
Chapter 4

Medical Services, Public Health and Elderly Care

Preamble

Hong Kong has a high-quality healthcare system supported by a team of highly professional healthcare workers. Our public and private medical sectors provide a wide range of services, including a low-cost public healthcare “safety net” that ensures no one in Hong Kong is denied medical care due to a lack of means.

We will seek to ensure the long-term sustainability of our healthcare system through a series of reform measures, including promoting long-term development of primary care and Chinese medicine, the proposed introduction of the Health Protection Scheme and revamping the regulatory regime for private healthcare facilities.

In face of the challenges brought about by an ageing population and the changes in the prevalence of diseases, we will uphold our firm commitment to providing quality and affordable public healthcare services. We will increase the capacity of the healthcare system on the one hand and enhance service quality on the other, through service and infrastructure development.

The Government is committed to building and maintaining a healthy community. We devote a lot of efforts to ensure that the wide variety of food available for consumption is safe, and the public at large are

free from threats of animal diseases. We also work tirelessly to provide a clean and hygienic environment.

As Hong Kong moves steadily to an ageing society (with the number of elderly people aged 65 and above rising from 1.02 million or 14% of the population in 2012 to a hefty 2.56 million or 30% in 2041), elderly care ranks high on the current-term Government's policy and action agenda.

Our objective is to enable our senior citizens to live in dignity and to provide the necessary support for them to promote their sense of belonging, security and worthiness. We will continue to implement a host of measures and initiatives to enhance elderly care on all fronts.

We will step up our efforts in promoting active ageing. Our aim is to facilitate the elderly to lead a more fulfilled life in their golden years and harness their wealth of experience, knowledge and expertise through continued learning, volunteer service and participation in social and economic activities.

For the frail elderly, we strive to provide quality and cost-effective long-term care services in line with our policy of promoting "ageing in place as the core, institutional care as back-up". In this respect, we will strengthen and expand community and home care services whilst at the same time increase and enhance subsidised residential care services.

In meeting the growing needs and aspirations of our ageing population, we will not only strive for quality and quantity in services but also seek to provide diversity and choices, including measures to facilitate those elderly persons who choose to retire in Guangdong.

New Initiatives

We will:

Enhancing Health Services Provision

- Reserve a site for the development of a Chinese medicine hospital pending the recommendations of the Chinese Medicine Development Committee on the implementation details. (FHB)
- Conduct strategic planning for a new acute hospital at Kai Tak Development Area with a view to addressing the long-term healthcare needs of residents in Kowloon region. (FHB)
- Review the existing policy on mental health with a view to mapping out the future direction for development of mental health services in Hong Kong and take forward enhancement measures having regard to the recommendations to be made by the Review Committee on Mental Health. (FHB)
- Extend the Tin Shui Wai General Out-Patient Clinic Public-Private Partnership Programme to Kwun Tong, Wong Tai Sin and Tuen Mun districts, providing general out-patient clinic patients with specific chronic diseases with a choice to receive treatment in private clinics. (FHB)
- Plan and develop a pilot programme to subsidise colorectal cancer screening for well-defined target groups. (FHB)

Food Safety and Labelling

- Prepare legislation to regulate nutrition labelling of formula products and foods for infants and young children under the age of 36 months. (FHB)

Elderly Healthcare Services

- Increase the annual voucher amount under the Elderly Health Care Voucher Scheme from \$1,000 to \$2,000. (FHB)
- Convert the “Pilot Project on Outreach Primary Dental Care Services for the Elderly in Residential Care Homes and Day Care Centres” into a regular dental care programme for elders in residential care homes and similar facilities. (FHB)

Ageing in Place

- Provide additional resources to elderly centres to enhance information provision, counselling, care needs assessment and services application for the elderly. (LWB)
- Enhance support services by District Elderly Community Centres to elderly persons with dementia and their carers. (LWB)
- Invite CCF to implement a pilot scheme of providing living allowance to carers for the elderly who are from low-income families. (LWB)
- Fully roll out the Senior Police Call programme to promote crime prevention and road safety awareness of the elderly, and to minimise their chance of being victims of crime. (SB)

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- Inject \$50 million into the Elder Academy Development Foundation to support the development of Elder Academy. (LWB)
 - Regularise the District-based Scheme on Carer Training to enhance carers' knowledge and skills of providing care for the elderly. (LWB)

Long-term Care Services for the Elderly

- Task the Elderly Commission to explore the feasibility of introducing vouchers for residential care service for the elderly. (LWB)
- Allocate additional resources to nursing home places to provide a continuum of care. (LWB)
- Launch a pilot scheme to purchase residential care places from an elderly home run by a Hong Kong NGO in Shenzhen for elderly persons on the Central Waiting List for subsidised residential care places to choose to live in the elderly home concerned; and discuss similar arrangements with an elderly home in Zhaoqing run by another Hong Kong NGO. (LWB)

