CHAPTER 14 - REHABILITATION PERSONNEL

INTRODUCTION

14.1 A major constraint on the provision of full and comprehensive rehabilitation services in Hong Kong has been the shortage of trained rehabilitation personnel. This problem aggravates with the rapid expansion of welfare services in recent years and the rising expectation and demand of the community for better quality services. General world shortage of trained rehabilitation personnel and the desirability or necessity of a working knowledge of Cantonese for certain professions like speech therapist and clinical psychologist render overseas recruitment in some areas impracticable.

14.2 To address the manpower problems of clinical psychologists, physiotherapists and occupational therapists, a Working Group on Allied Health Personnel was set up under the then Health and Welfare Branch (now Health and Welfare Bureau) in 1995. This Working Group has made a number of recommendations to address the significant shortfall in the supply of these allied health personnel, and the recruitment and retention difficulties faced by non-governmental organisations (NGOs). In addition, working groups on nursing manpower and speech therapists in the public sector were set up under the then Health and Welfare Branch in 1993 and the then Education and Manpower Branch (now Education and Manpower Bureau) in 1995 respectively to study similar issues related to the two professions.

14.3 To review the manpower provision in special education, the Sub-committee on Special Education was set up under the Board of Education in 1994. The Sub-committee recommended a number of manpower improvements in special schools in its report issued in May 1996. Some of the recommendations are being implemented. In addition, the Education Department has arranged the Malpractice Liability Insurance Policy for all aided special schools with effect from January 1998. The policy is essentially designed to protect all special schools against legal liability for third party bodily injury, death, illness or disease in the provision of occupational therapy, physiotherapy, speech therapy, nursing, boarding and other related medical services.

14.4 This chapter mainly covers the development and problems of the key professions or specialists in rehabilitation services as well as their job-related training. The estimated number of additional posts of rehabilitation personnel to be provided between January 1999 and March 2003 arising from funded projects are set out in Table 14.1 below.
Table 14.1 - Estimated Number of Additional Posts of Rehabilitation Personnel between January 1999 and March 2003 Arising from Funded Projects (Position as at December 1998)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Additional Number of Post*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Medical Sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audiologist</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinical Psychologist</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctor</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurse (General)</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurse (Psychiatric)</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupational Therapist</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Care Worker</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physiotherapist</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Podiatrist</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prosthetist and Orthotist</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Worker</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Child Care Worker</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education Teacher</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech Therapist</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welfare Worker</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshop Instructor</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: * Some additional posts are not designated for rehabilitation service only.

**AUDIOLOGIST**

14.5 The University of Hong Kong (HKU) started to offer a two-year programme of Master in Audiology in 1996 with an intake of about 10 students in alternate years. In view of the fact that the first batch of locally trained audiologists would be available in 1998, the Hospital Authority has ceased offering the Hospital Authority Training Scholarship Scheme for selected candidates to pursue a Master’s degree in audiology overseas since 1997.

14.6 As at December 1998, there were five audiologists working in the Department of Health over an establishment of five posts and 11 audiologists working in the Hospital Authority. Two additional audiologist posts will be provided in the Department of Health by 2002-03 under funded projects.

14.7 Audiologists in the Education Department provide audiological assessment to pupils referred from the Combined Screening Programme and other sources. They also
provide the Pre-school Advisory and Training Service, Peripatetic Advisory Service and Visiting Audiological Service for hearing impaired children. As at December 1998, the Department has an approved establishment of eight audiologist posts but only five posts including one senior audiologist were filled.

14.8 Apart from the above, there has been a subvented audiologist post established in the welfare sector since 1995-96. The audiologist is responsible for the delivery of services including audiological assessment, hearing aid prescription and fitting, earmould prescription and production, advisory service on assistive device, etc. to hearing impaired persons in the community.

**CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGIST**

14.9 Local training programmes for clinical psychologists (CPs) comprises a two-year programme of Master of Social Science offered by the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) and a two-year programme of Master in Clinical Psychology offered by the HKU. In response to the recommendation of the Working Group on Allied Health Personnel, the targeted intake for these two programmes have been increased to 15 students per year and 27 students in alternate years respectively starting from the school year 1998/99. This will help alleviate the shortage problem of CPs.

14.10 In the medical sector, CPs provide psychological assessment, treatment and counselling to clients including children with developmental disabilities, behavioural and emotional problems, as well as patients in general and those with mental illness. As at December 1998, there were 12 CPs working in the Department of Health over an establishment of 15 posts and 55 CPs working in the Hospital Authority. An additional six and three CP posts will be provided in the Department of Health by 2002-03 and in the Hospital Authority by 2001-02 respectively under funded projects.

