

# **An Executive Summary of the Hong Kong Rehabilitation Programme Plan**

## **Background**

In January 2005, the Rehabilitation Advisory Committee (RAC) decided to carry out a review of the Hong Kong Rehabilitation Programme Plan (RPP). The review aims to make recommendations on the future development of rehabilitation services in accordance with the following two strategic directions:

- to promote cross-sectoral collaboration in providing a barrier-free environment and diversified services for persons with disabilities so as to facilitate their integration into the community; and
- to empower persons with disabilities and their carers, so as to help them become valuable social capital.

2. In March 2005, the then Health, Welfare and Food Bureau set up a RPP Review Working Group (the Working Group), comprised of representatives of persons with disabilities, self-help groups, rehabilitation service providers, parents' groups, the Hong Kong Council of Social Service, business sector, RAC and relevant Government departments. The review spanned two years, during which the Working Group conducted a thorough examination of the existing rehabilitation services, discussed the views collected (including over 100 written submissions) and made recommendations on the future development of various rehabilitation programme areas. All these have been incorporated into this new RPP.

3. In May 2007, the Working Group completed the review and submitted the RPP to the RAC for endorsement. Recommendations set out in the RPP will form the basis for various sectors of the community, including the business sector, non-government organisations (NGOs) and the Government, to forge collaboration in providing equal opportunities for persons with disabilities and to facilitate their integration into the community.

## **Directions of Service Development**

4. The RPP puts forward recommendations on the way forward for various rehabilitation services. Regarding disability types for people requiring rehabilitation services, the RPP proposes, on top of the former eight categories of disability, including autism, hearing impairment, intellectual disability, mental illness, physical disability, speech impairment, visceral disability and visual impairment, to include two additional new categories, namely Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD) and Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD). This is on the consideration that early identification and intervention will go a long way towards minimising the difficulties encountered by persons with AD/HD or SpLD in formal education setting, while enabling them to enjoy equal opportunities in learning and development.

5. Regarding the various rehabilitation programmes, the new RPP proposes strategic directions for development, long-term and short-term objectives, as well as specific measures. Recommendations on the specific development directions for each programme area are summarised as follows:

- (1) Prevention and Identification: to stress the importance of prevention and to recommend enhancement of preventive work at different levels. Apart from public education on disease and accident prevention, efforts should also be made to forestall worsening of disease, recurrence and complications;
- (2) Medical Rehabilitation: to develop day rehabilitation programmes and community rehabilitation services, and to forge closer collaboration among different sectors and local communities, with a view to facilitating early return of persons with disease-induced disabilities to community life;
- (3) Pre-school Training: to continue to work towards the present policy objective of providing a full range of pre-school training for pre-schoolers with disabilities with a

view to providing early detection and intervention to reduce developmental delay and helping their families meet their special needs;

- (4) Education: to continue to provide appropriate support for students with special educational needs. Further efforts will be made in the following directions: empowering teachers, establishing school networks to facilitate professional sharing, enhancing professional support, helping schools inculcate an inclusive culture, promoting parent education and involvement, and fostering cross-sectoral collaboration, etc.;
- (5) Employment and Vocational Rehabilitation: to promote employment of persons with disabilities which should be oriented to the enhancement of their abilities and development of their potential, and in collaboration with various sectors of the community to create an environment in which they can enjoy equal employment opportunities. With this in mind, the new RPP recommends promoting open employment, providing vocational training and employment services, and creating more employment opportunities for persons with disabilities;
- (6) Residential Care: while the overall direction is to encourage persons with disabilities to live in the community with their families and friends, the special needs of those persons with disabilities who cannot live independently or be adequately cared for by their families are recognised. In this connection, the RPP recommends that the Government formulate a long-term plan, developing in a sustainable manner various kinds of residential services with different levels of support, including regulating residential services and promoting the three-pronged development of private, self-financed and subvented hostels, so as to provide more service options for persons with disabilities;
- (7) Day Care and Community Support: day care and

community support play an integral part in enabling persons with disabilities to live in the community and facilitating their full integration into the community. The RPP supports continuous development of such support services and recommends enhancing people-oriented services, providing more support to carers, developing community mutual help networks and rendering multi-disciplinary support services;

- (8) Development of Self-help Organisations: self-help organisations, in the capacity of rehabilitation service users, offer valuable advice for the development of rehabilitation programmes. The RPP recommends supporting the development of self-help organisations, establishing their role and strengthening the collaboration of these self-help organisations, Government departments and other sectors in society;
- (9) Access and Transport: a barrier-free environment is fundamental to the full integration of persons with disabilities into the community. The RPP supports continuous implementation of the “Transport for All” policy and considers it necessary to ensure continuous advancement of the policy on barrier-free access facilities;
- (10) Application of Information and Communications Technologies (ICT): the use of ICT by persons with disabilities is conducive to their communication with other people, acquisition of information, studies and work, thereby facilitating their integration into the community. In this connection, the RPP recommends that continuous efforts by all sectors of the community be promoted in helping and supporting persons with disabilities in the use of ICT;
- (11) Recreational, Sports, Cultural and Arts Activities: persons with disabilities will benefit through the participation in recreational, sports, cultural and arts activities in

enhancing their capacity on various fronts. Besides, it is a useful means to facilitate their integration into the community. In this connection, the RPP recommends providing persons with disabilities with suitable activities and facilities to encourage their active participation in mainstream activities, and organising special activities for those who are unable to participate in mainstream activities. It also recommends providing support to outstanding athletes and artists with disabilities to pursue careers in recreation, sports, culture and arts; and

- (12) Public Education: understanding and acceptance of persons with disabilities by the general public are essential to the building of an inclusive society. In this connection, the RPP recommends strengthening the comprehensive public education programmes on rehabilitation with timely evaluation of their effectiveness and conducting regular review of strategy in light of the changing public attitude and social environment.

## **The Way Forward**

6. The directions of development, objectives and measures set out in the RPP can be taken forward through enhanced collaboration between Government departments and NGOs, the re-deployment of resources, as well as collaboration among the NGOs, the business sector and the Government.

7. The RAC will monitor the implementation of the various recommendations set out in the RPP on a regular basis. The sub-committees under the RAC will also follow up on the detailed implementation of the recommendations and relevant concrete arrangements.

8. We hope all stakeholders, including the NGOs, the business sector and the Government, will strive to forge closer partnership, to take the recommendations set out in the RPP into full consideration in the

strategic planning of the development of their services and activities and to bring them in alignment with the overall development needs of rehabilitation services; while working together towards a barrier-free environment and the building of a harmonious, inclusive and caring society.