Financial Support to the Elderly

- Review the Old Age Living Allowance to ascertain, among other things, whether the asset limits should be relaxed. (LWB)
- Explore the feasibility of extending Old Age Living Allowance to Guangdong, having regard to the operating experience gained from the first year of implementation of the Guangdong Scheme. (LWB)

Planning and Integration of Elderly Services

- Task the Elderly Commission to prepare an Elderly Services Programme Plan. (LWB)
- Explore the feasibility of setting up Integrated Elderly Services Centres on a pilot basis to provide one-stop, multi-disciplinary healthcare and social services for the elderly at the community level. (FHB/LWB)

Municipal Services

- Examine the positioning and functions of public markets in present-day circumstances and in light of such, develop proposals for improving the operating environment of public markets to enable them to better serve the public, taking into account the recommendations of the consultancy study recently commissioned. (FHB)
- Amend the Chinese Permanent Cemeteries Rules to relax the restrictions in relation to close relatives on the use of a family niche and provide for improvements in the management and use of Chinese Permanent Cemeteries to better serve community's needs. (HAB)

Animal Welfare

- Tighten up the regulatory framework for pet trading to enhance animal welfare. (FHB)

Veterinary Service

- Prepare legislation to strengthen the membership of the Veterinary Surgeons Board of Hong Kong and streamline its modus operandi. (FHB)

On-going Initiatives

We are:

Enhancing Healthcare Services Provision

- Planning and implementing initiatives to promote the development of primary care, including establishment of community health centres, formulation of reference frameworks for specific chronic diseases and population groups, development of the Primary Care Directory, etc. (FHB)
- Enhancing public healthcare services through public-private partnership to increase service volume, reduce waiting time, offer additional choices for patients, and enhance cost-effectiveness. We are planning and implementing pilot projects, including –
 - subsidising specific groups of patients under public general out-patient clinics to receive primary care in the private sector;
 - procuring haemodialysis services from private sector for end stage renal disease patients currently under the care of public hospitals;
 - providing outsourced radiological investigation services for selected groups of cancer patients; and
 - subsidising patients to receive cataract surgeries in the private sector. (FHB)

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- Improving the services of the Hospital Authority to provide citizens with quality public healthcare services, including –
 - enhancing the treatment for the critically ill;
 - enhancing elderly healthcare services;
 - enhancing infirmary services; and
 - optimising waiting time management of specialist out-patient clinic services and accident and emergency services. (FHB)
 - Widening the scope of the Hospital Authority Drug Formulary to enhance the efficacy of treating various diseases. (FHB)
 - Extending the case management programme to all districts to provide intensive community support for persons with severe mental illness. (FHB)

Healthcare Service Development and Infrastructure

- Constructing the Tin Shui Wai Hospital and Centre of Excellence in Paediatrics at Kai Tak, as well as actively pursuing the expansion and redevelopment of United Christian Hospital, Kwong Wah Hospital, Queen Mary Hospital and Kwai Chung Hospital. (FHB)
- Considering the establishment of a neuroscience centre in the planned Kai Tak Hospital Development. (FHB)

- Implementing the first stage of the electronic health record programme to set up a territory-wide patient-oriented system. It will facilitate the sharing of electronic health records between public and private healthcare providers. (FHB)
- Drafting legislation to provide a legal framework for the operation of the electronic health record sharing system. (FHB)
- Facilitating the further development of private hospitals with a view to ensuring the healthy development of a twin-track healthcare system in Hong Kong. (FHB)

Regulation of Medical Devices

- Developing a statutory regulatory proposal on medical devices, taking into account the findings of the business impact assessment and the views of stakeholders. (FHB)

Chinese Medicine

- Conducting review of the development of the Chinese medicine sector through the newly established Chinese Medicine Development Committee to formulate a strategy to raise the professional standard and status of Chinese medicine practitioners, support R&D of Chinese medicine, promote treatment with integrated Chinese and Western medicine, expand the role of Chinese medicine in the public healthcare system, and examine the need for the development of a Chinese medicine hospital in Hong Kong. (FHB)

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- Setting up public Chinese medicine clinics in 18 districts, with the last one in Islands District to commence service in 2014. We are also funding and monitoring 17 existing clinics to enhance Chinese medicine service in our public healthcare system. (FHB)

