

## **Family Council**

### **Pilot Scheme on On-site Pre-school Rehabilitation Services: Background Information**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

This paper provides background information to facilitate Members' discussion of the Pilot Scheme on On-site Pre-school Rehabilitation Services (the Pilot Scheme).

#### **BACKGROUND**

2. The Family Council (the Council) discussed the issues of pre-school rehabilitation services at its meeting on 20 February 2014. On the basis of Members' views expressed at the meeting and supplementary written comments, a letter setting out the views of the Council was submitted to the Chief Secretary for Administration (CS) on 27 May 2014 (**Annex A**).

3. CS has written to the Chairman of the Council (the Chairman) on 6 November 2015 to update the Council on the developments, in particular the Pilot Scheme to be launched by the Social Welfare Department (SWD) in the fourth quarter of 2015 (**Annex B**). CS also updated the Chairman that the Labour Welfare Bureau and SWD would brief the Council further on the Pilot Scheme at its meeting on 26 November 2015, and looked forward to receiving the feedback of the Council.

#### **ADVICE SOUGHT**

4. Members are invited to note the information as set out above and provide their views on the subject.



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27 May 2014

Mrs Carrie LAM CHENG Yuet-ngor, GBS, JP  
Chief Secretary for Administration  
25/F, Central Government Offices  
2 Tim Mei Avenue  
Tamar, Hong Kong

Dear *Carrie*

### **Rehabilitation Services for Pre-School Children**

As a cross-sector and cross-bureau platform to study and address family-related issues, the Family Council (the Council) has recently deliberated on the rehabilitation services for pre-school children at its meeting held on 20 February 2014. On the basis of Members' views expressed at the meeting and supplementary written comments, I am writing to set out the views of the Council as well as our suggested way forward.

At the abovementioned Council meeting, the Department of Health (DH) and the Social Welfare Department (SWD) were invited to brief the Council on the provision of child assessment services and rehabilitation services for pre-school children respectively, particularly on prevailing situation and relevant statistics. The Education Bureau (EDB) also briefed the Council on the roles and responsibilities of the respective government departments upon the harmonization of pre-primary services.

Noting the Government's existing efforts and services on the rehabilitation services for pre-school children, Members of the Council have the following views and suggestions:

- (a) the Government's endeavour in providing additional 1,471 places in the coming five years (from 2013-14 to 2017-18) for children with special education needs (SEN children) is noted. While this is a welcomed arrangement, the additional places are definitely not able to meet the growing demand. Given early identification and assessment help enhance the rehabilitation progress of SEN children, there is a genuine need for the Government to step up its efforts in increasing pre-school rehabilitation places;
- (b) while waiting for rehabilitation places, SEN children are usually enrolled in ordinary kindergartens (KGs). Consideration should be given to further enhancing in-service teachers' understanding of the SEN children and capability in catering for learning diversity;
- (c) as Early Education and Training Centres (EETCs) targeted to disabled children from birth to the age of six with a view to providing early intervention programmes with particular emphasis on the role of the disabled child's family, the Government should consider setting up more EETCs with a view to making them one-stop community resource centres for needy families;
- (d) while it is vital to provide support services to SEN children and teachers in KGs, services provided by the existing Special Child Care Centres (SCCCs) and EETCs should be better utilized;
- (e) to address the concern of different stakeholders, relevant Government departments should adopt a holistic approach by further strengthening their collaboration in establishing an inter-departmental mechanism for formulating a policy on rehabilitation of pre-school children;
- (f) while SWD should continue to provide subvention to EETCs, SCCC and Integrated Programme<sup>1</sup> in Kindergarten cum-Child Care Centres, EDB might consider acquiring professional services from EETCs/SCCCs so that SEN students in KGs could benefit from the

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<sup>1</sup> The programme provides training and care to children aged between two and six with mild disabilities with a view to facilitating their future integration into the mainstream education as well as in the society.

services. The rate should be no less than SWD's current subsidy to each child receiving EETC services;

