

**For discussion on
20 December 2022**

Family Council

The Chief Executive's 2022 Policy Address
Family-Related Policy Initiatives of the Labour and Welfare Bureau

Purpose

We briefed the Legislative Council Panel on Welfare Services in November 2022 on the new and on-going initiatives pertaining to the welfare portfolio as covered in the Chief Executive's 2022 Policy Address and Policy Measures. The relevant paper is at **Annex**. Members are invited to note the paper.

**Labour and Welfare Bureau
December 2022**

For Information
on 14 November 2022

Legislative Council Panel on Welfare Services
2022 Policy Address
Policy Initiatives of the Labour and Welfare Bureau

Introduction

This paper sets out the new and on-going welfare initiatives announced in the 2022 Policy Address and Policy Address Policy Measures.

Summary of New Initiatives

2. The Labour and Welfare Bureau (LWB) and Social Welfare Department (SWD) will implement the following new welfare initiatives :

- Implementing the Strive and Rise Programme through tripartite collaboration between the Government, the business sector and the community to focus on helping underprivileged students rise above intergenerational poverty (see paragraph 3 below for details);
- Restructuring the Commission on Poverty to study and identify any other target group for poverty alleviation (paragraph 4);
- Regularly implementing the Community Care Service Voucher for the Elderly (paragraph 5);
- Setting up 16 new neighbourhood elderly centres and expanding the services to cover areas such as retirement planning and promotion of gerontechnology (paragraph 5);
- Expanding the Hospital Authority's (HA) Integrated Discharge Support Programme for Elderly Patients (paragraph 5);
- Providing an additional 900 subsidised day care service places for elderly, of which 300 will commence service next year (paragraph 6);
- Providing an additional 6 200 subsidised residential care places, of which 2 600 will commence service next year (paragraph 7);

- Putting forward proposals on how to encourage developers to provide elderly service facilities in their private development projects to meet the needs of our aging population (paragraph 8);
- Launching a special scheme to allow the importation of care workers for residential care homes (RCHs) on an appropriate scale (paragraph 9);
- Subsidising an additional 1 700 or more students to enrol in nurse training programmes (paragraph 10);
- Undertaking a holistic review of the skill and qualification requirements of RCH staff (paragraph 10); and
- Progressively rolling out a number of measures from 2023 to enhance support for carers of elderly persons and of persons with disabilities (paragraph 11).
- Taking forward at full steam the setting up of a mandatory reporting mechanism for child abuse cases (paragraph 12);
- Improving service quality of residential child care services (RCCS) in a holistic manner, enhancing service planning, strengthening law-enforcing inspections and engaging independent persons to conduct unannounced inspections (paragraph 13); and
- Injecting \$180 million into the Child Development Fund (CDF) (paragraph 14).

Details of Policy Priorities/New Initiatives

Targeted Poverty Alleviation

3. The current-term Government adopts the strategy of targeted poverty alleviation by directing resources to those most in need. The Task Force to Lift Underprivileged Students out of Intergenerational Poverty, led by the Chief Secretary for Administration, launched the Strive and Rise Programme through tripartite collaboration among the Government, business sector and community. The Programme, which has kicked off in end October, targets 2 800 junior secondary students (particularly those living in sub-divided units) with mentorship, personal development planning and financial support. It has been well received by the community. Upon programme evaluation, we will chart the way forward and consider increasing mentee quotas and

expanding the target group.

4. The Government will also restructure the Commission on Poverty to study and identify any other target group for implementing the policy direction of targeted poverty alleviation.

Elderly and Rehabilitation Services

Supporting Ageing in Place

5. The Government will continue to improve elderly services with due emphasis on both quality and quantity, and adhere to the policy objective of promoting “ageing in place as the core, with institutional care as back-up”. The Government will implement the following measures to strengthen the support for elderly persons to age in place –

- (a) regularising the Pilot Scheme on Community Care Service Voucher for the Elderly in the third quarter of 2023. The number of beneficiaries will increase by 50% in phases, from 8 000 at present to 12 000 in 2025-26. The coverage of the scheme will also be expanded to include rental of assistive technology products;
- (b) setting up 16 new neighbourhood elderly centres in the next five years and expanding the services in the fourth quarter of 2023 to cover areas such as retirement planning and promotion of gerontechnology; and
- (c) expanding the HA’s Integrated Discharge Support Programme for Elderly Patients in the third quarter of 2023 by increasing the number of beneficiaries by one third, from about 33 000 to 45 000 per annum. The number of beneficiaries who can be referred to home support services will increase from about 9 000 to 11 000.

