate assessment on the number of applicants of the above two initiatives for the time being. Based on the past take-up rate of the GD Scheme and the age distribution of HK elderly persons in GD and FJ, it is assumed that, for planning purpose, an additional 5 000 elderly persons would benefit from the GD Scheme and 5 900 elderly persons would benefit from the FJ Scheme. The total additional recurrent expenditure incurred by the two initiatives is about \$174 million, with breakdown as set out below –

	Items	Recurrent Expenditure (\$ million)
(a)	Allowance payments	169
(b)	Personal emoluments	1
(c)	Other recurrent costs	4
	Total	174

Implementation of the Recommendations of the Inter-departmental Working Group on Review of the Disability Allowance

The Chief Executive stated in his 2016 Policy Address that the Government would implement the recommendations put forward by the Inter-departmental Working Group on Review of the Disability Allowance (DA) coordinated by the Labour and Welfare Bureau (LWB). The Government briefed Members of the Legislative Council (LegCo) Panel on Welfare Services on the outcome of the review¹ at its meetings on 15 February and 3 May 2016, and listened to views of the Panel Members, concern groups and individuals. The progress of implementation of the various recommendations is as follows –

Recommendation	Progress of Implementation
(A) Improving the existing assessment mechanism for DA	
1. To amend the Medical Assessment Form (MAF) for DA to achieve consistency and objectiveness in the assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Having regard to the views on the proposed amendments to MAF expressed by some organisations and individuals who attended the meeting of the Panel of Welfare Services on 3 May 2016, the Government would temporarily defer incorporating the proposed amendments to MAF. The Government would focus on the implementation of the other recommendations of the Working Group (i.e. items 2 to 9 below).
2. To standardise the arrangements for the use of rehabilitation and mechanical devices in medical assessment under DA	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The relevant arrangements were put in place on 21 December 2016. Specifically, doctors have since been adopting a standardised approach in conducting medical assessment for DA applicants on the basis of their condition without the use of external rehabilitation and mechanical devices (including prosthesis, hearing aids and artificial cochlea).
(B) Continuing to monitor the implementation of the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) established by the World Health Organisation (WHO) in neighbouring places	
3. To invite the Rehabilitation Advisory Committee (RAC) to continue monitoring the adoption of ICF established by WHO in neighbouring places (in particular	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The system in Taiwan will be fully implemented in 2019. The effect of the system has yet to be evaluated.

¹ Please see LegCo Paper CB(2)826/15-16(05) for details.

<p>Taiwan), with a view to exploring how to devise a set of comprehensive and widely accepted definition of disability and the level of disability.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Government will submit information to RAC in due course to follow up on this subject.
<p>(C) Encouraging persons with disabilities to engage in employment</p>	
<p>4. To invite the Community Care Fund (CCF) to fund a pilot scheme to provide further disregarded earnings (DE) for recipients with disabilities under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The three-year CCF pilot scheme has been implemented since October 2016. Eligible CSSA recipients with disabilities are not required to submit applications. The Social Welfare Department (SWD) will assess the amount of additional DE that the relevant CSSA recipients are entitled to based on the records on their employment income. SWD is reviewing the relevant information and will, on a quarterly basis, deposit the additional DE into the bank accounts which the relevant recipients use for receiving CSSA payment.
<p>5. To invite CCF to fund a pilot scheme to provide a subsidy for eligible persons with disabilities who are receiving the Higher DA and engaging in paid employment to hire carers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The three-year CCF pilot scheme has been implemented since October 2016. SWD has already issued invitation letters to relevant Higher DA recipients. Eligible persons may submit applications within the 12-month period starting from the implementation of the pilot scheme. The subsidy will be disbursed on a quarterly basis.
<p>6. To implement a pilot scheme to procure counselling service from a non-governmental organisation (NGO) to provide counselling support for job seekers with disabilities who are in need of such service</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Selective Placement Division of the Labour Department (LD) launched a two-year pilot scheme on 1 September 2016. LD has arranged tens of persons with disabilities to receive the counselling service and some of the counselling cases have been completed. Apart from close monitoring of the implementation of the counselling service, LD also conducts questionnaire survey on all completed cases to gauge views from persons with disabilities on the new service.
<p>7. To prepare early for the regularisation of the pilot scheme on peer supporters for ex-mentally ill patients</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SWD has commissioned 11 subvented NGOs operating Integrated Community Centres for Mental Wellness to implement the pilot scheme since March 2016. SWD will evaluate the

