

CE's speech in delivering "The Chief Executive's 2023 Policy Address" to LegCo (9)

Caring and Inclusive Community

Support Persons with Disabilities

121. To address the needs of persons with disabilities, the Government provides a variety of rehabilitation services catering to different types and levels of disability. These services include pre-school rehabilitation, vocational rehabilitation, centre-based or home-based community support services, as well as hostels for severely mentally handicapped persons, halfway houses and hostels for severely physically handicapped persons, etc. The Government will continue to strengthen the support in this regard, including the following measures:

(i) provide subsidy to encourage employment—We will implement a three-year pilot scheme to provide an additional subsidy of \$500 per month to employed disabled recipients of CSSA as a means of encouraging their employment. This will benefit some 800 persons with disabilities;

(ii) strengthen the services of residential care homes for persons with disabilities (RCHDs) and day training services—Given the ageing of users of RCHDs, the Government will increase nursing staff in RCHDs in the coming year to enhance care for their ageing residents. We will also increase service places of the Extended Care Programme in Day Activity Centres and the Work Extension Programme to enhance care for persons with disabilities using day training services who are ageing or have deteriorating health conditions;

(iii) encourage developers to construct and operate RCHDs in their development projects—Drawing reference from the prevailing arrangements applicable to private RCHEs, the Government will launch the "Incentive Scheme to Encourage Provision of Residential Care Homes for Persons with Disabilities in New Private Developments" this year. Eligible RCHDs will be exempted from premium payment for lease modifications, land exchange or private treaty grants, and the relevant GFA of the RCHD will not be counted in the calculation of total permissible GFA for the entire project;

(iv) optimise the establishment of resource teachers for aided special schools— Starting from the 2024/25 school year, we will strengthen the establishment of resource teachers for the primary and secondary sections of aided special schools, and extend the initiative to cover schools for social development, allowing them to provide additional learning and developmental support for students with autism spectrum disorder; and

(v) increase the number of representatives of persons with disabilities and carers in the Rehabilitation Advisory Committee—The Government has

completed the review of the Committee's composition. There will be more representatives of persons with disabilities and their carers in the next term of the Committee to better gauge their needs.

Support Carers

122. Carers play an important role in supporting elderly persons and persons with disabilities to live in the community. The Government is committed to supporting carers of elderly and carers of persons with disabilities, including providing financial assistance, care skills training, counselling and emotional support etc., and in parallel providing the elderly and persons with disabilities with personal care, home cleaning, rehabilitation training, respite services, etc. to relieve the pressure on carers.

123. With the aim of alleviating the physical and mental pressure of carers, the Government launched the 24-hour Designated Hotline for Carer Support last month to provide professional support on consultation, counselling, matching of respite services, etc., and will launch a one-stop Information Gateway for Carers next month to facilitate and encourage carers to seek timely assistance. We will continue our efforts to support carers through the following:

- (i) mobilise Care Teams—The Government will pilot in Tsuen Wan and Southern Districts to engage the Care Teams to help, through visits or contacts, identify carers of elderly persons and carers of persons with disabilities requiring support, and refer cases to the relevant social welfare service units for follow-up. The Government will review the effectiveness of the implementation in the pilot districts, and consider extending the services to other districts. We will also assist households referred by the Care Teams to install emergency alarm systems as necessary;
- (ii) expand the network of respite services—Carers of elderly persons or persons with disabilities may need to rely on community respite services for temporary relief when they need to take short breaks or attend to personal matters. We will request about 140 RCHEs under the Enhanced Bought Place Scheme, about 20 RCHDs under the Bought Place Scheme for Private RCHDs, and about 190 service units participating in the Community Care Service Voucher Scheme for the Elderly to provide residential and day respite services when there are vacant residential care places or service places for care-receiving individuals. Carers in need will also be matched with respite services through the social workers of the designated hotline for carer support;
- (iii) strengthen peer support services—In the coming two years, the SWD will set up four additional Parents/Relatives Resource Centres for carers of those in mental recovery to support people in mental recovery and their carers;
- (iv) promote publicity on caring for the carers—This three-year campaign encourages people from all walks of life to show their empathy, support and care for carers. In the first year, under the theme of "Helping Carers Help Themselves", publicity will focus on encouraging carers to help

themselves. In the second year, under the theme of "Walk with Carers", publicity will emphasise standing by carers. In the third year, under the theme of "Fostering a Carer-Friendly Community", publicity will focus on creating a community environment that supports carers;