- (g) taking the experience of overseas countries and successful experience of "Home Care Service for Persons with Severe Disabilities" into account, the Government should consider (i) empowering parents of the SEN children through collaboration with the non-governmental organisations (NGOs) as well as exploring the option of "peer counsellor" and (ii) assisting the SEN children who have difficulties in commuting to the centres, so that better home-based support could be provided to families of SEN children;
- (h) the possibility of introducing a voucher system is worth exploring, so that parents of SEN children have the flexibility to obtain individual or group training services from NGOs through the voucher system;
- (i) the Government should explore with NGOs on how to make better use of the land owned by NGOs through re-development or in-situ expansion with a view to providing more pre-school rehabilitation places. Vacant KG premises are possible alternative premises for establishing SCCCs;
- (j) manpower shortage of professional staff is also a matter of concern. It is desirable for the Government to formulate a long-term manpower planning strategy to cope with the steady growing demand for rehabilitation places;
- (k) providing a block grant through Lotteries Fund to the self-financed units and EETC/SCCC cum Resource Centres for the set up as well as maintenance costs is worth exploring; and
- (l) caution should be taken in labelling the children as suffering from "Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder" (ADHD) and "Oppositional defiant disorder" (ODD). In dealing with cases in which the children concerned are assessed as ADHD and ODD but making no significant improvement after undergoing various treatments and medication, "family therapy"<sup>2</sup> is an alternative approach worth considering.

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<sup>2</sup> It adopts a systematic perspective to approach the problem by examining not only the individual, but the child in the context of family. Dr Lee Wai-yung of the Academy of Family Therapy has developed a family assessment protocol and treatment model which has proven to be more cost-effective in helping parents deal with their children in problem.

As the Chairman of the Family Council, I would like to raise my personal concern on the collaboration between EDB and SWD in reviewing the policy on rehabilitation of pre-school children and providing timely service and assistance to such children and their families. The current situation is undesirable because the parents concerned have strong perception that their children are “human balls” within the bureaucracy. Looking ahead, whilst the Family Council will continue to work with relevant Bureaux and departments in taking forward the above suggestions, the CS may wish to take note of our views on the rehabilitations services for pre-school children.

Yours faithfully,



( Prof Daniel Shek )  
Chairman of Family Council

c.c.	Secretary for Education	(Attn: Mr Kevin Yeung)
	Secretary for Labour and Welfare	(Attn: Ms Doris Cheung)
	Director of Health	(Attn: Dr Florence Lee)
	Director of Social Welfare	(Attn: Mr Lam Bing-chun)

中華人民共和國  
香港特別行政區政府  
政務司司長辦公室



CHIEF SECRETARY  
FOR ADMINISTRATION'S OFFICE  
Government of the Hong Kong  
Special Administrative Region  
of the People's Republic of China

6 November 2015

Prof Daniel Shek Tan-lei, SBS, JP  
Chairman, Family Council  
c/o Hong Kong Polytechnic University  
Department of Applied Social Sciences  
Room HJ 407, Core H  
The Hong Kong Polytechnic University  
Hung Hom  
Kowloon, Hong Kong

Dear

*Daniel,*

### **Rehabilitation Services for Pre-School Children**

Thank you for your letter of 27 May 2014 sharing with me the views on the rehabilitation services for pre-school children as expressed by members of the Family Council at its meeting held on 20 February 2014.

Let me assure you that the Government fully agrees with members of the Family Council on the need for early provision of pre-school rehabilitation services to children with special needs. Since receipt of your letter, I have been convening inter-bureaux/departmental meetings attended personally by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, the Secretary for Education and the Secretary for Food and Health with a view to addressing the issues in an integrated and coordinated manner. I am pleased to say that after more than a year's efforts and full support from the relevant non-governmental organisations (NGOs), we are making significant progress. I am therefore writing to provide the Family Council with an update on the developments.