	implementation and effectiveness of the pilot scheme, thereby making early preparation for the regularisation of the scheme.
(D) Providing financial support for carers of persons with disabilities	
8. To invite CCF to fund a pilot scheme to provide a living allowance for low-income carers of persons with disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The two-year CCF pilot scheme has been implemented since October 2016. • SWD has issued letters to invite applications from carers of persons with disabilities who may be eligible for the subsidy, and will commission an academic institution to conduct evaluation on the pilot scheme with a view to mapping out the long-term development of the scheme.
(E) Providing support for children with special needs and their parents	
9. To establish a working group to examine the feasibility of setting up a public trust for children with special needs and their parents, and review the related guardianship system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LWB has established a Working Group, whose members include representatives from relevant Government departments, legal and financial sectors, parent groups of the mentally handicapped persons and NGOs in the rehabilitation sector. • The Working Group commenced its work in July 2016. Four sub-groups have been formed to explore the legal, operational, financial and public education arrangements, in the process of examining, in more concrete terms, the feasibility of setting up a Special Needs Trust for persons with intellectual disability.

For information
on 23 January 2017

Legislative Council Panel on Manpower

2017 Policy Address Policy Initiatives of the Labour and Welfare Bureau

Purpose

The Chief Executive (CE) delivered his 2017 Policy Address on 18 January 2017. This paper sets out the latest developments of the major new and on-going initiatives pertaining to the labour and manpower portfolio to be undertaken by the Labour and Welfare Bureau (LWB) and the Labour Department (LD) as set out in the 2017 Policy Address and Policy Agenda.

Policy priorities / New initiatives

2. To rise up to the challenges of our human resources brought about by ageing population and shrinking labour force, the Government has since the 2014 Policy Address been implementing a series of initiatives to drive the population policy objectives of unleashing the local labour force, attracting talent from outside Hong Kong and developing an age-friendly city. Promoting employment of local workers and protecting the rights and benefits of workers have always been high on Government's agenda. The Government will amend our legislation to increase the Statutory Minimum Wage (SMW) rate and will take full account of the report to be submitted by the Standard Working Hours Committee (SWHC) in formulating the working hours policy direction that suits Hong Kong's socio-economic situation. LD will also continue to provide diversified recruitment and employment services for employers and job seekers with different employment needs, and promote continuous learning. LD will continue to take rigorous enforcement actions against violation of labour laws to protect the well-being of workers. We will carry out the new initiatives set out in paragraphs 3 to 14 below.

Population Policy

Promoting continuing education and self-advancement

3. The Government will inject an additional \$1.5 billion into the Continuing Education Fund to encourage the public to pursue continuing education.

Providing Employment Support and Safeguarding Employees' Welfare

Enhancing employment support for ethnic minority (EM) job seekers

4. The Government is very concerned about the employment situation of ethnic minorities (EMs). LD has been making proactive efforts to provide dedicated services that cater to the needs of EM job seekers. To further strengthen the employment support for EMs, especially those of South Asian origins, LD will engage staff proficient in EM languages to provide employment services for EM job seekers at selected job centres on a pilot basis in 2017.

5. Staff conversant with EM languages and cultures can assist job centres in providing employment services, in particular personalised employment advisory service, for EM job seekers. They can also help LD proactively reach out to EM communities and encourage those with employment needs to make use of LD's employment services. LD will evaluate the effectiveness of the initiative in light of its operational experience and consider the long-term arrangements.

Following up on the report of SWHC with a view to mapping out the working hours policy direction

6. SWHC has since its establishment completed a number of tasks which included a comprehensive working hours survey and two rounds of extensive public consultation, and examined the relevant information, including the Consultation Report on Legislating for Standard Working Hours submitted by the labour sector to the Chief Executive. SWHC will submit its report to the Government within this month (January 2017), setting out recommendations on the working hours policy direction.

7. Upon receipt of the report, the Government will carefully consider the views of SWHC and those the community in a holistic manner, and will strive to map out within the term of the current Government the working hours policy direction that suits the socio-economic situation of Hong Kong.

Maintaining Hong Kong as a favourable place of work for foreign domestic helpers (FDHs)

8. At present, there are over 350 000 FDHs working in Hong Kong, assisting more than 280 000 families to take care of the household chores and of their elderly family members and young children, thereby unleashing our local work force. With the ageing population, we expect that the demand for FDHs by Hong Kong families will continue to grow. LD will promote and strengthen

co-operation with governments of FDH home countries and enhance the publicity and educational efforts in a continuing process of maintaining Hong Kong as an attractive destination of work for FDHs.