14.11 In 1989, the Social Welfare Department set up the Central Psychological Support Service (CPSS) Unit to provide consultation to rehabilitation service units. Since October 1996, a dual system has been implemented whereby NGO operators running a substantial number of rehabilitation service units are provided with agency-based CPs, whilst small agencies continue to be served by the CPSS Unit. These CPs provide psychological assessment and treatment to people with disabilities in need of the service. Due to recruitment difficulties in previous years, some pre-school centres have been given the flexibility to employ educational psychologists holding against CP posts. The Social Welfare Department will examine the need to continue this measure with a view to providing better service for disabled pre-schoolers. As at December 1998, there were six agency-based CPs and two EPs working in NGOs over an establishment of 10 CP posts and four CPs working in the CPSS Unit over four established posts. An additional five CP posts will be provided in the Social Welfare Department in 1999-2000 under funded projects.

14.12 The Working Group on Allied Health Personnel examined the provision of clinical psychological service and recommended no change to the existing manning ratios of CPs for various rehabilitation service units set out in Appendix 7.1. As regards the Working Group’s recommendation of creating Senior CP posts in the NGO sector, the Social Welfare Department is examining this recommendation with the Hong Kong Council of Social Service (HKCSS).
DOCTOR

14.13 The majority of doctors (medical practitioners) in Hong Kong are locally trained in the CUHK and HKU under their respective five-year degree programmes. The total annual intake of the two programmes is 330 students. Graduates of the two programmes may enter various medical streams based on their own aspirations. With steady output of medical graduates from the two universities and reducing turnover of doctors in the public sector in recent years, the overall manpower supply situation has been improved. The recruitment problem of doctors in the less popular specialities such as psychiatry has also been alleviated.

14.14 As at December 1998, there were 583 doctors working in the Department of Health over an establishment of 600 doctor posts and 3 449 doctors working in the Hospital Authority. They provide a range of medical services including medical rehabilitation services. An additional 63 doctor posts will be provided in the Department of Health by 2002-03 under funded projects.

EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGIST

14.15 A two-year programme of Master in Educational Psychology is offered by the HKU with an intake capacity of 12 students in alternate year. In view of the improved educational psychologist (EP) supply in recent years, the Education Department has decided to cease offering the Government Training Scholarship for training EPs overseas.

14.16 In the Education Department, EPs provide psycho-educational assessment and follow-up support for pupils with learning, emotional and/or behavioural problems. They also offer advice to parents and teachers. Under the Code of Aid for Special Schools, sponsoring bodies which operate special schools with an aggregate of 30 classes or more (except hospital classes) may, with the approval of the Director of Education, appoint school-based EPs according to the manning ratios as shown in Appendix 7.2. Special schools that are not entitled to school-based EPs are served by the central pool of the Education Department at the manning ratio of one EP to 40 special school classes (excluding hospital classes). As at December 1998, there were eight school-based and one central pool EPs over the establishments of 12 and seven EP posts respectively. After consulting staff in the Department and the aided sector, the Education Department has drawn up a proposal of replacing the existing EP stream of Specialist (Education Services) with a new EP grade. In order to make the profession more attractive to qualified persons, there will be new entry requirements and improved salary structure for the new grade. The proposal has been forwarded to both the Education and Manpower Bureau and the Civil Service Bureau for consideration.

14.17 There is no formal establishment of EP posts in the welfare sector. However, flexibility has been given to some pre-school centres for disabled children to employ EPs holding against CP posts. As at December 1998, there were two EPs in these pre-school centres.
NURSE

14.18 General nurses are trained in the 14 schools of general nursing under the Hospital Authority through a three-year course for registered nurses and a two-year course for enrolled nurses. The total annual intake capacity is about 1,200. To improve the quality of nursing education, a three-year sandwich programme of Professional Diploma in Nursing with an annual intake of 120 students has been jointly organised by the Hospital Authority and Hong Kong Polytechnic University (HKPU), and piloted in two schools of general nursing since 1997. In addition, full-time nursing degree programmes are offered by the CUHK, HKPU and HKU with a total annual intake of about 200 students. These three universities also offer part-time degree programmes designed for serving registered nurses with a total intake of about 180 students, which will be gradually increased to 200 by the school year 2002/03.

14.19 As at December 1998, there were 1,580 general nurses working in the Department of Health over an establishment of 1,619 posts and the Hospital Authority employed 17,950 general nurses. The general nurses provide a range of services including medical rehabilitation services. An additional 155 general nurse posts will be provided in the Department of Health by 2002-03 under funded projects.

14.20 Psychiatric nurses are trained in two schools of psychiatric nursing under the Hospital Authority through a three-year course for registered nurses and a two-year course for enrolled nurses. The total annual intake capacity of the two schools is about 140. As at December 1998, there were 2,069 psychiatric nurses working in the Hospital Authority.

14.21 Community-based nursing services under the Hospital Authority are provided by nurses who have undertaken a community nursing course or community psychiatric nursing course organised by the Institute of Advanced Nursing Studies. The intake capacity of the former is about 30 each year and the latter is about 30 in alternate years. As at December 1998, there were 277 community nurses and 60 community psychiatric nurses in the Hospital Authority.