On 14 January 2015, the Chief Executive reaffirmed in his Policy Address that the Government would strengthen the support for children with special needs and their families through, among others, early intervention. The Chief Executive announced that the Government would launch a pilot scheme (the Scheme) through the Lotteries Fund (LF) to invite operators of subvented pre-school rehabilitation services to provide on-site rehabilitation services so as to benefit children with special needs who were studying in kindergartens (KGs) or kindergarten-cum-child care centres (KG-cum-CCCs) as early as possible. To better understand the potential of this service mode, the Secretary for Education and I visited a KG providing such on-site services with back-up support by EETC and received feedback from NGO operators, KG principals, teachers and parents.

On 29 April 2015, the Labour and Welfare Bureau (LWB) and Social Welfare Department (SWD) convened a consultation session to collect views of relevant stakeholders, including principals and teachers of KGs/KG-cum-CCCs, representatives of parent associations and NGOs providing the Government subvented pre-school rehabilitation services. The stakeholders generally supported the Scheme, and urged the Government to make an early start. Most NGOs now providing subvented pre-school rehabilitation services showed interest in participating in the Scheme, stressing that they should be allowed to experiment slightly different models under the Scheme to test viability and effectiveness. The stakeholders also exchanged views with LWB and SWD on the service content of the Scheme.

In the light of this exchange of views and having regard to the relevant operational considerations, SWD, on 17 July 2015, issued the invitation to NGOs operating subvented pre-school rehabilitation services to submit projects for consideration. A cross-departmental vetting committee, including LWB, SWD, the Education Bureau (EDB) and the Department of Health (DH), was set up to examine the proposals submitted by NGOs. The vetting committee notified the applicant NGOs of the vetting results on 22 October 2015. The projects will commence from the fourth quarter of 2015 to January 2016, providing about 2 900 places for children with special needs in some 450 KGs or KG-cum-CCCs. This LF-funded Scheme will span over two years and regularisation will be positively considered in light of its effectiveness.

This Scheme will have the following key features :

- (a) On-site rehabilitation services will be provided to children with special needs who are studying in those KGs or KG-cum-CCCs participating in the Scheme. The NGOs concerned will also provide centre-based services to support the outreaching teams offering on-site rehabilitation services at KGs and KG-cum-CCCs;
- (b) the service will be delivered by inter-disciplinary teams (comprising occupational therapists, physiotherapists, speech therapists, clinical/educational psychologists, social workers and special child care workers) under the supervision of NGOs concerned through different modes, including on-site individual or group training, professional consultation workshops and seminars etc; and
- (c) apart from children with special needs, professional support and assistance will be provided by the NGOs concerned for teachers/child care workers and parents of participating KGs or KG-cum-CCCs.

During the two-year implementation period, LWB/SWD will, together with EDB and DH, liaise with the participants to monitor the progress of the different projects. The NGOs concerned are encouraged to share their experience through informal sessions convened by LWB/SWD from time to time. An evaluative study will also be conducted and this would be useful to the Government when considering whether and how the Scheme could be regularised upon the completion of the Scheme.

I should also add that the implementation of the Scheme would not detract from our other effort in providing more subvented pre-school rehabilitation places. A total of 1 118 additional places of Government subvented pre-school rehabilitation services will be provided in the next five years through new service projects and in-situ expansion initiated by SWD. An additional 3 800 places will be provided through the Special Scheme on Privately Owned Sites for Welfare Uses from 2017-18 to 2022-23, based on the preliminary proposals submitted by the NGOs participating in that Special Scheme. In the meantime, those children with special needs from low income families not otherwise benefiting from the Government subvented pre-school rehabilitation services may acquire non-government subvented services under SWD's Training Subsidy Programme.



My colleagues in LWB and SWD will brief the Family Council further on the Scheme at its next meeting on 26 November 2015. Concurrently, we are looking into the adequacy of child assessment service, training for KG teachers, manpower supply, etc. I look forward to receiving feedback from the Family Council.

*Yours sincerely,*

*Carrie Lam*

( Mrs Carrie Lam )  
Chief Secretary for Administration

c.c. Secretary for Labour and Welfare  
Secretary for Food and Health  
Secretary for Education  
Permanent Secretary for Labour and Welfare  
Director of Social Welfare