

File ref. : SWD 38/452/96

12 April 2002

The Hon Fred Li Wah-ming, JP
The Legislative Council
Rm 401, West Wing
Central Government Offices
Hong Kong

**Vulnerable Elders residing in old private tenements
in Sham Shui Po**

At the meeting of the Legislative Council Panel on Welfare Services held on 8 April, in discussing the review on Integrated Neighbourhood Programmes (INP), you commented that in old districts predominated by private housing such as Sham Shui Po, INP played an important role because the vulnerable groups they served were not readily covered by other support and outreaching networks such as the Support Teams for the Elderly (STE). I undertook to revert to you on this point.

STEs are outreaching teams attached to multi-services centres for the elderly (M/Es) with the responsibility to reach out and network vulnerable elders who are usually elderly singleton or elderly couples, irrespective of whether they are living in public or private housing. Through regular home visits and telephone contacts by STE staff and volunteers, elderly people networked are given information on community resources suited to their needs. With the support of the M/Es, services including emotional support, escort service, assistance in home-making and referral to formal services are also rendered. STEs

also promote volunteerism among elderly people as well as recruit, assess and train volunteers of all ages to serve elderly people. Over 50,000 vulnerable elders have been networked through these STEs.

In Sham Shui Po, there are three STEs attached to the NAAC Pak Tin Multi-Service Centre for the Elderly, the Sik Sik Yuen Multi-Service Centre for Senior Citizens and the Caritas Hong Kong – Caritas Social Centre for the Elderly. They are serving vulnerable elders in the whole district, including those living in old private tenements. As at end February 2002, 3,639 vulnerable elders (about 5.1% of all people aged 60 or over in Sham Shui Po¹) are networked through these STEs and are receiving the above-mentioned support. Over the past year, an average of 65 vulnerable elders were registered each month.

By comparison, there are currently three INPs operated by NAAC, Caritas and Salvation Army each serving one District Council constituency area of Nam Cheong North, East and Central. Incidentally, you will note that two of these INPs are actually operated by the same agencies operating the above-mentioned STEs. From the statistics provided by the INPs, among the vulnerable individuals contacted by them, about 24% were elders. Based on latest figures available for the period April to December 2001, the three INPs together had reached a total of 589 elders, or an average of 65 per month. For the two preceding years of 1999-2000 and 2000-01, the respective monthly average figures are 82 and 78. Apparently, the number of elders served by INPs is decreasing over the years.

In Sham Shui Po District, vulnerable elders have been identified as target groups deserving priority of attention under the Department's new initiatives. For example, in the areas currently served by the three INPs, there are a total of around 1,600 Comprehensive Social Security Assistance cases involving elders. The newly set up Sham Shui Po Family Support Networking Team will provide outreaching, support and counseling services to this target group. Follow-up services as needed will be provided by SWD service units, including social security field

¹¹ According to the 2001 Census, the number of residents in Sham Shui Po aged 60 or over was 71,267.

units, family services centres, family support and resource centres, as well as the newly formed pilot project of the Cheung Sha Wan Integrated Family Services Centre.

Elderly clients aside, similar support services are available to other potentially vulnerable groups in Sham Shui Po such as single parent and new arrival families. The International Social Service – Hong Kong Branch is providing a first point of contact with the new arrivals in the district through its post-migration services. One of the five single parent centres, namely, the Hong Kong Single Parents Association West Kowloon Single Parent Centre is located in Tai Hang Tung Estate, Sham Shui Po. The Centre provides comprehensive services including outreaching services to single parent families to meet their welfare needs.

The above is meant for clarification on the present position. We will await the findings and recommendations of the INP review to see how best to take the matter forward, achieving the objective of delivering accessible, quality and cost-effective welfare services.

I enclose a latest issue of our STE Newsletter and a volunteers newsletter of the Sik Sik Yuen STE for your reference.

(Mrs Carrie LAM)
Director of Social Welfare

c.c. SHA) w/o encl.
Clerk to LegCo Panel on Welfare Services)