

**For information on
9 July 2018**

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
PANEL ON WELFARE SERVICES**

Review of Policies and Welfare Support for Carers

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on various support services provided by the Government for carers of elderly persons and persons with disabilities, and sets out the arrangement for the extension of the Pilot Scheme on Living Allowance for Carers of Elderly Persons from Low Income Families and the Pilot Scheme on Living Allowance for Low-income Carers of Persons with Disabilities.

Background

2. The Government's elderly policy accords priority to the provision of home care and community care, supplemented by residential care. This is also the wish of most elderly persons. To enable elderly persons to age in a familiar environment, the Government has all along been providing various types of support and care services at the community level, as well as enhancing carers' capability to take care of the elderly and relieving their stress through a series of support services, thereby facilitating elderly persons to age in place.

3. The Government is also committed to providing support for carers of persons with disabilities. Through a wide range of community care and support services, we can assist persons with disabilities in developing their physical, mental and social capabilities to the fullest possible extent, thereby promoting their integration into the community; and strengthen the carers' caring capacity and relieve their burden, with a view to enhancing the quality of life for persons with disabilities and their carers.

4. Apart from general support services, the Government has, through the Community Care Fund (CCF) under the Commission on Poverty (CoP), launched the Pilot Scheme on Living Allowance for Carers of Elderly Persons from Low Income Families and the Pilot Scheme on Living Allowance for Low-income Carers of Persons with Disabilities in

June 2014 and October 2016 respectively. These schemes provide carers of elderly persons or persons with disabilities from low income families with a living allowance to help supplement their living expenses. The two pilot schemes were originally scheduled to close in September 2018, but CoP endorsed on 21 June 2018 the implementation of the Pilot Scheme on Living Allowance for Carers of Elderly Persons from Low Income Families Phase III and the Pilot Scheme on Living Allowance for Low-income Carers of Persons with Disabilities Phase II for a period of two years from October 2018 to September 2020. The details are set out in paragraphs 5 to 12 below.

Extension of the Pilot Scheme on Living Allowance for Carers of Elderly Persons from Low Income Families and the Pilot Scheme on Living Allowance for Low-income Carers of Persons with Disabilities

Implementation of the Two Pilot Schemes

5. The Government launched the Pilot Scheme on Living Allowance for Carers of Elderly Persons from Low Income Families in June 2014, as well as the Pilot Scheme on Living Allowance for Carers of Elderly Persons from Low Income Families Phase II and the Pilot Scheme on Living Allowance for Low-income Carers of Persons with Disabilities in October 2016, each for a period of two years. The two pilot schemes aim to provide carers of elderly persons or persons with disabilities from low income families with a living allowance to help supplement their living expenses so that elderly persons or persons with disabilities with long-term care needs may, with their carers' assistance, receive more proper care and continue to live in a familiar community.

6. The two pilot schemes currently provide each eligible¹ carer of elderly persons or persons with disabilities with a living allowance of \$2,000 per month. If the carer takes care of more than one elderly person or person with disabilities at the same time, the maximum amount of the monthly living allowance is \$4,000. The quota of beneficiaries for carers of elderly persons under the two phases of the Pilot Scheme on Living Allowance for Carers of Elderly Persons from Low Income Families is 4 000. As at end-March 2018, a total of 3 964 eligible carers of elderly persons had received the allowance under the two phases of the pilot scheme. As regards the Pilot Scheme on Living Allowance for Low-income Carers of Persons with Disabilities, the quota of beneficiaries for carers of persons with disabilities is 2 000. As at

¹ Please refer to [Annex 1](#) and [Annex 2](#) for the respective eligibility criteria of the two pilot schemes.

end-March 2018, 1 519 eligible carers of persons with disabilities had received the allowance under the pilot scheme.