6. The Government will provide an additional 900 subsidised day care service places for elderly by end-2027, of which 300 will commence service next year.

Lifting the Quality and Quantity of Residential Care Homes for the Elderly

7. The Government is making its greatest effort to increase the number of subsidised residential care service places with the target to provide an additional 6 200 subsidised residential care places by end-2027, of which 2 600 will commence service next year.

8. To leverage market forces to increase the supply, the Development Bureau will, together with LWB, put forward proposals to the Chief Executive

in early 2023 to provide more incentives, e.g. granting gross floor area concessions, in order to encourage developers to provide elderly service facilities in their private development projects to meet the needs of our ageing population.

9. On the premise that local workers' priority for employment will be safeguarded, the Government will launch a special scheme next year to allow the importation of care workers for residential care homes for the elderly (RCHEs) and residential care homes for persons with disabilities (RCHDs) on an appropriate scale, relax the ratio of care workers to be imported and streamline vetting procedures for applications, with a view to assisting the sector in enhancing service quality.

10. In the coming five years, the Government will subsidise an additional 1 700 or more students aspiring to join the social welfare sector to enrol in Enrolled Nurse (General) training programmes. The students will be required to work in the social welfare sector for at least three years upon graduation. In addition, the Government will undertake a holistic review of the skill and qualification requirements of RCHE and RCHD staff, so as to establish professional standards and a career progression path, so that the sector can better attract and retain talents.

Enhancing Support for Carers of Elderly Persons and of Persons with Disabilities

11. The Government has completed the Consultancy Study on Needs and Support Required of Carers of Elderly Persons and of Persons with Disabilities in Hong Kong (Consultancy Study), and accepted in principle the recommendations put forward in the report of the Consultancy Study. To provide effective and timely support to carers of elderly persons and of persons with disabilities, the Government will progressively roll out a number of measures from 2023, including –

- (i) regularising the Pilot Scheme on Living Allowance for Carers of Elderly Persons from Low-income Families, the Pilot Scheme on Living Allowance for Low-income Carers of Persons with Disabilities, the Special Care Subsidy for the Severely Disabled and the Pilot Scheme on Providing Subsidy for Higher Disability Allowance Recipients in Paid Employment to Hire Carers from October 2023, and increasing the amounts of allowance¹ and number

¹ After the regularisation, the monthly allowance of the Pilot Scheme on Living Allowance for Carers of Elderly Persons from Low-income Families and the Pilot Scheme on Living Allowance for Low-income Carers of Persons with Disabilities will be increased from \$2,400 to \$3,000; the monthly full grant of the Special Care Subsidy for the Severely Disabled will be increased from \$2,000 to \$2,500; and the monthly allowance of the Pilot Scheme on Providing Subsidy for Higher Disability Allowance Recipients in Paid Employment to Hire Carers is \$5,000.

of recipients;

- (ii) establishing a one-stop information gateway to facilitate carers' access to information on available services;
- (iii) setting up a designated hotline to provide emergency support and outreach services for carers;
- (iv) increasing the number of places of respite services to relieve the stress of carers of elderly persons and of persons with disabilities, while enhancing the enquiry system by including day respite services; and
- (v) launching territory wide publicity and educational campaign to raise public awareness of the needs of carers, and promoting community-based peer support for carers.

Protecting Children

12. The Government will take forward at full steam the setting up of a mandatory reporting mechanism for child abuse cases for early identification and effective intervention into child abuse/neglect cases. The Government consulted stakeholders of relevant sectors on the implementation details from August to October this year and would introduce a bill into the Legislative Council in the first half of 2023. SWD is actively preparing the training for relevant practitioners to facilitate their early identification and reporting of child abuse cases.