Strengthening the regulation of employment agencies (EAs)

9. LD has been taking rigorous enforcement actions against EAs on charging job seekers excessive placement fees in order to protect the rights of job seekers. To enhance the professional standard and the service quality of the industry, LD has just promulgated the Code of Practice for Employment Agencies (the Code) which sets out the requirements expected of EAs (including those placing FDHs) by the Commissioner for Labour.

10. To further strengthen the regulation of EAs, LD plans to introduce an amendment bill into the Legislative Council (LegCo) in the second quarter of this year to provide legal basis for the Code, and to impose heavier penalties on EAs (including those placing FDHs) overcharging job seekers or those operating without a licence. In the latter connection, the maximum penalty will be increased from \$50,000 to \$350,000 and three years of imprisonment, with a view to attaining a more potent deterrent effect.

Following up on the outcome of the review of the implementation of statutory paternity leave (PL)

11. Statutory PL has come into operation since 27 February 2015. Eligible male employees are entitled to three days' PL with pay at four-fifths of their average daily wages. The implementation of statutory PL has so far been smooth.

12. The Government has undertaken to review the implementation of statutory PL one year after its coming into operation. LD is working on the review. Upon completion of the review, LD will report the outcome and recommendations to the Labour Advisory Board and this Panel.

Preparing for the implementation of the revised SMW rate

13. After completing the latest round of review of the SMW rate, the Minimum Wage Commission (MWC) has reached a consensus to recommend that the current SMW rate of \$32.5 per hour be increased by 6.2% to \$34.5 per hour. The Chief Executive in Council has accepted the recommendation of MWC. Subject to the approval of LegCo, the revised SMW rate will take effect on 1 May 2017.

14. To tie in with the implementation of the revised SMW rate, LD will launch extensive publicity activities through various channels such as broadcasting Announcements in the Public Interest (APIs) on television and radio, widely displaying posters and distributing leaflets, advertising in different media, organising seminars and staging roving exhibitions. LD's 24-hour enquiry hotline of 2717 1771 (handled by "1823") will answer public enquiries about the revised SMW rate while offices of the Labour Relations Division will provide in-person consultation service. In addition, LD will conduct targeted inspection campaigns for effective enforcement of the SMW legislation.

On-going initiatives

15. Apart from the aforementioned policy priorities/ new initiatives, LWB and LD will continue to carry out the on-going initiatives in the areas of promoting employment, providing vocational training, promoting family-friendly and elder-friendly measures, safeguarding employees' rights and welfare, promoting occupational safety and health, etc. as set out in paragraphs 16 to 47 below.

Promoting Employment

Enhancing employment support services for mature persons

16. To promote the employment of mature persons, LD will continue to implement a series of measures such as organising employment briefings for mature persons and holding experience sharing sessions for employers on employing mature persons so as to enhance employment support services for them. LD will continue to stage district-based job fairs on part-time employment at job centres to meet the needs of some mature persons who are more interested in taking up part-time jobs, and organise large-scale thematic job fairs targeted at middle-aged and mature job seekers to enhance their employment opportunities.

17. In addition, LD will continue to provide on-the-job training allowance of up to \$3,000 per month for a period of three to six months to employers to encourage them to engage middle-aged and mature job seekers and provide them with on-the-job training under the Employment Programme for the Middle-aged. The programme, which originally covered only full-time employment (i.e. working 30 hours or more per week), has been extended to cover part-time jobs.

Encouraging employers to adopt friendly employment practices for the elderly through continued publicity

18. LD has all along been encouraging employers, having regard to the individual circumstances of their enterprises, to adopt friendly employment practices for mature persons, including extending the working life of their employees and adopting more flexible modes of employment, etc., so as to establish suitable working conditions and environment to attract mature persons to stay in or return to employment.

19. LD will continue to promote relevant messages to the public through various publicity channels and a wide range of educational and promotional activities. Such messages include elderly persons being a potential supply of labour force, and encouraging employers to adopt friendly employment practices for elderly persons at the workplace. Activities to publicise the message include widely distributing thematic publications, staging roving exhibitions, publishing newspaper feature articles, placing advertisements at public transport network, broadcasting APIs on television and radio, as well as conducting meetings and exchanges with business executives and human resources managers from time to time.