7. The Social Welfare Department (SWD) has authorised 43 non-governmental organisations (NGOs) operating District Elderly Community Centres (DECCs) and/or Neighbourhood Elderly Centres (NECs) (a total of 143 service units) as approved service providers (ASPs) under the Pilot Scheme on Living Allowance for Carers of Elderly Persons from Low Income Families Phase II. Separately, SWD has authorised 24 NGOs operating District Support Centres for Persons with Disabilities (DSCs), Parents/ Relatives Resource Centre (PRCs) or Integrated Community Centre for Mental Wellness (ICCMW) (a total of 46 service units) as ASPs under the Pilot Scheme on Living Allowance for Low-income Carers of Persons with Disabilities. These service providers located in all districts throughout the territory provide eligible carers, and the elderly persons and persons with disabilities being taken care of with the necessary support and follow-up services, including referral/arrangement of training, home visits to follow up on the caregiving situation, emotional counselling to carers when necessary, etc. While their carers are receiving the allowance, the elderly persons and persons with disabilities being taken care of can continue to wait for long-term care or residential services, or use subsidised community care services.

8. SWD has commissioned the Sau Po Centre on Ageing (CoA) of the University of Hong Kong to evaluate the two pilot schemes concurrently, with a view to assisting the Government in mapping the way forward for both pilot schemes. Preliminary findings of the evaluation show that the carers participating in the pilot schemes generally regarded the Government's granting of living allowance for carers of elderly persons or persons with disabilities is a recognition of their contribution. At the same time, it also helped improve the quality of life of the elderly persons and persons with disabilities being taken care of, and relieved the carers' stress from caregiving.

Arrangement for the Extension of the Two Pilot Schemes

9. CoA's evaluation on the two pilot schemes is ongoing, and the Government will need time to carry out detailed analysis and consideration upon completion of the evaluation to formulate a long-term development plan and direction. On 21 June 2018, CoP endorsed the extension of the Pilot Scheme on Living Allowance for Carers of Elderly Persons from Low Income Families and the Pilot Scheme on Living

Allowance for Low-income Carers of Persons with Disabilities for a period of two years from October 2018 to September 2020.

10. The implementation of the new phases of the two pilot schemes will generally follow the existing operating modes², with three improvement measures having regard to the operation of the current phases and various stakeholders' views towards the pilot schemes -

- (i) **Number of beneficiaries**: Increase the quota for carers of elderly persons by 2 000 and that for carers of persons with disabilities by 500, bringing the quota of the two pilot schemes to 6 000 and 2 500 respectively, so as to benefit more eligible carers of elderly persons or persons with disabilities;
- (ii) **Amount of allowance**: The amount of allowance disbursed to each eligible carer will be increased from the current \$2,000 to \$2,400 per month. If the carers have to take care of more than elderly person or person with disabilities at the same time, the amount of allowance disbursed will be increased from the current \$4,000 to \$4,800 per month³; and
- (iii) **Service fee for ASPs**: The service fee for ASPs will be increased. The service fee for serving each carer in the first six months will be increased from the current \$500 to \$600 per month, while the service fee for serving each carer from the 7th month onwards will be increased from the current \$300 to \$360 per month.⁴

11. SWD will invite applications for the allowance under the new phases of the two pilot schemes in batches starting from August 2018. SWD will also confirm with all the ASPs currently participating in the two pilot schemes whether they will continue to provide services, and invite eligible service units that have not yet participated in the pilot schemes to become ASPs.

² The eligibility criteria of the new phases of the two pilot schemes will generally be the same as the existing ones (refer to **Annex 1** and **Annex 2**). In addition, SWD will follow the existing arrangement to disburse the allowance to carers of elderly persons/persons with disabilities every month; while the arrangement of disbursing the service fee to ASPs every quarter will also remain unchanged.

³ According to the adjustment of the Median Monthly Domestic Household Income (MMDHI) published in the Report on General Household Survey in the past four years, the rate of increase of the amount of allowance is 20%.

⁴ The service fee for ASPs is similarly increased by 20% according the adjustment of the MMDHI published in the Report on General Household Survey in the past four years.

Way Forward

12. SWD will invite CoA to submit the evaluation report on the two pilot schemes in the third quarter of 2018, so as to assist the Government in considering the future direction. The Government will report to the Legislative Council Panel on Welfare Services on the outcome of the evaluation in a timely manner.