(v) support special school leavers and their carers—Designated teams will be set up in the second quarter of next year to proactively contact carers of special school leavers six months before graduation to provide training on caring and interaction skills, arrange post-school care plans and link with community support services; and

(vi) utilise technology to reduce the burden and pressure of carers—We will expand the scope of the Innovation and Technology Fund for Application in Elderly and Rehabilitation Care to cover gerontechnology products suitable for household use. Eligible elderly and rehabilitation service units can procure suitable technology products for lending to elderly persons, persons with disabilities and their carers for use at home. This will improve the quality of life of the care recipients and relieve the pressure of the carers.

Protect Children

124. The LegCo is scrutinising the Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse Bill. We look forward to the early passage of the bill and the implementation of the mandatory reporting regime for early identification and intervention into child abuse cases. The Government will provide training for mandated reporters and draw up guidelines. We will also increase the number of emergency places for residential child care service.

125. The Committee on Review of Residential Child Care and Related Services, formed last year, has completed its review. The Government will follow up on and progressively implement the relevant recommendations, including stepping up inspections and unannounced visits, increasing the number of residential child care service places, strengthening the support and training for foster families, etc.

126. To encourage more willing individuals to become foster families, the Government will substantially increase the incentive payment for foster families starting from next April. For foster care service, the payment will be more than doubled from around \$5,000 to about \$11,000 per month. For emergency foster care service, it will be doubled from around \$6,600 to about \$13,000 per month. Additional support will be provided to foster families taking care of children with special learning or care needs, including arranging early assessment and appropriate professional rehabilitation therapy and training.

Support the Development of Welfare Services Organisations

127. The Government will set up a dedicated fund of \$500 million to help NGOs operating subvented welfare services meet their development needs for staff training and system enhancement, particularly in enhancing professional knowledge of their staff and strengthening awareness of inter-disciplinary

collaboration, as well as encouraging and promoting the application of information technology, etc.

Targeted Poverty Alleviation

128. The current-term Government has adopted the strategy of targeted poverty alleviation by directing resources to those most in need. Based on the latest statistics and multi-dimensional analyses of household characteristics, employment and income conditions, cash welfare assistance and living conditions, etc., the Commission on Poverty has identified three groups for targeted poverty alleviation: households residing in SDUs, single-parent households and elderly households. In the coming year, the Government will implement various targeted poverty alleviation projects catering to the needs of these target groups. We will:

(i) enhance the Strive and Rise Programme—Through tripartite collaboration among the Government, the business sector and the community, focused support will be given to junior secondary students from underprivileged families, particularly those living in SDUs. The second round of the programme will begin at the end of this month, including such new elements as: increasing the number of mentees from 2,800 to 4,000, with an extension to cover Secondary Four students; enriching the variety of group activities with more Mainland study and exchange tours; introducing mentorship groups; and establishing an Alumni Club for mentees who have completed the programme to provide them with diversified social activities and internship opportunities. The total number of benefited mentees will increase to 6,800 in the 2023/24 school year, reaching 12,000 in the 2025/26 school year;

(ii) launch a Pilot Programme on Community Living Room—While we will embark on a study to tackle the issue of SDUs in the long term, we also strive to improve the living and community environment of the SDU households. We will launch a Pilot Programme on Community Living Room (CLR) later this year. Under the pilot programme, the business sector will provide venues and the Community Care Fund (CCF) will provide the funding to commission NGOs to operate the CLRs. The CLRs will offer shared kitchens and dining rooms, as well as common spaces for doing homework, holding interest classes and group activities, providing SDU households with additional living space in their respective communities. To strengthen community support for the service targets, the pilot programme will also arrange information and talks, make referrals to other community services as appropriate, and approach the business sector and local organisations for in-kind donations, such as food or food vouchers, as well as providing volunteer services like homework guidance. The first CLR under the pilot programme will be rolled out at Fuk Wa Street of Sham Shui Po later this year, for a period of three years. The CLR is expected to serve at least 500 SDU households, with about 80,000 attendance a year. We will review the effectiveness one year after operation, and consider extending the pilot programme to other communities with more SDU households;