Providing the dedicated employment information e-platform for job seekers with higher education

20. To strengthen employment support for job seekers with higher education, in particular Hong Kong students who are educated in tertiary institutes outside Hong Kong, the second generation of Hong Kong emigrants who are interested in working in Hong Kong as well as persons from overseas with higher academic/ professional qualifications, LD launched, in December 2016, a dedicated employment information e-platform. The e-platform aims to enhance their understanding of the Hong Kong employment market and facilitate them to search and apply for suitable job openings through the new dedicated webpage.

21. LD is collaborating with relevant bodies, including career service centres and student associations of local and overseas universities, and Hong Kong Economic and Trade Offices overseas and in the Mainland, to publicise this dedicated employment information e-platform to graduates of local universities and persons with higher education residing outside Hong Kong. LD has also contacted employers and their associations to publicise this e-platform with a view to canvassing suitable job vacancies from them.

Strengthening employment services for job seekers with disabilities

22. LD provides personalised employment services to job seekers with disabilities fit for open employment and helps them find suitable jobs. To strengthen the employment support for job seekers with disabilities, LD has launched a two-year pilot scheme in September 2016 to engage a non-governmental welfare organisation to provide professional psychological and emotional counselling service to job seekers with disabilities in need of this service. LD will review the pilot scheme upon its completion and map out the way forward in light of the review findings.

23. LD will continue to provide follow-up service for job seekers with disabilities for at least six months after placement. LD will help employees with disabilities adapt to their work as soon as possible and assist employers in better understanding the special needs of their employees with disabilities, so as to help both parties build up good working relationship.

24. To enhance the employability of persons with disabilities, LD will continue to implement the Work Orientation and Placement Scheme which encourages employers to offer more employment opportunities for persons with disabilities and provide them with coaching and support through the provision of an allowance.

Implementing the Employment Services Ambassador (ESA) Programme for EMs

25. LD will continue to implement the ESA Programme for EMs, under which trainees of the Youth Employment and Training Programme (YETP)¹ who can communicate in EM languages are employed as ESAs at LD's job centres, industry-based recruitment centres and job fairs to undergo six-month on-the-job training. Not only can ESAs help LD officers in providing services for EM job seekers but the programme can also enable ESAs to enrich their own working experience and resume, which would benefit their job search in the open market. The programme, launched in September 2014, has so far engaged a total of 78 ESAs.

Organising thematic job fairs

26. LD will continue to organise large-scale thematic job fairs, including those that are suitable for EM, middle-aged and mature job seekers as well as those with employment and vacancy information on the Mainland. Through

¹ YETP provides one-stop pre-employment and on-the-job training for young school leavers aged 15 to 24 with educational attainment at sub-degree level or below.

staging these job fairs, LD strengthens support to EM, middle-aged and mature job seekers in finding suitable jobs and assists job seekers, particularly young people, understand and seize employment opportunities on the Mainland.

Promoting family-friendly employment practices (FFEP)

27. The Government has been encouraging employers to adopt “employee-oriented” good people management measures and to implement FFEP with a view to helping employees balance their roles and responsibilities at work and in the family. Making the workplace family-friendly is a shared responsibility of the entire community. Employers may adopt different types of FFEP having regard to the individual circumstances of their enterprises and needs of their employees.

28. LD is one of the facilitators in promoting FFEP. Relevant information has been disseminated to the community through a wide range of publicity channels and various educational and promotional activities such as publications, seminars, thematic exhibitions, promotional videos, APIs on television and radio, newspaper feature articles, advertisements in periodic publications of major employers’ associations and trade union federations, advertisements in public transport network as well as meetings and exchanges with business executives and human resources managers from time to time.

Providing Vocational Training

Providing retraining courses and support services for different social groups

29. The Employees Retraining Board (ERB) has been providing training courses and support services for different social groups. In 2017-18, ERB will continue to focus on social groups with special needs in the development of courses and services. For instances, ERB will offer training courses and support services for mature persons and organise training courses in the support centres for EMs. ERB will extend the “Modular Certificates Accumulation System” to other courses with market demand and the “First-hire-then-train” Programme to more industries to allow trainees (in particular female trainees) who have work or family commitments to make flexible arrangements for further studies, acquire recognised qualifications, and re-enter the labour market. ERB will also improve the operation of the “Smart Starter” service to provide registration, referral and follow-up services of part-time jobs for new arrival trainees.

Funding the Vocational Training Council (VTC) to implement the traineeship scheme in services industries

30. VTC launched the Traineeship Scheme (the Scheme) in end-2011 to apply the structured apprenticeship arrangements to the beauty care and hairdressing industries. The Scheme provides in-service training and relevant vocational education to youngsters aged 15 or above so that they can learn and work at the same time and accumulate the requisite knowledge and skills for starting their career in services industries. As at November 2016, VTC had enrolled 660 trainees under the Scheme.

