

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
PANEL ON WELFARE SERVICES**

Follow-up to meeting on 8 February 2010

“Allowance for home carers of persons with disabilities”

At the meeting of the Legislative Council Panel on Welfare Services on 8 February 2010, a motion was carried. The wording of the motion is as follows – “That this Panel urges the Administration to launch immediately an ‘allowance for home carers of persons with disabilities (PWDs)’ so as to provide an additional option to PWDs waiting for residential care home places.” This paper provides the Administration’s response to the above motion.

Financial assistance for home carers of PWDs

2. Cherishing the family is one of the core values of the Hong Kong society. Hence, the Government has all along been promoting mutual support among family members. We also value greatly the contribution made by home carers to their family members. In this regard, the Government provides a wide range of community care and support services for home carers with a view to helping them discharge their family responsibilities and alleviating their stress.

3. To cater for the special needs of PWDs, we are committed to providing them with suitable support services, and enabling them to cope with and resolve problems encountered in their daily life. With regard to financial assistance, PWDs may approach the Social Welfare Department (SWD) and apply for the non-means-tested Disability Allowance so as to meet their special needs arising from severe disabilities.

4. For PWDs with financial difficulties, they can meet their basic needs with the financial assistance provided under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme. At present, the CSSA Scheme provides higher standard rates for PWDs together with a range of supplements and special grants. These include “Grant to cover fees for Home Help Service/Integrated Home Care Service”, “Grant to cover costs of Enhanced Home and Community Care Services” and “Grant to cover costs of Community-based Support Projects for People with Disabilities and Their Families” which are granted for those requiring special caring needs. For those medically certified to be in need of constant attendance, a “Care and Attention Allowance” may also be

provided to cover the costs of care and attention services at home (including the cost of hiring a carer) on social worker's recommendation.

Enhancing support for home carers

5. The Government recognises the need to provide suitable support for the families and home carers of PWDs. In this regard, we have since January 2009 set up 16 district support centres for PWDs through re-engineering the community support services in order to provide one-stop service for strengthening the support for PWDs residing in the community and their family members. Along the same direction and following the setting up of the first Integrated Community Centre for Mental Wellness (ICCMW) in Tin Shui Wai in March 2009, the Government will provide additional recurrent funding of \$70 million each year for expanding the ICCMW across the territory to provide district-based, one-stop and integrated community support services for persons with mental health problems and their family carers.

6. Furthermore, the Government has proposed to earmark \$163 million under the Lotteries Fund to implement a three-year pilot scheme for provision of home-based care services for around 540 persons with severe disabilities living in Kwun Tong and Tuen Mun and are on the waiting lists for subvented residential care services. The pilot scheme will provide home-based support service including personal care and escort service, occupational therapist/physiotherapist rehabilitation training service and nursing care service to the service users. SWD will discuss with non-governmental organisations concerned in order to formulate the implementation details.

7. The various types of support services provided by the Government to home carers aim at helping them discharge their family responsibilities and alleviating their stress, rather than substituting family functions. We believe that our existing support services can reflect social values and, compared to the provision of subsidies, can better meet social circumstances and needs. We will keep a close watch on the needs of PWDs and their carers and continue to provide them with diversified community support services with a view to helping PWDs integrate into society.