



## Rehabilitation

The objective of Hong Kong's rehabilitation services is to help persons with disabilities develop their physical, mental and social capabilities to the fullest extent which their disability permits. The 1995 White Paper on Rehabilitation sets out comprehensively the policy decisions on the further development of rehabilitation services over the next decade and beyond. The Disability Discrimination Ordinance (Cap. 487), which has been in full operation since December 1996, gives persons with disabilities legal reasons to fight for equal opportunities and against discrimination and harassment.

According to a household survey conducted by the Census and Statistics Department from 2006 to 2007, there were 361 300 people with restriction in body movement, seeing difficulty, hearing difficulty, speech difficulty, mental illness, autism, specific learning difficulties and/or attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder. At the same time, a separate statistical assessment made by the department indicated that there were about 67 000 to 87 000 people with mental handicap.

**Policy Formulation and Co-ordination of Services:** The Commissioner for Rehabilitation is responsible to the Secretary for Labour and Welfare (SLW) for the formulation of policy on rehabilitation matters, and for co-ordinating the planning and executive action of all government departments and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

SLW is advised by the Rehabilitation Advisory Committee (RAC), which is consulted on all important aspects of rehabilitation. RAC also assists the Government in monitoring the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Hong Kong. RAC and its four Sub-committees viz Access, Employment, Public Education, and Arts and Culture are chaired by non-officials.

In late 2007, the Labour and Welfare Bureau published the Hong Kong Rehabilitation Programme Plan (RPP) which formed the basis of the rehabilitation services for the past five years, focusing on strategic directions and priorities for rehabilitation policies and services.

NGOs provide a wide range of rehabilitation services which are mainly funded by government subvention. Expenditure on rehabilitation in 2008/09, including financial assistance to individual persons, is estimated to be \$17.2 billion, representing an increase of 2.9 per cent from that of 2007/08.

**Prevention and Early Identification:** Prevention is carried out through various means, for example, arousing public awareness through health education, providing screening service for early detection of disabilities, and conducting immunisation programmes.

Child health and developmental surveillance is offered to all children, from birth to five years of age, through the

Integrated Child Health and Development Programme in all Maternal and Child Health Centres (MCHCs) of the Department of Health. Anticipatory guidance is provided for parents and caregivers. Hearing screening is provided for babies who have not received newborn hearing screening at hospitals and pre-school vision screening by optometrist/orthoptist is offered to 4-year-old children. The health care professionals carry out structured observations to monitor the physical health, growth and development of children. A referral and reply system has been established between MCHCs and all pre-primary institutions in Hong Kong since December 2008 to facilitate pre-primary teachers to identify and refer children with physical, developmental or behavioural problems to MCHC for preliminary assessment. The Department also provides hearing and vision screening for primary one students and an annual health assessment for all primary and secondary school students through the Student Health Service. The Education Bureau operates an Early Identification and Intervention of Learning Difficulties Programme for Primary One pupils and an Early Identification and Intervention Programme for Speech and Language Problems to help primary schools to identify primary one pupils with learning difficulties and/or speech and language impairments and provide early intervention.

Children identified to have developmental or health problems are referred to the child assessment centres of the Department of Health or the Hospital Authority, special education services centres of the Education Bureau or appropriate specialists for detailed assessment, treatment and follow-up management.

**Special Education and Training:** Regarding education, care and training for children with disabilities, it is the Government's policy to provide education for them as far as possible in ordinary schools and kindergartens. There are 2 045 places in early education and training centres which mainly cater for the needs of children with disabilities aged below two and those between two and six meeting the eligibility criteria for early education and training centre services only. For children aged two to six, there are 1 860 integrated programme places for mildly disabled children in kindergarten-cum-child care centres and 1 474 places for moderately and severely disabled children in special child care centres. These pre-school services for disabled children are subvented by the Social Welfare Department (SWD) and operated by NGOs.