Manpower Development

Attracting Overseas Talent

31. LWB has commenced a consultancy study on the feasibility of drawing up a talent list which would serve to attract high-quality talent in a more effective manner to support Hong Kong's development as a high value-added and diversified economy. The study is expected to be completed this year.

Alleviating manpower shortage of individual sectors

32. The Government has all along been closely monitoring the manpower demand and supply for different sectors. We have also strengthened training initiatives to attract new entrants to the sectors. On the premise of according employment priority to local workers, importation of labour is allowed on an appropriate, limited and targeted basis to relieve the manpower shortage of individual sectors. Employers facing genuine difficulties in local recruitment can apply for importation of skilled workers on a limited scale under the Supplementary Labour Scheme (SLS), thereby addressing the manpower needs of individual industries with labour shortage. LD will continue to administer the SLS in accordance with the principle of giving priority to local workers in employment.

Enhancing efficiency in job search and recruitment through the Construction Industry Recruitment Centre (CIRC)

33. LD will continue to facilitate local construction workers to find jobs and employers of the industry to recruit workers through CIRC. The Centre provides a venue for employers, contractors and sub-contractors of the trade to organise job fairs and conduct on-the-spot job interviews with job seekers, enhancing the efficiency in job search and recruitment. LD will also continue

to collaborate with the Construction Industry Council (CIC) closely so as to achieve better synergy of the services between the two.

Safeguarding Employees' Rights and Welfare

Improving work injury protection for employees in high-risk industries

34. The Task Force on Improving Work Injury Protection for Employees in High-risk Industries (TFWIP) coordinated by LD was set up in February 2016 to explore the proposals put forward by the inter-departmental working group. Three working groups, one each on employees' compensation insurance, case processing and therapy/ rehabilitation, have been set up under TFWIP to further the discussions, conduct consultations and implement the agreed measures in phases once they are ready so as to improve protection for injured employees in high-risk industries.

Promoting Occupational Safety and Health

Further safeguarding the safety of workers conducting work-at-height

35. LD will continue to promote safety measures on working at height to contractors and workers through collaboration with trade associations, workers' unions, professional bodies, related organisations and other government departments. These measures include:

- (a) using standard-conforming working platforms and avoiding the use of ladders for work above ground; and
- (b) using safety helmets with chin straps.

36. In addition, LD will, jointly with the Occupational Safety and Health Council (OSHC), continue to enhance the collaboration with trade associations and workers' unions to promote the "SME Sponsorship Scheme for Fall Arresting Equipment for Renovation & Maintenance Work and Construction Industry" to the small and medium-sized contractors. LD will also further promulgate the importance of using safety helmets with chin straps to trade associations and workers' unions and explore ways to encourage proper use of this kind of helmets by workers.

37. LD has enhanced collaboration with property management sector to promote work-at-height safety in the repair and maintenance works. In this regard, a Task Force has been formed between LD and the Hong Kong

Association of Property Management Companies Limited to step up the promotion of work-at-height safety to the industry like use of suitable working platforms instead of ladders for working above ground and wear of safety helmets with chin straps.

38. LD has also partnered with OSHC to ride on Home Affairs Department's community platform to reach the upstream stakeholders like owners' incorporations, property owners and tenants for raising their safety awareness of work-at-height safety in connection with repair and maintenance works. LD will continue to collaborate with the stakeholders to organise safety talks and seminars. Through the Committee on Construction Safety of CIC and the relevant task forces formed thereunder, LD will explore with industry stakeholders on ways to foster safety culture and implement measures to eliminate the hazards of work-at-height, including the formulation of industry guidelines.

Continuing to promote the occupational safety and health of construction workers through publicity, education and enforcement

39. With the commencement of a number of mega works projects and a large number of maintenance works projects for old buildings, and in anticipation of the continuous vibrant development of the construction industry, there are increasing job opportunities in the industry. The number of construction workers increased by almost 70% from over 62 000 in 2011 to over 106 000 in the first three quarters of 2016. In view of this challenge, LD will continue to promote the occupational safety and health of construction workers through publicity, education and enforcement, including prevention of accidents caused by systemic deficiencies by containing work risks at source.