(iii) operate the School-based After School Care Service Scheme—We will roll out a School-based After School Care Service Scheme in the 2023/24

school year to allow primary students in need to stay at school outside school hours for care and learning support. This will help their parents go to work and will also benefit single parent households. The scheme will be implemented on a trial basis in 50 primary schools in districts with more targeted students for one year, and will be reviewed. NGOs will be engaged to run the services at the participating schools, benefiting some 3â€¦000 students; and

(iv) support singleton or doubleton elderly householdsâ€¦â€¦Despite the continuous development of elderly services and increasing dedication of resources, singleton or doubleton elderly households remain vulnerable, and we need to reach out proactively to offer support. To that end, the Government will mobilise community resources and will, starting from the first quarter of next year, engage the Care Teams in Tsuen Wan and Southern districts as pilots, to arrange visits and contacts for singleton or doubleton elderly households. The Care Teams will assist the households in seeking relevant government support services, and refer cases with welfare needs to the relevant social welfare units for follow-up. The Government will review the effectiveness of the implementation in the pilot districts, and consider extending the services to other districts.

Care Teams

129. In the last Policy Address, I announced the establishment of the Care Teams, which have contributed considerably towards district care and social services. An example was last month's Super Typhoon and torrential rain, in which the Care Teams in the Southern and Tsuen Wan districts promptly assisted the residents affected. The selection of Care Teams in all 18 districts has been completed and they are now ready to kick-start their service, converging community resources and efforts to support district work, and foster ties with the communities. The Government will, having regard to the operation of Care Teams, make good use of technology to develop management applications for the Care Teams to facilitate their work.

Women's Development

130. Following the allocation of additional funding to establish the Women Empowerment Fund last year, the Government will set up under the Home and Youth Affairs Bureau (HYAB) a dedicated Women Affairs Team and designate the post of Commissioner for Women Affairs to steer work related to women's affairs. Key initiatives for the coming year include launching a one-stop family and women information portal; organising the first Family and Women Development Summit to collect views for formulating more focused measures; and introducing a maintenance mediation pilot scheme through CCF to assist the parties concerned, including women who are victims of maintenance arrears, to resolve disputes through mediation.

Promote Hometown Culture

131. The Home Affairs Department will launch the Clansmen Culture Promotion Scheme in the first quarter of 2024 for a period of three years, with a total funding of \$30 million earmarked for application by local clansmen

associations to organise activities promoting hometown culture. The scheme aims to deepen the public's understanding of and sense of belonging to their hometowns, thereby fostering the spirit of loving the motherland, Hong Kong and their hometowns.

Ethnic Minorities

132. Ethnic minorities (EMs) form an integral part of Hong Kong. The Government has been providing them with services and support on various fronts, such as integration into the community, education, employment, welfare and healthcare. Measures include:

(i) integration into the community—The Government will set up two additional support service centres for EMs next year, one in Kowloon Central and the other in New Territories East, bringing the total number of these centres to 10. These service centres provide EMs with language classes, after-school tutorial classes, integration programmes, counselling services, etc. Each of the centres will be invited to set up one EM Care Team to reach out to EM households, understand their needs and introduce public services they need. Also, we will continue to enhance the support provided by these centres for EM new arrivals and youths, and will regularise the District-based Programmes for Racial Harmony;

(ii) education—EDB will continue to encourage non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students to learn Chinese for integration into society. Our enhanced efforts include designing Online Chinese Language Self-learning Resources for NCS students to provide diversified learning materials; preparing for the offer of after-school Chinese language courses for lower primary NCS students on a trial basis using adapted learning materials for the Youth Chinese Test; expanding the Summer Bridging Programme to include NCS students progressing to primary 5 and primary 6 starting from the 2023/24 school year; and increasing the number of schools that provide school-based life planning services for NCS students, etc.;

(iii) employment—Government departments may design their own job-oriented language tests according to the requirements of individual grades to enable applicants to meet the appointment requirements of relevant grades in respect of language proficiency. Departments will also step up recruitment and outreaching efforts to invite job applications from EMs;

(iv) the District Ambassador Scheme—The SWD will extend the EM District Ambassador pilot scheme for three years to engage EMs or designated persons to support EMs in the welfare service units of NGOs and the SWD; and

(v) emotional support and counselling—We will collaborate with NGOs to set up a service centre on a trial basis to provide emotional support and counselling services for EMs.

(To be continued.)