14.22 Under the Code of Aid for Special Schools, special schools for the physically handicapped and severely mentally handicapped with more than 40 pupils may, with the approval of the Director of Education, appoint a full-time registered nurse. For those special schools with 130 or more pupils, they may appoint one more registered nurse. Furthermore, in accordance with the recommendations of the Sub-committee on Special Education, one school nurse is provided to each special school for the mildly mentally handicapped, moderately mentally handicapped, combined mildly and moderately mentally handicapped and visually impaired with mental handicap with effect from September 1997. As at December 1998, there were 98.4 nurses in special schools for disabled children (including the boarding section) over an establishment of 102 nurse posts. Six additional nurse posts will be provided in special schools by the school year 2002/03 under funded projects of the Education Department.

14.23 As at December 1998, there were 428.5 general nurses and 50 psychiatric nurses working in rehabilitation service units to render medical care and general health services for people with disabilities over an establishment of 477.5 and 125 posts respectively. An additional 60 general nurse posts and 62 psychiatric nurse posts will be provided in rehabilitation service units by 2002-03 under funded projects of the Social Welfare Department. To address the shortage problem of enrolled nurses in the
rehabilitation and elderly sectors, the Social Welfare Department, with assistance from the Hospital Authority, implemented a blister programme for enrolled nurses in 1998-99. This blister programme will train up 270 pupil nurses to meet the demand of the two sectors.

**OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST**

14.24 A three-year degree programme in occupational therapy has been offered by the HKPU since 1991. In pursuance of the recommendation of the Working Group on Allied Health Personnel, the annual intake of this programme was increased from 55 to 90 students in the school year 1998/99 with a view to increasing the local supply of occupational therapists (OTs). Since the latest projection reveals that there is a downturn adjustment in the shortfall of OTs, it is considered that further increase in student intake of the programme is not necessary at this stage. Apart from degree programme, the HKPU has offered part-time modular programmes of Post-graduate Diploma in Occupational Therapy and Master in Health Care, which incorporates the post-graduate diploma programme, since 1992 and 1995 respectively. Students of the two programmes are required to complete the programmes within six years.

14.25 In the medical sector, OTs mainly conduct assessment and treatment programmes for clients so as to assist them in overcoming dysfunction and maximising their ability to act independently. As at December 1998, there were nine OTs working in the Department of Health over an establishment of nine OT posts and 420 OTs working in the Hospital Authority. An additional six and 41 OT posts will be provided in the Department of Health by 2002-03 and in the Hospital Authority by 2001-02 respectively under funded projects.

14.26 Under the Code of Aid for Special Schools, special schools for the physically handicapped and severely mentally handicapped may, with the approval of the Director of Education, appoint 0.5 OT and 0.5 occupational therapy assistant (OTA) for every 15 pupils. As at December 1998, there were 45 OTs working in these special schools over an establishment of 50.5 OT posts. Two additional OT posts will be provided in these special schools by the school year 2002/03 under fund projects of the Education Department. In addition, the Sub-committee on Special Education recommended that OT posts in these special schools should be ranked at OT I and the manning ratio of Senior OT to OT should be improved from 1:6 to 1:5. These recommendations will be implemented subject to the availability of resources.

14.27 In 1989, the Social Welfare Department set up the Central Para-medical Support Service (CPMS) Unit to provide allied health services to augment the quality of service and efficiency of rehabilitation centres for people with disabilities that were not yet provided with such personnel. Since October 1996, a dual system has been implemented whereby NGO operators running a substantial number of rehabilitation service units are provided with agency-based OTs, whilst small agencies continue to be served by the CPMS Unit. As at December 1998, there were 20 agency-based OTs working in the NGOs over an establishment of 25 posts, and 15 OTs in the CPMS Unit over 16 posts. There were also 67 centre-based OT posts established in rehabilitation service units. With a view to improving the service, the Social Welfare Department has subvented four OT posts for an NGO to provide domiciliary occupational therapy services to people with disabilities since October 1997. An additional 12.5 OT posts will be provided in rehabilitation service units by 2002-03 under funded projects of the Department. In addition, the Department has
subvented two Senior OT posts in two NGOs with a large establishment of subvented therapist posts since April 1998 to provide necessary supervision and training to junior therapists and clinical placements. The Special Coin Suspense Account has also provided support for a Senior OT post in an NGO since October 1997. The Social Welfare Department will consider subventing one additional Senior OT post in 1999-2000 by re-deployment of resources.

14.28 Although the Working Group on Allied Health Personnel recognised that there was a need to improve the existing manning ratios of OTs in rehabilitation service units, the Administration considered that, in addressing the manpower problems of OTs, priority should be given to fill the existing vacancies and reduce the wastages. And the improvements in grade structure and manning ratios should be considered in the light of the availability of resources and priority. The existing manning ratios of OTs in various rehabilitation service units and the proposed manning ratios endorsed by the Working Group on Allied Health Personnel are set out in Appendix 7.3.

