
Chapter 4

Optimising Our Demographic Structure And Attracting Talent

Preamble

Hong Kong is facing the challenge of an ageing population. The proportion of elderly population in Hong Kong will rise rapidly over the next two decades, at a rate much faster than most other advanced economies. This will have a far-reaching impact on the economy, healthcare, welfare, retirement protection, education and public finance. We need to prepare for this challenge.

We need to continue enhancing the quality and competitiveness of our population in order to meet the challenges of a knowledge-based economy. To this end, we will continue to devote substantial resources in education, vigorously develop retraining services and facilitate the entry and stay of non-local talent.

We also need a healthcare system that can cater for the changing demographic structure, increasing healthcare needs and rising health expenditure. The Government is embarking on a comprehensive healthcare reform which includes: enhancing primary care services to improve the population's health, promoting healthy development of the healthcare market through public-private partnership, developing

electronic health record sharing to provide essential infrastructure for the healthcare system, strengthening the public healthcare safety net for the protection of the under-privileged, increasing the capacity of the healthcare system, and addressing the long-term sustainability of financing for healthcare.

Following the public consultation on healthcare reform and financing in early 2008 based on the Healthcare Reform Consultation Document “Your Health, Your Life”, the Government aims to put forward more concrete proposals and launch the second stage public consultation in 2009 in order to deepen the discussion and galvanise consensus. In response to the public expectation to improve healthcare services, we will devote resources to take forward a series of measures, before healthcare financing arrangements are finalised for implementation, in order to enhance healthcare services and implement reforms. However, the sustainable development of the healthcare system requires resolution of the healthcare financing problem.

New Initiatives

We will:

- In accordance with the direction of the healthcare reform, before the healthcare financing arrangements are finalised for implementation, make use of the increased government funding for healthcare to strengthen existing healthcare services and to start implementing various service reforms, including the new initiatives set out below –
 - (a) Strengthen healthcare support for chronic diseases, in order to facilitate early detection, prevention and treatment, educate patients and their carers, encourage need- and risk-based proactive care for secondary prevention, and provide early prevention and intervention of complications to reduce need for hospitalisation. To this end, we will on a pilot basis –
 - (i) introduce a comprehensive multi-disciplinary risk assessment and targeted management programme to support preventive care for chronic diseases by public clinics and private family doctors;
 - (ii) develop and launch a pilot patient empowerment programme in collaboration with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to support the education of chronic disease patients under the care of either public clinics or private family doctors; and

- (iii) set up pilot multi-disciplinary teams comprising nurses and allied health practitioners at specific General Out-Patient Clinics to co-ordinate delivery of integrated care for chronic disease patients;
- (b) Enhance healthcare services for specific groups of patients through public-private partnership in order to increase service volume, reduce waiting time, offer additional choices for patients, and enhance cost-effectiveness of public healthcare services. To this end, we will on a pilot basis –
 - (i) purchase services from private practitioners as an additional choice for patients currently under the care of public Specialist Out-patient Clinics;
 - (ii) purchase Haemodialysis service from centres managed by the private sector for end stage renal disease patients currently under the care of public hospitals; and
 - (iii) expand the pilot project to purchase primary care services from private sector for specific groups of patients under the care of public General Out-Patient Clinics;
- (c) Set up a dedicated office under the Food and Health Bureau to co-ordinate the development of a territory-wide patient-oriented electronic health record system for sharing medical records of patients between healthcare providers subject to the patients' consent, which provides a pivotal infrastructure for implementing healthcare reform;
- (d) Build a hospital in Tin Shui Wai to strengthen medical services in the district; and

- (e) Update the Childhood Immunisation Programme by introducing the pneumococcal conjugate vaccine into it to enhance primary health services and disease prevention.
- Strengthen investment in our research and development (R&D) personnel by extending the Internship Programme under the Innovation & Technology Fund to our R&D centres and expanding the pool of recruits to cover graduates of master or higher degree as well as to non-local graduates.
- Set up a Working Group to rigorously explore the promotion of electronic learning materials in enhancing students' capacity for self and interactive learning.

On-going Initiatives

We are:

- Continuing to encourage and promote public policy research in higher education institutions as a means to improve our policy-making capabilities, in particular the quality of policy research.
- Continuing to devote substantial resources in education to enhance the quality of our young generation, promote social mobility, and meet the needs and challenges of a changing economy.
- Continuing to enhance the quality of pre-primary education by progressively increasing the level of direct fee subsidy for eligible parents and providing financial support for teachers' professional upgrading through the Pre-primary Education Voucher Scheme.
- Planning with four remaining primary schools to turn into whole-day schooling.
- Discussing with stakeholders proposals to fine-tune the Medium of Instruction arrangements for secondary schools promulgated in 2005, and scheduled for implementation from September 2010.
- Continuing to provide a broad range of school-based professional support services for kindergartens, primary and secondary schools to help them take forward education reform initiatives.

- Transforming senior secondary and higher education through professional capacity building and supporting institutional preparation to implement the changes from 2009.
- Implementing the Qualifications Framework by phases through the formation of industry training advisory committees to develop competency-based qualifications for individual industries, and developing a quality assurance mechanism to underpin the Qualifications Framework.
- Establishing the Academy for Gifted Education to develop the potential of students with exceptional talent by providing more structured, articulated and challenging off-site programmes and promoting the concepts and practices of gifted education.
- Improving the language standards in Hong Kong by implementing the Action Plan recommended by the Standing Committee on Language Education and Research, which includes professional upgrading of language teachers, enhancing the quality of English teaching at pre-primary level, and creating a conducive language learning environment in collaboration with the mass media.
- Strengthening support to teachers through the provision of professional development opportunities and a professional preparation grant for the New Senior Secondary Curriculum.
- Promoting overseas exchange programmes to nurture students' global perspective and encouraging their participation in international events and activities.