Other Support Services for Carers of Elderly Persons

13. Carers play an important role in caring for the elderly. At present, the Government provides a series of support services for carers of elderly persons through 210 subvented DECCs/NECs, 94 home care services teams and 76 Day Care Centres/Units for the Elderly (DEs/DCUs) throughout the territory. These services include provision of information, training and counselling, assistance in forming mutual aid groups, and demonstration and loan of rehabilitation equipment, etc. To relieve carers' stress and allow them to take a short break or attend to personal affairs when necessary, the Government also provides residential and day respite services through residential care homes for the elderly and DEs/DCUs. SWD will continue to designate additional respite service places in newly established elderly service facilities. Under the Pilot Scheme on Community Care Service Voucher for the Elderly, elderly persons may also use the monthly voucher values to purchase residential respite services if necessary.

14. In addition, all the subvented elderly centres are currently providing outreach service for hidden and vulnerable elderly persons and their carers in the community. In the course of service provision, the social workers of each elderly centre will seek to understand the support network of the elderly persons and their families (e.g. whether the elderly persons are living with their family, or whether there is sufficient support from relatives or neighbours), so as to provide them with suitable services. To ensure that needy carers receive appropriate support, the Government will allocate additional resources to all subvented elderly centres and home care services teams in the territory in 2018-19 to enhance outreaching services for supporting needy carers living in the community who are looking after frail elderly persons, including carers with disabilities or aged carers. The additional resources will enable elderly centres and home care services teams to make use of various outreach services and community networks to identify hidden and needy elderly persons in the community more effectively, for example by liaising with different neighbourhoods and mobilising members of the community. The home

care services teams will also proactively reach out to needy carers and offer them the necessary support services, such as temporary elder-sitting, so as to relieve their pressure.

Other Support Services for Carers of Persons with Disabilities

15. SWD also strives to provide an array of subsidised community care services for persons with disabilities or ex-mentally ill persons and their carers, including DSCs, PRCs, ICCMWs, Home Care Service for Persons with Severe Disabilities, Integrated Support Service for Persons with Severe Physical Disabilities, as well as day and residential respite services, etc. These services cover emotional support, personal and nursing care, rehabilitation training, day care, carer support, home respite service, escort service, cash subsidies for renting respiratory support medical equipment and purchasing medical consumables, etc. To support needy low-income carers of persons with disabilities, the Government has also rolled out a series of assistance programmes under CCF, including the Pilot Scheme on Providing Special Subsidy for Persons with Permanent Stoma from Low-income Families for Purchasing Medical Consumables, and the Special Care Subsidy for the Severely Disabled.

16. In 2018-19, SWD will provide additional resources to strengthen the support for persons with disabilities or ex-mentally ill persons and their families/carers. To this end, SWD will progressively increase the number of PRCs from six to 19. SWD will also increase the total amount of annual funding for the Financial Support Scheme for Self-help Organisations for Persons with Disabilities/Chronic Illnesses by about \$6 million, i.e. from about \$15 million to about \$21 million, to enhance the support for the operation and development of self-help organisations.

17. To step up support for families and carers of ex-mentally ill persons, SWD will allocate additional funding to ICCMWs for creating clinical psychologist posts and increasing the number of social workers to better support ex-mentally ill persons and their families (especially their children). Besides, SWD will regularise the Pilot Project on Strengthening Support for Persons with Autism and their Parents/Carers in October 2018, and will set up an additional service team to enhance the support for persons with autism and their parents and carers, as well as rehabilitation service units providing services for persons with autism and relevant frontline staff.

Advice Sought

18. Members are invited to note the content of this paper.

**Labour and Welfare Bureau
Social Welfare Department
July 2018**

**Pilot Scheme on Living Allowance for
Carers of Elderly Persons from Low Income Families
Eligibility Criteria**

Carers of elderly persons applying for the living allowance of the pilot scheme must meet the following criteria:

- (i) The elderly person(s) being taken care of must be living in Hong Kong, has/have been assessed under SWD's Standardised Care Need Assessment Mechanism for Elderly Services (SCNAMES) as having moderate or severe level of impairment, and has/have been on the Central Waiting List (CWL) waiting for subsidised long-term care services (i.e. residential care services (RCS) and/or community care services) before a specified date;
- (ii) The elderly person(s) being taken care of must be living in the community without using any RCS and without undergoing long-term hospitalisation for treatment during the application period and while receiving the allowance;
- (iii) The carer must be capable of taking up the caregiving role^{Note 1}, and provide at least 80 hours of caregiving work per month^{Note 2} (or not less than 120 hours per month for taking care of more than one elderly person);
- (iv) The carer must be a Hong Kong resident who is living in Hong Kong and not engaged in any form of employment relationship with the elderly person(s) under his/her care;
- (v) The carer must not be a recipient of Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) or Old Age Living Allowance (OALA) or the living allowance under the Pilot Scheme on Living Allowance for Low-income Carers of Persons Disabilities for taking care of the same elderly person; and
- (vi) The monthly household income of the carer must not exceed 75% of the relevant MMDHI, excluding assets.

