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A FREER HAND,
BETTER SERVICE

New aid code for welfare agencies

VOLUNTARY organisations offering services for the rehabilitation of the disabled might receive subsidies on a new code of aid similar to the one for aided schools.

This will give voluntary organisations a free hand in developing and offering better services, the Chairman for the Rehabilitation Development Co-ordinating Committee (RDCC), Dr Harry Fang, said.

At present the Government subsidises a portion of the current expenses of voluntary organisations offering any kind of social welfare services and these subsidies are subjected to annual revision.

Voluntary organisations will have to raise sufficient funds to cover the amount not provided by the Government and this could be a difficult task at times.

More difficulties will be added to voluntary organisations when the Government raises the salaries of civil servants.

"Take for instance the 7½ per cent salary adjustment in the Civil Services this year," Dr Fang said.

"The Government will increase the subsidy for voluntary organisations, but only in proportion to the existing subsidy," he said.

Social workers in voluntary organisations will not get the full 7½ per cent increase unless their employers raise sufficient additional funds.

"That would affect the work of both voluntary organisations and social workers," Dr Fang said.

The development of social services would be enhanced if the salaries of social workers were subsidised by the Government on the same principles as that for teachers in aided schools, Dr Fang said.

The RDCC will also ask the Government to clarify and standardise the principles of subsidy to rehabilitation services in the voluntary sector as stated in the committee's terms of reference.

"Voluntary organisations can concentrate on their services when they know they can rely on the Government for a fixed portion of their recurrent expenses," Dr Fang said.

"I think the Government should subsidise voluntary organisations, which offer up to standard social services not provided by the Government, on deficiency grounds," he said.

At a press conference yesterday, Dr Fang said the main objective of the RDCC is to realise the objectives and plans laid out in the White Paper - integrating the Disabled into the Community: A United Effort - in the shortest possible time.

The RDCC has planned on forming seven subcommittees staffed with specialists in the rehabilitation field to map out and review the challenges before the committee.

Disabled people will be invited to participate in these specialist subcommittees, Dr Fang said.

"They will provide practical down-to-earth advice on where our services need improvement and will also be able to provide and comment on possible solutions," he said.

The seven subcommittees are: personnel, transport and access; employment; education; housing; sport and recreation; and publicity.