Ensuring Long-term Sustainability of Healthcare System

- Conducting an overall review of the operation of the Hospital Authority to ensure that it will continue to provide quality and effective services under the twin-track healthcare system. (FHB)
- Reviewing the regulatory regime for private healthcare facilities to enhance the safety, quality and price transparency of private healthcare services. (FHB)
- Taking forward the Health Protection Scheme to provide more choices and better protection for those who use private healthcare services. (FHB)

Disease Prevention and Control

- Implementing the Prevention and Control of Disease Ordinance and improving our infectious disease surveillance, control and notification system. (FHB)
- Implementing a multi-pronged strategy to minimise the risk of and enhance Hong Kong's preparedness for influenza pandemic. (FHB)
- Continuing the subsidy schemes for eligible children and elderly to receive seasonal influenza and pneumococcal vaccinations to enhance primary care and disease prevention. (FHB)

- Adopting a comprehensive preventive and surveillance programme to reduce the risk of avian influenza outbreaks and human infections in Hong Kong. We are keeping the situation and the propriety of our policies under review. (FHB)
- Drafting legislation to extend the current import control regime for meat and poultry to cover poultry eggs to minimise the risk of avian influenza. (FHB)
- Implementing the Strategic Framework for Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases to promote cross-sector co-operation in the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases. (FHB)

Health Promotion

- Making progressive efforts in tobacco control through the multi-pronged approach of publicity, promotion, education, legislation, enforcement, taxation and smoking cessation. (FHB)
- Promoting registration on the Central Organ Donation Register to the public through collaboration with relevant organisations. (FHB)

Safe Use of Pesticides and Veterinary Drugs

- Preparing for the commencement of the Pesticides (Amendment) Ordinance in January 2014 to fully meet the requirements of the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants and the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade. (FHB)

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- Preparing for the commencement of the Pesticide Residues in Food Regulation (Cap. 132CM) on 1 August 2014 to ensure food safety. (FHB)
 - Refining the details of the proposed regulatory framework governing veterinary drug residues in food with reference to the Pesticide Residues in Food Regulation. (FHB)

Elderly Healthcare Services

- Continuing to promote the Elderly Health Care Voucher Scheme which subsidises elderly people aged 70 or above to use private primary care services in their neighbourhood community. The Scheme will become a regular support programme for the elderly in 2014. (FHB)
- Implementing a two-year pilot project in collaboration with NGOs to provide health assessment for elderly people aged 70 or above to enhance preventive care. (FHB)

Ageing in Place

- Implementing the Pilot Scheme on Community Care Service Voucher for the Elderly to enable eligible elderly people to choose the services that suit their individual needs with the use of service vouchers. (LWB)
- Increasing the number of day care and home care places for the elderly to support ageing in place. (LWB)

- Implementing the Integrated Discharge Support Programme for Elderly Patients on a territory-wide basis to provide integrated support services to elderly hospital discharges who have difficulties taking care of themselves and their carers. (LWB)
- Upgrading the physical setting, facilities and equipment of some 230 elderly centres under the Improvement Programme on Elderly Centres. (LWB)

Long-term Care Services for the Elderly

- Increasing the number of subsidised residential care places for the elderly through –
 - the Enhanced Bought Place Scheme;
 - making better use of space in subvented homes;
 - building new contract homes; and
 - identifying sites for new homes. (LWB)
- Exploring the option of converting or redeveloping Wong Chuk Hang Hospital, which mainly provides extended care, into a care home for the elderly with more residential places. (LWB)
- Supporting infirm elderly in subsidised residential care places through the provision of infirmary care supplement. (LWB)
- Supporting demented elderly in day care centres/units and those in subsidised residential care places through the provision of dementia supplement. (LWB)

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- In collaboration with the welfare sector, extending the pilot project, which aims at encouraging young people to join the welfare care profession, to more elderly services units and to include rehabilitation care work in the initiative. The initiative will provide 1 000 places for young people. (LWB)

Financial Support to the Elderly

- Ensuring a smooth operation of Old Age Living Allowance under the Social Security Allowance Scheme. The Allowance is to supplement the living expenses of Hong Kong elderly persons aged 65 or above who are in need of financial support. (LWB)
- Implementing the Guangdong Scheme launched in October 2013 to provide Old Age Allowance for eligible Hong Kong elderly people residing in Guangdong. (LWB)

Municipal Services

- Taking forward the five-year assistance scheme for improving the fire safety and design of hawker stalls in 43 fixed-pitch hawker areas. (FHB)
- Seeking support to take forward individual sites shortlisted across the territory for public columbarium development whilst promoting green burials in parallel. (FHB)
- Drafting legislation to regulate private columbaria. (FHB)
- Conducting a comprehensive review of the fee levels and charging policy for the municipal services and facilities managed by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department. (FHB)