

Embracing
Opportunities in an
Ageing
Society



6.1 By 2041, nearly one in every three people in Hong Kong will be aged 65 or above. Are we as prepared as we think for our ageing society of the future?

6.2 An ageing population creates greater demands on social security, healthcare and elderly services. **The SCPP considers that while the community should waste no time to address these challenges, we should also get prepared for the opportunities that come with an ageing society.** Future generations of elderly people will be healthier and more energetic. They will be better connected to society, better educated, more individualised in lifestyle and more independent in planning and taking care of their needs. These factors will open up new economic and social opportunities for this group as well as for the community as a whole.

Box 6.1
What is Active Ageing?

Active ageing is the process of optimising opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age.

- World Health Organization



Active Ageing and Age-friendly Environment

6.3 Maintaining an active and productive life is important for elderly people to stay fit both physically and psychologically. There are many facets of active ageing. Some elderly persons may still prefer to work, albeit not on a full-time basis. And retired elderly people provide a ready pool of volunteers to serve other needy groups in the community. Undertaking volunteer service provides them flexibility in time commitment and makes good use of their wealth of experience, knowledge and expertise.

6.4 An age-friendly environment encourages active ageing by enabling elderly people of various capacities to stay healthy, active and independent. Over the years, the Government has taken various initiatives to encourage active ageing, for example, the establishment of elder academies to promote lifelong learning among elderly people, the Public Transport Fare Concession Scheme for the Elderly and Eligible Persons with Disabilities which greatly enhances the mobility of elderly people, and the improvement to physical accessibility to buildings and public facilities. But building an age-friendly environment takes more than the above and requires the efforts of more than the Government. ***The SCPP would like to seek the views of the public, particularly from the elderly people, on what areas of improvement are needed and how different sectors of the community can contribute to building an age-friendly environment.***

Box 6.2 Government initiatives to promote active ageing

Elder Academy (EA) Scheme

Launched by the Elderly Commission and the Labour and Welfare Bureau in 2007, the EA Scheme has been offering a wide range of courses to encourage elderly people to pursue lifelong learning. At present, there are altogether 106 EAs in primary, secondary and tertiary institutions throughout the territory.

Neighbourhood Active-Ageing Project (NAAP)

Launched in 2008, NAAP promotes active ageing, develops community support networks and encourages elderly people to serve the community as volunteers. A total of 75 district projects were carried out across the territory between 2008 and 2011, engaging more than 200 000 elderly persons and their family members. The new phase NAAP was launched in early 2012 and a total of 69 district projects are being carried out until 2014.

Public Transport Fare Concession Scheme for the Elderly and Eligible Persons with Disabilities

The Scheme enables elderly people and eligible persons with disabilities to travel on the general Mass Transit Railway (MTR) lines, franchised buses and ferries at a concessionary fare of \$2 per trip. The estimated government expenditure of the Scheme is around \$600 million in 2013-14. The daily average passenger trips using MTR, buses and ferries by elderly people under the Scheme is around 580 000.

Improvement Programme of Elderly Centres (IPEC) cum Jockey Club Elderly Facilities Modernisation Scheme (JCEFMS)

Starting from 2012, 237 elderly centres would be modernised with improved physical setting and facilities in phases with combined funding of \$900 million from the Lotteries Fund and \$110 million from the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust. IPEC cum JCEFMS will enable some 200 000 users of the elderly centres to engage more fully in community life.

Universal Accessibility Programme

The new policy on “Universal Accessibility” announced in August 2012 aims at further enhancing the accessibility of existing public walkways to help our elderly and other people in need to move around with greater ease. Different from previous retrofitting programmes which accorded priority to ramps, we will install both lifts and ramps at existing public walkways unless site constraints dictate one form over the other. After consulting the District Councils in the first quarter of 2013, the Government is conducting preliminary technical feasibility studies for priority projects identified in each district.



Silver Hair Market

6.5 Future generations of elderly people will be fitter, better educated and better informed than any previous generations. Businesses and entrepreneurs whose key customers are currently the middle-aged population should get prepared as their consumers grow older. They should make early plans to ensure that their products, services and marketing strategies can cater for the needs of the future markets. The so-called “silver hair market” will present plenty of business opportunities, for example, in financial services (such as health or medical insurance), tourism, care services, medical services, fitness and grooming, health food products, and housing. We need to examine what it takes for business and the economy to take advantage of these opportunities.

Retiring on the Mainland

6.6 At present, the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) for elderly aged 60 or above is portable to Guangdong and Fujian provinces under the Portable CSSA Scheme¹. The Government introduced the “Guangdong Scheme” in October 2013 to allow eligible elderly people who choose to reside in Guangdong to receive the Old Age Allowance without the need to come back to Hong Kong. Both schemes provide solely cash payments and seek to facilitate and better support elderly people who choose to retire on the Mainland.

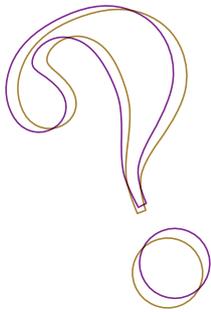
6.7 Indeed, some of our elderly people are attracted to retire in Guangdong because of its proximity to Hong Kong and the more spacious living environment. This opens up an opportunity for greater co-operation between Hong Kong and Guangdong to help our elderly opt for retirement in the province.

6.8 *The SCPP considers that facilitating our elderly people to retire on the Mainland and particularly in Guangdong is a complex issue but, nonetheless, worthy of exploration.* Several factors are at play. For example, the availability of affordable and quality healthcare is a very important consideration for those elderly people who wish to retire on the Mainland. Some elderly people may need various levels of long-term care services while residing in Guangdong. Friends and family ties are also of great concern to the elderly people. We should study the merits, feasibility, and financial implications of any support measures. Any new measure would be useless if it is not what users want. Hence, we need to tap the views of elderly people on how best to meet their needs and aspirations.

¹ To be eligible for the Portable CSSA (PCSSA) Scheme, an elderly person must be a Hong Kong permanent resident and have lived in Hong Kong for at least seven years; be aged 60 or above; and have received CSSA continuously for at least one year immediately before the date of the application for PCSSA. Breaks in payment totalling not more than 10 days during the one-year period are allowed.



Your views sought



Active Ageing and Age-friendly Environment

- What are the key areas we need to improve to build an age-friendly city that can help elderly people to stay active in the community?
- How can we encourage and facilitate elderly people to undertake volunteer service?

Silver Hair Market

- What sort of products and services tailored for elderly people would you like to see in the market? How can the Government facilitate the development of the silver hair market?

Retiring on the Mainland

- What support measures are needed to facilitate elderly people to retire on the Mainland, particularly in Guangdong?

Links for further information

World Health Organization – Ageing
www.who.int/topics/ageing/en/

Elderly Commission
www.elderlycommission.gov.hk/

Public Transport Fare Concession Scheme for the Elderly and Eligible Persons with Disabilities
www.lwb.gov.hk/fare_concession/index_e.html

Elder Academy
www.elderacademy.org.hk/

Design Manual - Barrier Free Access 2008
www.bd.gov.hk/english/documents/code/e_bfa2008.htm

Portable Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (PCSSA) Scheme
www.swd.gov.hk/en/index/site_pubsvc/page_socsecu/sub_portableco/

Guangdong Scheme
www.swd.gov.hk/gds/index_e.html