**ORIENTATION AND MOBILITY INSTRUCTOR**

14.29 There is no formal training for orientation and mobility (O&M) instructors in Hong Kong. In accordance with the recommendations of the Sub-committee on Special Education, additional O&M instructor posts are provided in special schools for the visually impaired and visually impaired with mental handicap. As such, every class, instead of every secondary class, in the two special schools concerned are provided with 0.5 O&M instructors. These O&M instructors are reckoned as members of the Certificated Master/Mistress grade. However, O&M instructors in the welfare sector are pitched at the Welfare Worker grade which is less favourable. In view of this disparity, the Social Welfare Department will look into the ranking and grading structure of subvented O&M instructors in the welfare sector.

14.30 As at December 1998, there were seven O&M instructors over an establishment of 8.5 posts in the education sector and seven subvented O&M instructors in the welfare sector.

**ORTHOPTIST**

14.31 No formal training in orthoptics is available in Hong Kong. The Hospital Authority has been selecting suitable candidates to undertake a three-year degree programme in orthoptics overseas under the Hospital Authority Training Scholarship Scheme since 1992. As at December 1998, there were 13 orthoptists working in the Hospital Authority. They work closely with ophthalmologists to help diagnose squint and amlyopia, make assessments on ocular motility, binocular visual and functional disorders, and give appropriate treatment to patients with these conditions.

**PHYSIOTHERAPIST**

14.32 A three-year degree programme in physiotherapy has been offered by the HKPU since 1991. In pursuance of the recommendation of the Working Group on Allied Health Personnel, the annual intake of this programme was increased from 100 to 150 students in the school year 1998/99 with a view to increasing local supply of physiotherapists (PTs). Since the latest projection reveals that there is a downward adjustment in the
shortfall of PTs, it is considered that further increase in the student intake of the programme is not necessary at this stage. Similar to occupational therapy training, part-time modular programmes of Post-graduate Diploma in Physiotherapy and Master in Health Care, which incorporates the post-graduate diploma programme, have been offered by the HKPU since 1992 and 1995 respectively. Students of the two programmes are required to complete the programmes within six years.

14.33 PTs working in the medical sector provide assessment of physical competence and physiotherapy treatment to patients in need. The aim is to promote the health and well-being of the patients concerned so that they may achieve optimum level of function and independence for integration into the community. As at December 1998, there were eight PTs working in the Department of Health over an establishment of nine PT posts and 664 PTs working in the Hospital Authority. An additional six and 52 PT posts will be provided in the Department of Health by 2002-03 and in the Hospital Authority by 2001-02 respectively under funded projects.

14.34 Under the Code of Aid for Special Schools, special schools for the physically handicapped and severely mentally handicapped may, with the approval of the Director of Education, appoint 0.5 PT for every 15 pupils, and one PT artisan (PTA) to support every two PTs. As at December 1998, there were 47.5 PTs working in these special schools over an establishment of 50.5 PT posts. Two additional PT posts will be provided in these special schools by the school year 2002/03 under funded projects of the Education Department. In addition, the Sub-committee on Special Education recommended that PT posts in these special schools should be ranked at PT I and the manning ratio of Senior PT to PT should be improved from 1:6 to 1:5. These recommendations will be implemented subject to the availability of resources.

14.35 Rehabilitation service units in the welfare sector are served by the CPMS Unit of the Social Welfare Department and centre-based PTs. As at December 1998, there were four PTs working in the CPMS Unit over an establishment of six posts and 47 centre-based PTs in rehabilitation service units over 56 posts. An additional 11.5 PT posts will be provided in rehabilitation service units by 2002-03 under funded projects of the Department. In addition, the Social Welfare Department has subvented two Senior PT posts in two NGOs with a large establishment of therapist posts since April 1998 to provide necessary supervision and training to the junior therapists and clinical placements. The Special Coin Suspense Account has also provided support for a Senior PT post in an NGO since October 1997. The Social Welfare Department will consider subventing an additional Senior PT post in 1999-2000 by re-deployment of resources.

14.36 Although the Working Group on Allied Health Personnel recognised that there was a need to improve the existing manning ratios of PTs in rehabilitation service units, the Administration considered that, in addressing the manpower problems of PTs, priority should be given to fill the existing vacancies and reduce the wastages. And the improvements in grade structure and manning ratios should be considered in the light of the availability of resources and priority. The existing manning ratios of PTs in various rehabilitation service units and the proposed manning ratios endorsed by the Working Group on Allied Health Personnel are set out in Appendix 7.4.

14.37 In addition, the Working Group on Allied Health Personnel recommended creating a new PTA rank in rehabilitation service units so as to relieve PTs from non-therapeutic and routine tasks. With funding support from the Queen Elizabeth Foundation
for the Mentally Handicapped and Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust, 31 PTA posts were created and allocated to six rehabilitation agencies in 1996-97 as a pilot project. A review on the pilot project in 1997 concluded that PTAs were effective in enhancing the quality of physiotherapy service. Resources will be sought for continuing these posts as appropriate.