13. On the front of improving RCCS, the Government has already completed the First Phase Review of Residential and Child Care and Related Services. We have identified areas requiring focused efforts for improvement and will improve service quality in a holistic manner, enhance service planning and strengthen law-enforcing inspections. Concrete measures include stepping up inspection efforts; setting up service quality groups and engaging independent persons to conduct unannounced inspections; enhancing the manning ratio and creating the post of Child Care Aide; introducing multi-disciplinary professional support; strengthening staff training; introducing a registration mechanism for Superintendents who shall bear the responsibility of reporting suspected child abuse cases; introducing new technologies to the closed-circuit television system in Residential Child Care Centres; and increasing the provision of more RCCS premises, etc.

Child Development Fund (CDF)

14. Since its establishment in 2008, a total of \$900 million has been injected into CDF. Up till now, CDF has utilised about \$858 million to roll

out nine batches of NGO-run projects and eight batches of school-based projects, benefitting more than 25 000 grassroots children. The ninth batch of school-based projects will be rolled out in December 2022, which is expected to benefit about 1 200 new participants. The Government will inject \$180 million into the CDF in 2023-24 to sustain its operations. It is expected that the injection together with the uncommitted balance of the fund could benefit more than 6 000 new participants.

On-going Initiatives

Child Care Services

15. We will continue to strengthen child care services, including the provision of additional child care service places, re-engineering of 19 Mutual Help Child Care Centres to provide After School Care Programme for pre-primary children in phases and the review of implementation mode and effectiveness of the Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project, etc.

Strengthening Support for Ethnic Minorities (EMs)

16. SWD has commissioned non-governmental organisations (NGOs) with employment of EM staff to proactively reach out to EMs and connect those in need, as well as to provide case counselling, groups and activities for EMs. SWD has also continued to implement its Ethnic Minority District Ambassador pilot scheme, which aims to employ more EMs in SWD and NGOs, enhance district services, and co-ordinate and deepen communication and co-operation with relevant stakeholders.

Cash Assistance Schemes

Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme

17. The CSSA Scheme provides a safety net of last resort for those who cannot support themselves financially due to old age, ill-health, disability, single parenthood, unemployment, low-earnings or other reasons to help them meet their basic needs. In 2019, the Government conducted the first major review of the CSSA Scheme in 20 years and has fully implemented a host of improvement measures² since February 2021 to benefit most recipients. As at end-September 2022, there were about 210 000 CSSA cases, covering over 290 000 recipients. In 2022-23, the estimated recurrent expenditure of the

² The relevant measures included significantly increasing the maximum level of the disregarded earnings by 60% to \$4,000, substantially raising the maximum rent allowance on a one-off basis (by as much as 27% depending on household size), as well as extending various supplement and special grants to eligible non-elderly able-bodied recipients, such as the community living supplement, grant to cover costs of glasses and grant to cover costs of dental treatment.

CSSA Scheme is about \$24.4 billion.

The Working Family Allowance (WFA) Scheme

18. The Government introduced the WFA Scheme in April 2018 to implement a host of improvements³ to the then Low-income Working Family Allowance (LIFA) Scheme. As at end-August 2022, there were about 62 000 WFA “active households”⁴ (involving about 200 000 persons, including more than 80 000 children), which is more than double the number of the then LIFA Scheme. In 2022-23, the estimated recurrent expenditure for WFA is about \$2.57 billion, which is about three times more than that of the then LIFA.

Old Age Living Allowance (OALA)

19. The Government had merged the Normal and Higher OALAs on 1 September 2022. The merged OALA adopts the more lenient asset limits of the Normal OALA and the payment rate of the Higher OALA. The payment rate is currently at \$3,915 per month. As at end-September 2022, there were more than 660 000 elderly persons receiving OALA. In 2022-23, the estimated recurrent expenditure for OALA is about \$31.4 billion.

20. The Government introduced OALA under the Guangdong Scheme and Fujian Scheme in January 2020. As at end-September 2022, this “portable” arrangement benefitted about 22 000 Hong Kong elderly persons residing in Guangdong and Fujian.

