

**For Discussion
On 10 January 2005**

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL PANEL ON WELFARE SERVICES

Support and Assistance for Tetraplegic Patients Living in the Community

PURPOSE

The purpose of this paper is to update Members on the development in providing assistance and support to tetraplegic patients living in the community and their families.

BACKGROUND

2. The subject was discussed by the Panel on two occasions on 10 May 2004 and 19 July 2004. This paper updates Members on the latest progress of enhanced services provided to tetraplegic patients in addition to those already mentioned in Paper No. CB(2)3078/03-04(03).

CARE AND ATTENTION ALLOWANCE

3. From July 2004, we have adopted a more flexible approach in granting the Care & Attention Allowance to tetraplegic patients whereby a sum of \$4,296 per month (or more in exceptional cases) can be paid under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme to cover the expenditure required to hire a carer for taking care of the tetraplegic patient at home. In addition to the monthly allowance, SWD would also consider discretionary grant to cover other one-off expenses related to the hire of helper (including insurance, agent fee, air ticket, government tariff and long service award). As at 15 December 2004, 32 applications were received: 12 had already hired a carer using the allowance, 14 cases were granted approval-in-principle to hire a carer, the remaining 6 were under processing.

4. With effect from 1 November 2004, an Enhanced Care and Attention Allowance (Enhanced C & A Allowance) was introduced to tetraplegic patients who have fully met the eligibility requirements for receiving the C & A Allowance under the CSSA Scheme. The Enhanced C & A Allowance included a monthly special addition of \$1,115 which was meant to meet additional out-goings required by the tetraplegic patients.

YAN CHAI TETRAPLEGIC FUND

5. The Yan Chai Hospital Board has established a charitable fund named “Yan Chai Tetraplegic Fund” in September 2004 to provide financial assistance to tetraplegic patients for supporting their living in the community and improving their quality of living. The coverage of the grant includes essential expenses for the purchase of medical/rehabilitation appliances and repair service for these items; the essential expenses on home modifications; temporary grants for the tetraplegic patients in coping with special needs (e.g. personal helper, occasional care, medical consumable items, escort service, personal care items etc.); and other special grants which the Fund Committee considers appropriate in supporting the community living of tetraplegic patients. By now, the Fund has received over \$8,000,000 donations.

6. Up to 30.11.2004, the Fund has received 40 applications. At the first Vetting Committee meeting on 2.12.2004, 13 cases were approved and about \$570,000 was granted.

OTHER FUNDS

7. Tetraplegic patients may also apply to relevant charitable funds through medical social workers, patients’ mutual help groups or voluntary organizations for subsidy to buy medical supplies and other necessities. The S K Yee Medical Foundation has granted a total of \$1,000,000 under the S K Yee Fund for the Disabled to the Hong Kong Neuro-Muscular Disease Association in 2003 and 2004 to provide financial support for about 20 paralysed persons to purchase medical consumables and rehabilitation appliances.

8. Recipients of Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme may

apply for special grants under the Scheme to cover the expenses the medical consumables and rehabilitation appliances.

ALLOCATION OF PUBLIC HOUSING UNIT

9. To address the housing need of the tetraplegic patients who wished to live and integrate into the community, the Housing Department agreed to give special consideration to Compassionate Rehousing (CR) application of tetraplegic patients on their needs for extra space for accommodating the carers and rehabilitation equipment. With the joint effort of medical and allied health team of Kowloon Hospital, a specification on the housing provision, including minimum size, suitability for home modification, accessibility as well as availability of suitable commercial and communal facilities has been worked out to facilitate the Housing Department to identify suitable flats for allocation to tetraplegic patients.

10. 5 cases of CR application has been submitted to the Housing Department as at 15.12.2004. Two of the patients have been allocated public housing unit and are waiting for home modification while 3 are pending offer of housing unit.

OTHER SUPPORT MEASURES

11. As regards other support measures, SWD will continue to offer counselling and support services to tetraplegic patients and their families, connecting them to the new service provision, assisting them to achieve their rehabilitation plan through collaborating with the multi-disciplinary team in hospital, as well as to realize their plan of reintegrating into the community with the enhanced financial and community support services. Currently, Medical Social Workers are helping 54 tetraplegic cases for return to community living.

INTEGRATED HOME CARE SERVICES

12.. We also provide intensive occupational therapy service to the severely disabled persons through the Home-based Training and Support Service. Since mid August 2004, the Integrated Home Care Services (Frail cases) is also extended to the severely disabled persons to provide holistic care and support services to these persons according to their individual needs, ranging from meals, home-making,

escort to personal care and nursing care. Up to end of November 2004, there are 7 tetraplegic patients receiving the services.

ADVICE SOUGHT

13. Members are invited to note the above measures in helping tetraplegic patients to live in the community.

Social Welfare Department
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