

Budget Speech by the Financial Secretary (13)

A Caring Society

170. I will continue to provide resources for the Government to implement support measures for the needy to build a caring society.

Welfare Facilities

171. When planning for the provision of more welfare facilities, we are often faced with a shortage of venues. This problem is particularly prevalent in densely-populated areas, where demand for welfare services is indeed acute. I will allocate \$20 billion for the purchase of 60 properties for accommodating more than 130 welfare facilities, including day child care centres, neighbourhood elderly centres, on-site pre-school rehabilitation services, etc., which are expected to benefit about 86 000 people.

172. Provision of technology products in elderly and rehabilitation facilities can facilitate service enhancement. I will allocate some \$200 million for the Lotteries Fund to launch a four-year pilot project providing Wi-Fi service to around 1 350 service units operated by subvented organisations under the Social Welfare Department (SWD) to encourage them to make use of technology products to improve elderly and rehabilitation services. The SWD will also provide Wi-Fi service to 180 welfare facilities which it operates. This is expected to benefit a total headcount of about 100 000 per day.

Elderly Services

173. We will continue to enhance elderly services. In the next two years, the Government expects to provide more than 500 additional residential care places and 300 subsidised day care places for the elderly. Apart from ongoing provision of visiting medical practitioner services, the Government has recently launched a four-year pilot scheme to provide professional outreach services, including social workers and physiotherapists, etc., for some 45 000 residents in private residential care homes for the elderly. The additional recurrent expenditure for launching the new measures in 2019-20 is around \$1.36 billion. As mentioned earlier, I will provide, on a one-off basis, an additional \$1,000 worth of Elderly Health Vouchers to benefit elderly persons.

Rehabilitation Services

174. The Government will introduce measures to enhance the quality of existing rehabilitation services to step up support for persons with disabilities. Major new initiatives for 2019-20 include increasing 835 rehabilitation service places and purchasing 300 places from private

residential care homes for persons with disabilities, gradually setting up five additional District Support Centres for Persons with Disabilities and two additional Support Centres for Persons with Autism, and strengthening the rehabilitation and support services provided by the centres by increasing the manpower of social workers and therapists. These initiatives will involve a total annual recurrent expenditure of around \$290 million and benefit about 9 000 service users a year.

Child and Youth Services

175. As regards child care, the Government will allocate an additional funding of about \$156 million from 2019-20 onwards to increase the level of subsidy for services provided by child care centres to alleviate parents' financial burden; improve the manning ratio of qualified child care workers in day and residential child care centres and enhance training to improve service quality; and provide in phases a total of about 400 additional aided standalone child care centre places in North District, Kwun Tong, Sha Tin, Kwai Tsing and Yuen Long to provide long full-day child care services for children aged below three.

176. I will also allocate additional resources to increase professional and supporting manpower for the Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project to strengthen training for home-based child carers so as to enhance the quality of services. Incentive payments to these carers will also be raised. Furthermore, the Government will restructure the services of the existing Mutual Help Child Care Centres and deploy additional social workers and supporting staff. The above initiatives will involve an additional annual recurrent provision of around \$52 million.

177. For early identification of, and to provide assistance to pre-primary children and their families with welfare needs, the Government has allocated \$990 million from the Lotteries Fund to launch a three-year pilot scheme to provide social work services in phases for about 150 000 pre-primary children and their families in subsidised/aided child care centres, kindergartens and kindergarten-cum-child care centres. The first phase of services was launched in February 2019.

178. To enhance support for divorced families and their children, the Government will set up five centres to be operated by NGOs to provide one-stop co-parenting support services from 2019-20, and strengthen the manpower of the SWD. These will involve an additional annual recurrent provision of around \$69 million.

179. To enhance teenagers' mental health and stress resilience, the Government will implement the measure of "two school social workers for each school" in more than 460 secondary schools in Hong Kong from the 2019/20 school year, and increase supervisory manpower accordingly. The annual recurrent expenditure involved will be around \$310 million.

Social Enterprises

180. Social enterprises (SEs) in Hong Kong have developed steadily in recent years. The Enhancing Self-Reliance Through District Partnership Programme has given impetus to the development of local SEs, and delivered long-term and sustainable benefits since its launch. To render continuous support to the development of SEs and the socially disadvantaged, I will provide an additional funding of \$150 million for the ongoing operation of the programme.

(To be continued.)