At school age, children with mild disabilities are integrated whenever possible into ordinary schools. They are provided with school-based support services and related follow-up services in Special Education Services Centres. Children with severe disabilities are accommodated in special schools. In the school year 2007/08, there are 53 special schools for children with disabilities comprising two for children with visual

impairment, two for children with hearing impairment, seven for children with physical disability, 41 for children with intellectual disability and one hospital school. Nineteen of these special schools provide boarding facilities.

**Vocational Rehabilitation:** The Vocational Training Council (VTC), funded by government subvention, operates three skills centres for persons with disabilities. In addition, there are two other subvented centres run by two NGOs, which were converted into Integrated Vocational Training Centres expanding the service scope to include a spectrum of vocational training services of 453 places. These centres have a total of 1 113 full-time training places (including 290 boarding places).

In addition, short courses of flexible attendance mode are provided to meet the employment needs of various groups of disabled adults. For those who can gain entry into the Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education, Hong Kong Design Institute Training and Development Centres and the School of Business and Information Systems, the VTC would provide them with special supportive services during their studies.

The VTC also provides related supplementary services through its Vocational Assessment Service and Technical Aids and Resource Centre. The former evaluates the aptitude, potential and abilities of persons with disabilities for developing individual vocational placement plans, while the latter provides technical advice regarding design of devices and adaptations.

The Employees Retraining Board (ERB) organises courses specifically designed for persons with disabilities, including industrial accident victims, to help them become productive members of the labour force. In 2008-09, 46 courses were offered in Catering, Retailing, General Business, Environmental Hygiene and Management, Traditional Chinese Medicine for Healthcare, Printing and Publishing, Information and Communication Technology, Logistics, Vocational Languages, and Career Planning and Counseling. As at December 2008, 667 trainees have completed our courses, and around half of them joined the labour force successfully upon completion of the courses. To provide more training options for disabled trainees, ERB offers Training Facilities Subsidies to training bodies for making appropriate arrangements to facilitate a barrier-free learning environment.

The Government also assists persons with disabilities in finding jobs. The Selective Placement Division (SPD) of the Labour Department offers placement service to persons with disabilities looking for open employment. In 2008, the SPD recorded 3 327 registrations and achieved 2 490 placements. At the same time, the SPD launched a pre-employment training and work trial placement scheme named "Work Orientation and Placement Scheme" to encourage employers to employ persons with disabilities. In addition, through a \$50 million project of "Enhancing Employment of Persons with Disabilities through Small Enterprise", The SWD supported NGOs to set up small business on the condition that 50 per cent of the employees are persons with disabilities.

For those persons with disabilities who cannot or who are not yet ready to return to open employment, there are 5 113 sheltered workshop places, 3 399 integrated vocational rehabilitation services centre places, 1 655 supported employment places, 432 on the job training programme places and 311 Sunnyway – On-the-Job Training Programme for Young persons with Disabilities. In addition, 4 370 day activity centre places are available for the moderately and severely mentally handicapped, and five training and activity centres for ex-mentally ill persons providing 230 places for discharged mental patients.

**Medical Rehabilitation:** The Hospital Authority provides medical rehabilitation to patients becoming dysfunctional

after an injury or attack of illnesses such as stroke. Rehabilitation starts early in the acute phase once the medical condition has been stabilized to enable early mobilization and functional retraining which are delivered by multidisciplinary professionals in the hospital setting. Since 2002, HA has gradually set up 14 stroke units in acute hospitals to enhance stroke care management to patients who may benefit from early intervention. Currently, there are over 200 acute stroke beds among all clusters.

HA also provides specialty-led rehabilitation programs such as pulmonary rehabilitation, orthopaedic, geriatric, cardiac rehabilitation in its extended care hospitals, day or outpatient settings for patients who require a medium-term period of functioning and psychosocial training. There are also three centres for spinal cord injury established in HK, Kowloon and Tai Po for specialized rehabilitation of paraplegic and tetraplegic patients as a result of spinal cord injury. With continual planned development in rehabilitation services, the Tuen Mun Rehabilitation Block was opened in 2007 with over 300 beds gradually commissioning in the next few years.