**PLACEMENT OFFICER**

14.38 All placement officers of the Labour Department have to undergo an eight-day intensive in-service training on Selective Placement of Disabled Persons so as to acquire knowledge about physical and mental disabilities, basic skills of vocational guidance and employment needs of people with disabilities. Rehabilitation experts are invited to deliver talks and share experience on vocational rehabilitation with the placement officers in seminars and workshops regularly convened by the Selective Placement Division. Courses on counselling, interviewing skills and sign language are also organised for them.

14.39 As at December 1998, there were 16 placement officers in the Selective Placement Division of the Labour Department over an establishment of 17 posts. They work in three teams each under the supervision and guidance of a district Labour Officer for placement of people with disabilities. Their work includes assessing a disabled job seeker’s working abilities, conducting job matching and referrals, as well as providing counselling and follow-up service. In addition, there are personnel in NGOs providing job-placement services for people with disabilities. The Labour Department has no existing plan to increase the number of placement officer posts in the Selective Placement Division by 2002-03.

**PODIATRIST**

14.40 There is no formal training in podiatry in Hong Kong. To meet the demand for podiatrists (formerly known as chiropodists), the Hospital Authority has been recruiting suitable candidates to undertake a three-year degree programme in podiatry in the United Kingdom under the Hospital Authority Training Scholarship Scheme since 1992. As at December 1998, there were 19 podiatrists working in the Hospital Authority. They provide a comprehensive range of foot health services for patients in need through therapeutic techniques such as minor surgical intervention, wound management and orthotics provision. Three additional Podiatrist posts will be provided in the Hospital Authority by 2001-02 under funded projects.

**PROSTHETIST AND ORTHOTIST**

14.41 Local training in prosthetics and orthotics was previously provided by the School of Prosthetics and Orthotics of the Hospital Authority, which ceased operation at the end of 1997. As at December 1998, there were 89 prosthetists and orthotists working in the Hospital Authority and 82 of them were trained by this school. They provide a comprehensive range of prosthetic and orthotic services including the design, construction, supply and evaluation of remedial aids (prostheses and orthoses) for clients in need, and ongoing monitoring of usage and needs for alterations or replacement of the remedial aids.
Nine additional prosthetist and orthotist posts will be provided in the Hospital Authority by 2001-02 under funded projects.

14.42 To be in line with overseas development and in response to local demand, a three-year degree programme in prosthetics and orthotics has been offered by the Jockey Club Rehabilitation Engineering Centre of the HKPU since the school year 1995/96 with an annual intake of about 25 students. The first batch of graduates joined the prosthetic and orthotic services in the community in 1998. The Centre is considering the provision of a conversion programme for the non-degree professionals so that they may obtain qualifications equivalent to degree level.

**SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETER**

14.43 There is no formal training for sign language interpreters in Hong Kong. The necessary training is provided by the NGO sector with non-governmental resources. As at December 1998, the Government subvented 1.5 full-time Sign Language Interpreter posts in an NGO for hearing impaired persons. In 1998, the Social Welfare Department and this NGO examined the demonstrated demand for sign language interpretation services including the grade structure of sign language interpreters. Additional subvention will be considered subject to the results of the assessment and availability of resources.

**SOCIAL WORKER**

14.44 There are two grades of social workers, namely the Social Work Assistant and Social Work Officer grades. Social work assistants may be trained in the City University of Hong Kong (CityUHK) and HKPU through four-year part-time or two-year full-time diploma programmes in social work. The total annual intake of the part-time programmes is 165 students and the full-time programmes is 415 students. Social work assistants may also be trained in the Hong Kong Shue Yan College through a four-year full-time diploma programme in social work which has an annual intake of about 30 students. For social work officers, full-time degree programmes in social work are offered by five local universities, namely the CityUHK, CUHK, Hong Kong Baptist University (HKBU), HKPU and HKU with a total annual intake of about 300 students. Part-time degree programmes admitting holders of Diploma in Social Work are also offered by the CityUHK and HKPU with a total annual intake of about 80 students.

Social Workers in Medical Setting

14.45 Social work services for patients, including people with disabilities, in the medical setting are mainly provided by medical social workers (MSWs) of the Social Welfare Department and Hospital Authority. As at December 1998, there were 368 MSWs working in the Social Welfare Department over an establishment of 384 posts and 148 MSWs working in the Hospital Authority. An additional 27 MSW posts will be provided in the Social Welfare Department by 2002-03 under funded projects.

14.46 The Social Welfare Department has used the manning ratio adopted by the former Medical Development Advisory Committee, as set out in Appendix 7.5, for planning purpose since 1979. In order to have a clear picture of the current manpower requirements
for MSWs, the Social Welfare Department is conducting a review on manning ratios of MSWs.