21. To provide greater flexibility to elderly persons who wish to apply for Social Security Allowance (SSA) and retire on the Mainland, the 2021 Policy Address announced that the Government would explore the relaxation of absence limit under the pre-application one-year continuous residence requirement of the SSA Scheme. For details of the proposal, please refer to the discussion paper separately submitted to this Panel. Subject to the views of the Panel, we plan to seek approval from the Finance Committee on the proposal by the end of this year.

Short-term Food Assistance Service (The Service)

22. The Government has regularised the Service in August 2021 to provide low-income persons who have temporary difficulties in meeting their basic food expenditure with short-term and basic food items for generally not

³ These measures include relaxing the eligibility criteria (such as extending the Scheme to singleton households), substantially increasing the rates of allowances twice, and allowing household members to aggregate their working hours to apply for WFA.

⁴ Referring to those households which have been approved with WFA and submitted the latest applications in the past six months.

more than eight weeks each time. In 2022-23, the estimated recurrent expenditure of the relevant service is around \$400 million.

Care for the Elderly

Supporting Ageing in Place

23. From July 2017 till now, the number of service places for subsidised home care services has increased from around 8 400 to around 13 400. The average waiting time for subsidised home care services has substantially reduced from 11 months at that time to 6 months in September 2022 accordingly.

Residential Care Services

24. Among the 92 elderly facility development projects the Government is currently taking forward, 61 projects will include RCHEs, gradually providing about 11 300 residential care places for the elderly in the future.

Promoting Gerontechnology

25. The Government allocated \$1 billion to set up the Innovation and Technology Fund for Application in Elderly and Rehabilitation Care in December 2018, with a view to improving the quality of life of service users and reducing the burden and pressure on care staff and carers. Thus far, seven tranches of grants totalling over \$470 million have been approved, subsidising about 1 500 elderly and rehabilitation service units to procure or rent over 12 000 technology products. Since September 2022, the eligibility under the fund has been expanded from subsidised service units to all RCHs, including private and self-financing RCHs for the elderly and for persons with disabilities so that about 500 more RCHs can use the fund to purchase or rent technology products.

Support for the Disadvantaged

Strengthening Support for Persons with Disabilities

26. The Government is committed to increasing the provision of rehabilitation services and will provide about 2 300 additional pre-school rehabilitation, day and residential rehabilitation service places in 2023-24. The Government will also regularise the Pilot Scheme of Professional Outreaching Team for Private Residential Care Homes for Persons with Disabilities from March 2023 to provide continuous support to residents of these care homes. On community support services, the Government will increase the number of District Support Centre for Persons with Disabilities to

21 in 2022-23 and strengthen the online and clinical psychologists' services of Integrated Community Centres for Mental Wellness.

27. Pursuant to the recommendations of the Persons with Disabilities and Rehabilitation Programme Plan (RPP), the Government will launch three pilot schemes in 2023 respectively to provide one-stop day training and residential care services for ageing service users in hostels for severely and moderately mentally handicapped persons; to set up two new community rehabilitation centres for providing integrated day care and home care services for persons with severe disabilities living in the community; and to set up the Vocational Rehabilitation Advanced Training Courses, optimising the services of Sheltered Workshops/Integrated Vocational Rehabilitation Service Centres to provide persons with disabilities with more diversified employment opportunities. The Government will also explore the feasibility of integrating the Pilot Project on Tier 1 Support Services in Kindergartens/Kindergarten-cum-Child Care Centres with the On-site Pre-school Rehabilitation Services. The Government will continue to adopt the approach of "implementation as and when ready" in implementing other recommendations of RPP.

Increasing the Number of Sponsorship Places of Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy Programmes for the Welfare Sector

28. The Government will continue to implement the training sponsorship scheme in the coming five years, fully sponsoring the tuition fees of an additional 750 students in total of the Master in Occupational Therapy and Master in Physiotherapy programmes of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, and the Bachelor in Occupational Therapy and Bachelor in Physiotherapy programmes of the Tung Wah College. The sponsored students are required to work in non-governmental organisations providing subvented welfare services for at least three years and two years respectively.