Pre-discharge planning for patients approaching the end of their course of rehabilitation and before hospital discharge is performed by domiciliary physiotherapists and occupational therapists to ensure that the home environment is suitable and conducive for continual habitation and activity of the disabled patients after discharge. Home modification and supply of assistive devices may be necessary as situation warrants. In this regard, community support services run by NGOs are especially important in providing longer term assistance for reintegration into community. HA collaborates closely with the Day Rehabilitation Centres and other rehabilitation services operated by the welfare sector in ensuring that there is smooth transition of care from hospitals to the community.

A total of 35 patient resource centres in public hospitals providing patient and carer empowerment as well as disease prevention programmes to support the chronically ill patients and their carers. With the strong network of over 200 patients mutual help groups of various chronic illnesses, the Health InfoWorld of Hospital Authority facilitates community rehabilitation through patient care empowerment in a community engagement approach. Since April 1997, the Government has been subventing six Community Rehabilitation Network centres across Hong Kong, to enhance the quality of life for people with visceral disability and their families.

The Hospital Authority organises its psychiatric services in line with the general hospital cluster networks. Comprehensive care services including acute, extended, ambulatory and community care for people with mental illness are provided in different clusters. As at March 31, 2008, there are 4 400 psychiatric beds in 10 hospitals. Other psychiatric facilities including psychiatric day hospitals, specialist out-patient clinics, and community psychiatric services. In addition, there are four teams providing early assessment and detection of persons with psychoses, seven teams for elderly suicide prevention, and special programmes have also been set up in psychiatric hospitals to provide intensive rehabilitation for chronic patients. Within the hospitals, occupational therapists, social workers and clinical psychologists provide rehabilitation programmes to better prepare patients for discharge back into the community.

There are 680 hospital beds designated for infirmary care for profoundly and severely mentally handicapped patients. For carers of people with severely mentally handicaps, respite service serves to alleviate the stress on the carers and outreaching services are provided to support and maintain close collaboration with various agencies providing services to the severely mentally handicapped.

**Social Rehabilitation Services:** The services include counselling, housing, training, day and residential care, transport, access facilities, sports and recreation, and welfare allowance. Normal Disability Allowance of \$1,140

per month for an individual is provided to about 106 000 people with severe disability while Higher Disability Allowance of \$2,280 per month is paid out to about 15 000 severely disabled persons requiring constant attendance at home. These allowances are non-means-tested. Persons with disabilities may also apply for the means-tested Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme which includes different standard rates to meet the basic needs of different categories of recipients and a wide range of special grants to meet their special needs. Those who are eligible for Comprehensive Social Security Assistance will not be granted Disability Allowance.

Persons with disabilities are encouraged to live independently in the community. Those in accommodation unsuitable for their disabilities may apply for public housing under the Compassionate Rehousing Scheme of the Housing Authority.

For persons with disabilities who require residential care, there are 7 580 residential places for handicapped adults, 36 halfway houses with 1 509 places for discharged

mental patients and five long stay care homes with 1 407 places for chronic mental patients. SWD has also put into operation a computerised Central Referral System for Rehabilitation Services, respite service emergency placement service, place of refuge, community rehabilitation day centre, home-based training and support service, commercial-hired vehicle transport service, occasional child care service for disabled children, six parents resource centres and a range of community support services.

Free or subsidised special transport is provided where the need is demonstrated. Under government subvention, a NGO runs a fleet of 109 Rehabus vehicles providing scheduled routes, feeder and dial-a-ride services. In addition, financial concessions are available to disabled drivers.

The *Design Manual: Barrier Free Access 2008* sets out obligatory and recommended design requirements for providing proper access to and appropriate facilities in a building for persons with disabilities.