14.47 MSWs and staff working with mentally/ex-mentally ill patients in medical and rehabilitation service units should be equipped with the relevant knowledge and skills in order to discharge their responsibilities effectively. Subsequent to the Mental Health (Amendment) Ordinance 1988, “Approved Social Workers” at Social Work Officer/Assistant Social Work Officer ranks in the mental health service are appointed by the Director of Social Welfare to specifically discharge duties in relation to access to patients received into guardianship and application for search and removal warrants. Special training programmes are organised to equip them with the required expertise.

Social Workers in Education Setting

14.48 In accordance with the recommendations of the Sub-Committee on Special Education, Warden and Assistant Warden posts in special schools are upgraded from the ranks of Senior Social Work Assistant and Senior Welfare Worker to Assistant Social Work Officer/Chief Social Work Assistant and Senior Social Work Assistant respectively with effect from September 1997; and Programme Worker and Houseparent posts in special schools are upgraded from the rank of Welfare Worker to Social Work Assistant with effect from September 1998. These improvements aim to enhance pastoral care and education for pupils with special educational needs. As at December 1998, there were 108 social workers working in the school section and 72 in the boarding section of special schools for disabled children over the establishments of 110 and 301 social worker posts respectively. By the school year 2002/03, an additional 3.5 and 26 social worker posts will be provided in the school and boarding sections respectively of these special schools under the staff improvement projects and other funded projects of the Education Department.

Social Workers in Welfare Setting

14.49 Social workers in family services centres operated by the Social Welfare Department and subvented NGOs handle a wide range of problems for both able-bodied persons and people with disabilities. At present, the Government subvents NGOs providing family casework services on the basis of one social worker to 65 cases. Because of rapid increase in the demand for family casework service, actual caseload for each social worker in NGOs is still in the excess of the approved caseload. As at December 1998, the Social Welfare Department had a network of 42 family services centres handling 36 828 cases by 558 social workers (66 cases per social worker) while NGOs operated 23 centres handling 12 852 cases by 174 social workers (74 cases per social worker). Counselling service is also provided by social workers in rehabilitation service units. As at December 1998, there were 765 social workers serving in rehabilitation service units over an establishment of 745 posts. An additional 167 social worker posts will be provided in rehabilitation service units by the end of 2002-03 under funded projects of the Social Welfare Department.
SPECIAL CHILD CARE WORKER

14.50 To qualify as special child care workers, the incumbents are required to complete approved courses organised by the Hong Kong Institute of Education (HKIEd) (formerly known as colleges of education), HKPU, Lee Wai Lee Technical Institute of the Vocational Training Council, or School of Continuing Education of the HKBU. In addition, there are other in-service training programmes co-ordinated by the Training Section of the Social Welfare Department to enable the child care workers to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge required in their work setting. Some courses are conducted by the Social Welfare Department while some are contracted out to academic bodies. There are also courses organised by NGOs.

14.51 In view of the special knowledge and skills required of special child care workers in performing their work, they have to attend a special training course in addition to the basic course for child care. An allowance equivalent to one salary increment is granted to workers attending the special training course while an allowance equivalent to two increments is granted to those who have satisfactorily completed the course with effect from September 1995. These arrangements help solve the recruitment and retention problems of special child care workers.

14.52 As at December 1998, there were 511.5 special child care workers working in subvented pre-school centres for disabled children over an establishment of 521.5 posts. An additional 50 special child care worker posts will be provided in these centres by 2002-03 under funded projects of the Social Welfare Department.

SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER

14.53 Teachers serving in special schools and special education classes are qualified teachers who have received basic teacher training either in the HKIEd or universities. They are also required to receive special education training at the HKIEd.

14.54 As recommended in the Education Commission Report No. 5, the 16-week block-release mode in-service course of training for teachers of children with special educational needs was replaced by a two-year programme for teachers of children with special educational needs in 1993. The programme consists of one-year full-time course study and one-year part-time research study. In addition, a one-year part-time retraining course for special education teachers commenced operation in September 1993 to provide teachers of children with special educational needs with a view to updating their professional knowledge and skills in special education.

14.55 The Education Department adopts the manning ratios as set out in Appendix 7.6 for the provision of special education teachers, including resource teachers who conduct resource teaching programmes for autistic children. As at December 1998, there were 1 389 special education teachers serving in special schools for disabled children (including 127 resource teachers) and 24 special education teachers serving in special education classes for visually impaired and hearing impaired children over the establishments of 1 437 and 24 respectively. The Education Department plans to establish an additional 78
special education teacher posts, including about two resource teacher posts, by the school year 2002/03 under funded projects.

SPEECH THERAPIST

14.56 A four-year degree programme in speech and hearing sciences has been provided by the HKU since September 1988 for the training of speech therapists (STs). In the light of a shortage of this category of rehabilitation personnel over the years, the annual intake of the programme was increased from 20 to 44 students in the school year 1997/98 and maintains 40 students from the school year 1998/99 onwards.