Partnership Fund for the Disadvantaged (PFD)

29. PFD has been promoting tripartite partnership among the welfare sector, the business community and the Government, and providing matching grants to establish partnership and jointly help the disadvantaged. PFD has approved matching grants of over \$540 million to implement over 1100 welfare projects, benefitting more than one million disadvantaged persons. PFD has also approved matching grants of about \$280 million under the dedicated portion to implement 436 after-school learning and support programmes, benefitting about 130 000 primary and secondary school students mainly from grassroots families. PFD will accept a new round of application by the end of December 2022.

Welfare Premises Planning

30. The Government has all along been adopting a multi-pronged approach to identifying suitable sites or premises for the provision of more welfare services which are in acute demand. Among others, the Hong Kong Housing Authority and the Hong Kong Housing Society will reserve premises equivalent to about 5% of the total gross floor area for welfare purposes in suitable public housing projects in the future on the premise that the public housing supply and other ancillary facilities will not be affected.

Enhancing the Government Public Transport Fare Concession Scheme for the Elderly and Eligible Persons with Disabilities (the \$2 Scheme)

31. The Government has implemented the enhancement and anti-abuse measures of the \$2 Scheme from 27 February 2022. These measures include lowering the eligible age from 65 to 60 and extending the Scheme to red minibuses, kaitos and the tramways on the condition of their strict compliance with the Transport Department's monitoring requirements. To enjoy the \$2 concessionary fare, new beneficiaries aged 60 to 64 must apply and use Personalised Octopus Cards (i.e. the JoyYou Cards) with their photos and names printed. Since 25 September 2022, the \$2 Scheme has further extended to cover residents' service routes approved by the Transport Department to join the scheme.

Conclusion

32. The recurrent expenditure on social welfare in the financial year 2022-23 is estimated to be \$111.8 billion, accounting for around 20% of the recurrent expenditure of the Government. The Government will continue to strengthen collaboration with different sectors of the community, plan for and deliver suitable social welfare services.

33. To monitor the progress and effectiveness of implementing various policies, the indicators set by LWB are listed in the Annex.

Indicators on Welfare initiatives

(A) Policy Address-related indicators

Task Force to Lift Underprivileged Students out of Intergenerational Poverty

- **No less than 70%** of students who complete the one-year Strive and Rise Programme to achieve improvement in terms of personal development and positive thinking.

Social Welfare

Strengthen child care

- Increase the number of beneficiaries under the Fee-Waiving Subsidy Scheme of the After School Care Programme for low income families to **4 600 by end-2026/27 school year**, an increase of more than 60% over 2021/22 school year.
- Increase the number of Aided Standalone Child Care Centre service places for parents who cannot temporarily take care of their young children to **1 440 by end-2026-27**, an increase of nearly 70% over 2021-22

Improve elderly services

- Provide **6 200** additional subsidised residential care service places for the elderly **by end-2027**, with about **2 600** of them delivered **by end-2023**.
- Provide **900** additional subsidised day care service places for elderly **by end-2027**, with about **300** of them delivered **by end-2023**.
- Regularise the Pilot Scheme on Community Care Service Voucher for the Elderly with effect from **Q3 2023** and increase the number of beneficiaries from existing 8 000 to **12 000** in **2025-26**.

- Increase the number of beneficiaries under HA's Integrated Discharge Support Programme for Elderly Patients from existing about 33 000 to **45 000** starting from **Q3 2023**.

Better support to carers

- Regularise carers' allowance for low-income families and increase the monthly rate from \$2,400 to **\$3,000** with effect **from October 2023**.
- Implement a package of support measures including providing a one-stop information portal and hotline service for carers and increasing respite service **from 2023**.

Improve rehabilitation services

- Achieve **zero waiting time from 2024-25** in respect of On-site Pre-school Rehabilitation Service for children with special needs.
- Increase number of day rehabilitation, residential care and respite service places for persons with disabilities by 10% from 35 100 in 2021-22 to **38 800 by 2026-27**.

(B) Other indicators

Strengthen support for the elderly

- Merger of the Normal and Higher Old Age Living Allowances (OALAs) to take effect **from September 2022** to benefit about **50 000** Normal OALA recipients.