40. Apart from conducting over 50 000 routine site inspections each year, LD from time to time launches special enforcement operations to deter work practices contravening work safety requirements, with focus on high-risk processes such as lifting operations, work-at-height, electrical work, truss-out scaffold works, sea-based construction works, etc. LD will take immediate enforcement actions upon discovery of breaches of safety legislation. LD launched a number of special enforcement operations in 2016, with a total of 210 Suspension Notices (SNs) and 673 Improvement Notices (INs) issued, and 534 prosecutions to be initiated. As regards the enforcement figures for the construction industry as a whole (inclusive of the figures for special enforcement operations), as at end December 2016 LD issued a total of 621 SNs and 1 632 INs, with 1 868 prosecutions initiated. Besides, LD is also highly concerned about the safety of workers working on road/ at roadside and has stepped up inspection and enforcement.

41. LD also strives to prevent accidents caused by systemic deficiencies at source. One of the initiatives is to enhance liaison with major works project proponents, and ask them to urge their contractors to strengthen their site safety management systems and step up safety audits of major works projects so as to eliminate potential work hazards, especially in respect of high-risk process. On work safety for sea-based construction works, LD organised with Marine Department (MD) eight safety seminars on marine construction work safety for the front line staff of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge Project from June 2015 to December 2016. In addition, LD and MD launched 26 joint enforcement operations from the 4th quarter of 2014 to December 2016. The two Departments have taken rigorous prosecution against those work practices which are in contravention of the safety requirements.

42. In 2017, LD will tackle systemic risks by strengthening the analysis of underlying systemic risks of serious construction accidents, instituting targeted inspections and enforcement actions, organising seminars on thematic work safety (e.g. lifting operation, work-at-height, electrical work, etc.), and formulating codes of practice on work safety.

Launching large-scale promotional programmes to raise the standard of occupational safety and health in sectors such as the construction industry and food and beverage services sector and the awareness of relevant stakeholders

43. LD, in collaboration with OSHC and related organisations of the construction industry, will continue to co-organise the “Construction Industry Safety Award Scheme” this year to give recognition to contractors and construction industry practitioners with outstanding safety performance. Besides, LD will continue to support workers’ unions and organisations in organising regional roving exhibitions and site safety talks this year, during which family members of the victims of industrial accidents will share with frontline workers the causes of accidents, the prevention measures as well as the grief they suffered, for the purpose of heightening workers’ vigilance on safety at work. In addition, LD will organise safety forums and seminars to instill work safety culture in construction workers.

44. In respect of the food and beverage services sector, LD and OSHC will continue to launch the “OSH Star Enterprise Catering OSH Enhancement Pilot Scheme” this year. Participating enterprises may take part in the “Accreditation Scheme for Catering Establishments with 5S Good Housekeeping” to enhance the safety and cleanliness of workplaces. Accredited restaurants will receive subsidies for purchasing slip resistant shoes, cut-resistant gloves and heat-resistant gloves.

45. LD will continue to organise large-scale promotional and publicity programmes to enhance occupational safety and health awareness in sectors such as the construction industry and food and beverage services sector. These programmes include “Safety Award Schemes”, roving exhibitions, promotional visits, broadcast of APIs on television and radio, radio programmes, fun days and experience sharing workshops, etc..

46. LD will also continue to tailor-make simple and reader-friendly promotional leaflets for EM workers, and organise site visits, talks and regional roving exhibitions in collaboration with workers’ unions and organisations and trade associations to enhance their safety awareness. Work safety messages in EM languages will also be promulgated in local weekly EM newspapers.

Youth Development

Continuing to enhance the promotion of the Working Holiday Scheme (WHS)

47. To provide our youths the opportunity of experiencing foreign culture and customs and broadening their horizons through living and working temporarily overseas while holidaymaking, Hong Kong has hitherto established bilateral WHSs with 11 economies (including New Zealand, Australia, Ireland, Germany, Japan, Canada, Korea, France, the United Kingdom (UK), Austria and Hungary). Youths aged 18 to 30 may apply for working holiday visas with these economies. Save for the UK and Austria which allow Hong Kong youths to stay for up to 24 months and six months respectively, participants of our other nine WHSs are allowed to stay in the host economies for up to 12 months for holidaying. During their stay, the participants can take up short-term employment and/ or studying short-term courses (except Ireland which disallows such under its standing visa policy). Since the inception of WHSs, some 75 000 Hong Kong youths have participated in these Schemes. LD will continue to enhance the promotion of the Schemes and will seek to expand WHS to other economies so that more of our youths can enrich their global exposure.

Conclusion

48. The Government will continue working closely with employers and employees as well as different sectors of the community in implementing the various labour and manpower initiatives outlined above.

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