- Providing free senior secondary education for all students in public sector schools and full subvention for full-time courses offered by the Vocational Training Council for Secondary 3 school leavers with effect from the 2008-09 school year.
- Preparing for the implementation of small class teaching in public sector primary schools with effect from the Primary 1 cohort of students in the 2009-10 school year.
- Increasing the respective ratios of graduate teacher posts in public sector primary and secondary schools to 50% and 85% in the 2009-10 school year.
- Providing a new deputy head rank in public sector primary schools with effect from the 2008-09 school year.
- Implementing measures to develop Hong Kong as a regional education hub to attract and retain non-local students. These include increasing the non-local student quota for publicly-funded programmes, awarding government scholarships to outstanding students from the \$1 billion HKSAR Government Scholarship Fund, and relaxing employment and immigration restrictions for non-local students.
- Preparing for the allocation of four greenfield sites earmarked for the development of new international schools or the expansion of existing schools.
- Organising Mainland study trips and exchange programmes for teachers and students of both primary and secondary schools to enhance their awareness and understanding of our country's development, as well as their national identity.

- Participating in the work of the Standing Committee on Legal Education and Training to keep under review and make recommendations on the system and provision of legal education and training in Hong Kong, including the provision of vocational training of prospective legal practitioners.
- Continuing the promotion of various talent admission schemes and reviewing their application procedures from time to time.
- Based on the views received during the first stage public consultation on healthcare reform carried out from March to June 2008, formulating detailed proposals for service reform and supplementary financing, with the aim to initiate further public consultation in the first half of 2009.
- In accordance with the direction of the healthcare reform, before the healthcare financing arrangements are finalised for implementation, make use of the increased government funding for healthcare to strengthen existing healthcare services and to start implementing various service reforms, including the on-going initiatives set out below –
 - (a) Enhancing primary care and community health services through exploring with the healthcare professions the introduction of a primary care doctor register and basic primary care service models in order to promote the family-doctor concept and preventive care in the community, and facilitate the provision of holistic primary care through the collaboration of the public sector, private sector and NGOs;

- (b) Launching a three-year pilot scheme in early 2009 to provide five health care vouchers per year of \$50 each to the elderly aged 70 or above as partial subsidy for their use of private primary care services in their neighbourhood community;
- (c) Continuing the pilot project to purchase primary care services from the private sector in Tin Shui Wai North for specific patient groups under the care of Hospital Authority (HA)'s General Out-Patient Clinics;
- (d) Enhancing community mental health support and outreach services and promoting early intervention of mental health problems so as to improve the mental health of the public;
- (e) Preparing for the establishment of multi-partite medical centres of excellence in paediatrics and neuroscience to improve the quality of clinical services to patients suffering from complex and serious illnesses as well as to enhance the standards of research and training in the two respective medical disciplines. To contribute to the long-term development of paediatrics and neuroscience, the Centres will bring together medical professionals in the public, private and academic sectors from both within and outside Hong Kong, and partner with major international medical centres in professional collaborations, research and training;
- (f) Continuing to explore other public-private partnership initiatives to facilitate integration of the public and private healthcare sectors, promote healthy competition for service quality and professional standards, and provide more choices for the public;

- (g) Further expanding the HA's "Electronic Patient Record Sharing Pilot Project" to allow more private healthcare providers, including those participating in public-private partnership projects, to access their patients' records kept at HA and enter the patients' clinical information upon the patients' consent with a view to promoting sharing of patients' records;
 - (h) Enhancing professional training and facilitating professional development for medical and healthcare practitioners, and improving their working arrangements; and
 - (i) Working out a three-year interim funding arrangement for the HA pending the development of a sustainable long-term funding arrangement in the light of the outcome of public consultation on the healthcare reform.
- Strengthening the regulation of Chinese medicine by handling transitional registration of proprietary Chinese medicines and enhancing inspections of Chinese medicines traders.
 - Increasing the number of public Chinese Medicine clinics from 11 to 14 by early 2009, thereby enhancing Chinese medicine service in our public healthcare system.
 - Implementing the Prevention and Control of Disease Ordinance and continuing to improve our infectious disease surveillance, control and notification system.
 - Developing a multi-pronged strategy to minimise the risk of avian influenza outbreaks, including the development of a poultry slaughteringhouse.

- Implementing the Strategic Framework for Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases, which is a comprehensive strategy to co-ordinate multi-sectoral efforts in the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases.
- Enhancing cancer surveillance by reducing the lag time for case reporting.
- Continuing our efforts in tobacco control through the multi-pronged approach of publicity, promotion, education, legislation and taxation, and to implement the fixed penalty system to strengthen enforcement of the smoking ban.
- Promoting healthy eating habit in schools and food premises and creating an environment conducive to making healthy choices of food to protect the public from life-style diseases.
- Developing a statutory regulatory proposal on medical devices, taking into account the findings of the regulatory impact assessment and the views collected from stakeholders.
- Through collaboration with relevant organisations, launching a Central Organ Donation Register (a centralised and computerised database for voluntary registration by organ donors of their wish to donate organs after death) and promoting registration for organ donation among the public.