14.57 STs in the medical sector may work in the Department of Health for the assessment and treatment of children with speech and language disorders. They may also work in the Hospital Authority for maximising the communication and swallowing functions of patients in need through the provision of assessment, diagnosis and intervention services. As at December 1998, there were 10 STs in the Department of Health over an establishment of 10 posts and 45 STs in the Hospital Authority. Two and one additional ST posts will be provided in the Department of Health by 2002-03 and in the Hospital Authority by 2001-02 respectively under funded projects.

14.58 STs in the Education Department provide diagnostic assessment and remedial follow-up for pupils with communication problems as well as parent counselling and training. They also provide professional consultation for schools and conduct inspection visits to speech therapy personnel in special schools. The existing provision of ST for the assessment and remedial team is one ST per 100 cases per annum. Based on operational needs, the requirement of STs in the Education Department was 10 posts in the school year 1998/99. However, as at December 1998, there were only five STs working in the Education Department over an establishment of eight ST posts.

14.59 Since September 1996, special schools for the hearing impaired, visually impaired with mental handicap, physically handicapped and mentally handicapped have been provided with STs in their staff entitlement to replace the approved Teacher Assisting in Speech Therapy posts by phases. As at December 1998, there were 29 STs out of 56 approved posts serving in these special schools. An additional 61 ST posts will be provided by the school year 2002/03 under this staff improvement project.

14.60 In rehabilitation service units, only special child care centres (except for the two special child care centres for hearing impaired children) are subvented with STs by the Social Welfare Department at a manning ratio of one ST to one unit of 60 children. Children in early education and training centres and integrated child care centres requiring speech therapy may obtain such service from the Department of Health and the Hospital Authority. As at December 1998, there were 20 speech therapists working in special child care centres over an establishment of 21.5 ST posts. An additional 2.5 ST posts will be provided in these centres by 2002-03 under funded projects of the Social Welfare Department.

14.61 The Working Group on the Review of Speech Therapists in the Public Sector was set up in 1995 under the then Education and Manpower Branch to study the recruitment and retention problems of STs and to recommend remedial measures. Upon its request, an ad hoc working group chaired by the Commissioner for Rehabilitation was set up in 1996 to
examine and make recommendations on the manning ratios of STs for rehabilitation service units in the welfare sector and other related issues. The NGO representatives of the ad hoc working group and the Administration had different views on the proposed manning ratios of STs for various rehabilitation service units. The Administration’s proposal was subsequently endorsed by the Working Group under the Education and Manpower Bureau. The proposed manning ratios as set out in Appendix 7.7 will be implemented subject to the availability of resources and priority. In addition, the Working Group endorsed the creation of a new rank, Senior ST, in the public sector. The Administration will further examine this proposal in the light of the availability of resources and justifications.

**WELFARE WORKER AND PERSONAL CARE WORKER**

14.62 Welfare workers and personal care workers in rehabilitation service units are employed to perform tasks that do not require much social work input. Welfare workers assist trained social workers in serving people with disabilities in both residential and day settings, in particular in improving the clients’ daily living skills, providing care and training, and organizing social and recreational activities. Personal care workers provide direct assistance for people with disabilities to uphold their personal hygiene as well as to improve their ability in personal care in residential settings. Though there is no pre-service training for these two categories of rehabilitation personnel, the Social Welfare Department has organised a number of in-service training programmes for them.

14.63 As at December 1998, there were 1,152 welfare workers and 402.5 personal care workers providing rehabilitation services for people with disabilities. The staff establishment of them were 1,261.5 and 447 posts respectively. An additional 248.5 welfare worker posts and 190.5 personal care worker posts will be provided in rehabilitation service units by the end of 2002-03 under funded projects of the Social Welfare Department.

**WORKSHOP INSTRUCTOR**

14.64 Workshop instructors help develop and improve disabled workers’ skills through active participation in the planning, organisation and management of production activities in sheltered workshops or supported employment units. To qualify for the post, candidates are required to complete an apprenticeship or a course of study, or have five years’ relevant experience in an appropriate trade. In order to equip in-service workshop instructors with the necessary knowledge and skills to serve people with disabilities, a number of training programmes are organised annually by the Social Welfare Department and HKIEd. An allowance equivalent to two salary increments is granted to those workshop instructors who have successfully completed a two-year in-service training course organised by the HKIEd.

14.65 As at December 1998, there were 387.5 workshop instructors working in rehabilitation service units over an establishment of 468 workshop instructor posts. An additional 111 workshop instructor posts will be provided by the end of 2002-03 under funded projects of the Social Welfare Department.
SUPERVISORY SUPPORT FOR SUBVENTED REHABILITATION SERVICE UNITS

14.66 All rehabilitation service units have to design, monitor and develop training programmes to meet the special needs of people with disabilities. They also have to provide staff with up-to-date knowledge in skills and service delivery models, and to train them to be sensitive and receptive to the changing needs of their clients. In this regard, the provision of Social Work Officer posts in rehabilitation service units is considered necessary for carrying out supervisory duties.

