

Report No. 42 of the Director of Audit — Chapter 9

TRAINING, EMPLOYMENT AND RESIDENTIAL SERVICES FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Summary

1. The Social Welfare Department (SWD) provides/subsidises training, employment and residential services for people with disabilities in order to acknowledge the equal rights of people with disabilities to be full members of the community. In 2002-03, the SWD spent \$1,705 million for this purpose. Of this expenditure, \$108 million was directly spent by the SWD and \$1,597 million was through subventions to non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

Provision of training, employment and residential services

2. *Costs of services.* The Audit Commission (Audit) notes that, in 2002-03, the average unit costs of training, employment and residential services provided by the SWD exceeded those of NGOs by 7% to 57%. Audit estimates that, if all such services provided by the SWD were outsourced to NGOs, there would be a resultant annual saving of \$12.6 million. The SWD has taken action to transfer six of its ten service units to NGOs by April 2004. *Audit has recommended that the Director of Social Welfare should consider outsourcing the operation of the SWD's remaining service units to NGOs.*

3. *Waiting time for services.* Audit notes that there were disparities in the average waiting time for allocation of different services for people with disabilities. For example, as at 31 March 2003, the average waiting time for admission to a long-stay care home was 102 months, while that for admission to a halfway house was only 6 months. *Audit has recommended that, when new resources are available, the Director of Social Welfare should consider allocating more resources to those services with long waiting time, such as the long-stay care home service.*

Staff training and staff safety

4. *Staff training.* Audit survey revealed that, in 2002-03, there were disparities in the average number of hours of job-related training received by each staff member of different service units. In that year, on average, while each staff member of a service unit received 52 hours of job-related training, each staff member of another service unit received only 3 hours of such training. *Audit has recommended that the Director of Social Welfare should arrange more job-related training for staff working in service units.*

5. **Staff safety.** Audit survey revealed that, from January 2000 to September 2003, there were variations among the number of days of sick leave granted by different service units to each staff member due to injuries during work. The staff of 16 respondent service units did not take any sick leave due to injuries during work. However, staff of two service units were each granted, on average, sick leave ranging from 8.3 days to 24.3 days in a year, as a result of injuries during work. *Audit has recommended that the Director of Social Welfare should ensure that service units provide their staff with a safe working environment.*

Medical services and assistance from parents and volunteers

6. **Provision of medical services for service users.** Audit survey revealed that the staff of respondent service units spent a large amount of time in accompanying their service users to attend clinics. Audit notes that a respondent service unit has implemented an arrangement with two private general practitioners who pay regular visits to it to provide general medical services for its service users. *Audit has recommended that the Director of Social Welfare should consider launching a private general-practitioner scheme to enhance the provision of medical services for service users at service units.*

7. **Assistance from parents of service users.** Audit survey revealed that the parents of service users of those service units with parents associations performed more voluntary work for the service units than the parents of service users of service units without parents associations. *Audit has recommended that the Director of Social Welfare should encourage service units to establish a parents association.*

8. **Assistance from volunteers.** Audit survey revealed significant disparities in the amount of voluntary work performed by volunteers in respondent service units. Audit survey also revealed that service units mostly obtained volunteer services through their own efforts. *Audit has recommended that the Director of Social Welfare should establish more volunteer networks among schools and in the community to help enlist volunteers to provide services for service units.*

Services provided at sheltered workshops and supported-employment units

9. **The Marketing Consultancy Office.** In 2002-03, the SWD spent \$4.6 million on its Marketing Consultancy Office (MCO) which successfully secured \$5.7 million (12%) of the total \$49 million of job orders obtained for sheltered workshops, and found 76 (13%) of the total 565 job placements obtained for service users of supported-employment units. *Audit has recommended that the Director of Social Welfare should review the cost-effectiveness of the MCO and, based on the results of the review, consider whether it is still justified to retain the MCO.*

10. ***Job opportunities provided by government departments.*** Audit survey revealed that, in 2002-03, government departments provided only 6% of the total job opportunities for service users of sheltered workshops and supported-employment units. *Audit has recommended that the Director of Social Welfare should request government departments to provide more job opportunities for people with disabilities working in sheltered workshops or supported-employment units.*

Monitoring the provision of services

11. ***Self-assessments by service operators.*** Each service operator providing services through its various service units submits one single return to the SWD every year to confirm that they have conducted self-assessments and met the requirements and standards laid down by the SWD. This arrangement does not give service operators the opportunity to report different levels of their attainment of the SWD's requirements and standards. *Audit has recommended that the Director of Social Welfare should require service operators to indicate different levels of attainment of the essential service requirements and service quality standards in their self-assessment reports to the SWD.*

12. ***On-site assessments.*** In one of the SWD's on-site assessments conducted in 2003-04, SWD staff found that a sheltered workshop had previously submitted incorrect performance information to the SWD. Audit notes that, apart from requesting this sheltered workshop to submit an action plan for improvement, the SWD did not verify other performance information previously submitted by it. *Audit has recommended that the Director of Social Welfare should verify the performance information previously provided by those service units which were found to have submitted incorrect performance information to the SWD, and take stringent action against them.*

13. ***Involvement of external personnel.*** Since mid-2003, the SWD has implemented a pilot project to invite District Council members and other prominent local people to make half-yearly visits to some residential care homes for the elderly. These external personnel collect views from residents, relatives and staff during their visits and make recommendations on the homes' facilities and services. *Audit has recommended that the Director of Social Welfare should consider inviting District Council members and other prominent local people to visit regularly service units providing services for people with disabilities.*

Response from the Administration

14. The Administration has accepted the audit recommendations.

April 2004