14.67 To cover part of the demand, the Social Welfare Department has allocated resources to establish 25 Social Work Officer posts since 1993. As the provision was far from adequate to meet the actual demand according to the manning ratios at Appendix 7.8, the allocations to NGOs concerned were made on a pro-rata basis. Improvement to the establishment of supervisory posts will continue to be made subject to the availability of resources. Since 1998-99, provision of supervisory support for rehabilitation services have been built into the staffing establishment on a unit base in new projects under planning. The Social Welfare Department will consult NGOs in the rehabilitation field for a fair and equitable allocation of the resources available for supervisory support for both existing and new projects in due course.

JOB-RELATED TRAINING

14.68 Staff training is considered to be conducive to the continuous improvement of service quality. Through its Lady Trench Training Centre (LTTC), the Social Welfare Department provides and co-ordinates in-service training programmes for staff serving in rehabilitation setting in both NGOs and the Department. The aim of the training is to equip the staff with the necessary knowledge and skills required for serving people with disabilities and instil in them proper attitude towards their clients and work.

14.69 The training programmes arranged by the LTTC are designed basing on the views collected from front-line workers, the subject staff of the Social Welfare Department and HKCSS. Since the services for the people with disabilities involve different ranks of staff, training is provided to all the helping staff in rehabilitation services, including the professional and non-professional ones. According to the needs and background of the staff, a wide range of training programmes of different levels are provided by the LTTC including -

(a) orientation course for newly recruited staff of the Social Welfare Department;
(b) basic training courses for non-professional helping staff;
(c) induction courses for professional staff newly joined the rehabilitation services; and
(d) staff development programmes in areas of specific concern to enhance staff competence and to meet new service requirements.

From 1995-96 to 1997-98, the LTTC has provided 65 training programmes for 2 421 staff working in rehabilitation settings and 80 training programmes for 1 682 staff working in medical settings. In addition, the LTTC and CPSS Unit of the Social Welfare Department have provided regular training for rehabilitation personnel on the application of TEACCH
(Treatment and Education of Autistic and Related Communications Handicapped Children) strategies to autistic persons.

14.70 New teaching staff as well as specialist staff in special schools are provided with induction and orientation programmes which aim at enhancing their professional knowledge and teaching skills in meeting pupils’ special educational needs. Meanwhile, a wide range of in-service teacher training programmes, staff development programmes, seminars and workshops are organised for serving teachers and specialist staff. The aims are to help them keep abreast of new initiative in teaching and curriculum reform as well as to equip them with knowledge in special education so as to maintain a quality service for children with special educational needs.

14.71 Apart from training provided by tertiary institutions, the Vocational Training Council, Social Welfare Department and Education Department, training programmes are arranged by the Department of Health and Hospital Authority for their staff in the medical sector, and the HKCSS for staff in rehabilitation service units. Some NGOs also provide training programmes for personnel working with specific disability groups with funding support from charitable funds and their own resources. These programmes include -

(a) **Conductive Education Programme** - it aims to inspire local rehabilitation personnel from different disciplines to break through their professional boundaries to work collaboratively for their clients as “a whole person”. The programme has a strong emphasis on adopting a holistic approach for the rehabilitation of people with disabilities. Since the establishment of a training centre in 1994, over 100 courses have been organised for personnel working in pre-school, school, adult, elderly, medical as well as integrated settings;

(b) **TEACCH Programme** - it aims to promote the knowledge and application of the principle of a structured approach for the training of people with autistic disorders. Since the establishment of a demonstration unit in 1997, over 30 courses and workshops have been organised for parents and rehabilitation personnel in the medical, education and welfare sectors; and

(c) **Psychiatric Rehabilitation Programme** - it aims to provide training on mental health and psychiatric rehabilitation for rehabilitation personnel. Since the establishment of a training institute in 1997, a total of 30 courses and seminars have been held for 2 300 participants.

**ISSUES OF CONCERN**

14.72 There is a concern over the difficulty in recruiting registered psychiatric nurses in the welfare sector. NGOs are of the view that specific measures similar to the blister programme for enrolled nurse may help improve the manpower supply.

14.73 In view of the improving supply of prosthetists and orthotists, some NGOs proposed that the demand for and provision of prosthetic and orthotic services in the welfare, education and primary care sectors be re-assessed. The Review Committee noted that the current supply of prosthetists and orthotists would not be completely absorbed by the requirements of the Hospital Authority. The Review Committee is of the view that the Administration and relevant organisations need to examine the feasibility of developing the service in the private sector in the light of the demand in the community.
The NGO sector requested for a pre-service training programme, or a more specific and intensive in-service training programme, for welfare workers so as to help them adapt to the working environment in rehabilitation service units and to help release the supervisory burden of the officers-in-charge of centres. In view of the rapid expansion in welfare service provision and strategic development in new welfare services, the Social Welfare Department will conduct a review on the training strategies including the need for specialised training and staff development programmes for different types of staff in different service settings.