Note 1: The carer must be aged 15 or above and capable of taking up the caregiving role. In general, a person who is assessed under SCNAMES to be of moderate or severe level of impairment, or on CWL waiting for subsidised long-term care services, or a recipient of Disability Allowance (DA) is not deemed to be a fit and capable carer and is therefore not eligible for the allowance.

Note 2: The care provided by the carer to the elderly person(s) refers to independent activities of daily living, such as meal preparation, home making, medication management, purchase of daily necessities, and escort, etc. and/or personal care and assistance in activities of daily living, such as mobility, dressing, toileting, and personal hygiene, etc. as required by the elderly persons(s) concerned. Some carers of elderly persons with behavioural or emotional problems may need to calm these persons down before the above daily living care can be provided. The time spent on calming them down can be counted as caregiving time. In addition, the number of hours for the carer to attend training can be counted as caregiving hours.

**Pilot Scheme on Living Allowance for
Low-income Carers of Persons with Disabilities
Eligibility Criteria**

Carers of persons with disabilities applying for the living allowance of the pilot scheme must meet the following criteria:

- (i) The person(s) with disabilities being taken care of must be living in Hong Kong and has/have been on the waiting list(s) of any specified rehabilitation services^{Note 1} subsidised by SWD or special school boarding services under the Education Bureau (EDB) or infirmary services of the Hospital Authority (HA) before a specified date;
- (ii) The person(s) with disabilities being taken care of must be living in the community without using any RCS / special school boarding services / infirmary services^{Note 2} and without undergoing long-term hospitalisation for treatment during the application period and while receiving the allowance;
- (iii) The carer must be capable of taking up the caregiving role^{Note 3} and provide at least 80 hours of caregiving work per month^{Note 4} (or not less than 120 hours per month for taking care of more than one person with disabilities);
- (iv) The carer must be a Hong Kong resident who is living in Hong Kong and not engaged in any form of employment relationship with the person(s) with disabilities under his/her care;
- (v) The carer must not be a recipient of CSSA or OALA or the living allowance under the Pilot Scheme on Living Allowance for Carers of Elderly Persons from Low Income Families for taking care of the same person with disabilities; and
- (vi) The monthly household income of the carer must not exceed 75% of the relevant MMDHI, excluding assets.

Note 1: Specified rehabilitation services refer to subsidised RCS/day rehabilitation training services (the waiting list applications for which are registered through the Central Referral System for Rehabilitation Services of SWD), including hostels for severely physically handicapped persons, hostels for severely mentally handicapped persons, hostels for moderately mentally handicapped persons, care-and-attention (C&A) homes for severely disabled persons, C&A homes for the aged blind, long-stay care homes, residential special child care centres, day activity centres, sheltered workshops and special child care centres, as well as community care services (CCS) (the waiting list applications for which are managed by service operators), including home care service for persons with severe disabilities and integrated support service for persons with severe physical disabilities.

Note 2: The persons with disabilities being taken care of who are receiving CCS and/or day rehabilitation training services while on the waiting lists of specified subsidised RCS are also eligible for the Pilot Scheme.

Note 3: The carer must be aged 15 or above and capable of taking up the caregiving role. In general, a person who is assessed under SCNAMES to be of moderate or severe level of impairment, or on the waiting lists of any specified rehabilitation services, special school boarding services under the EDB or infirmary services of

HA, or a recipient of DA, is not deemed to be a fit and capable carer and is therefore not eligible for the allowance.

Note 4: The care provided by the carer to the person(s) with disabilities refers to independent activities of daily living, such as meal preparation, home making, medication management, purchase of daily necessities, and escort, etc. and/or personal care and assistance in activities of daily living, such as mobility, dressing, toileting, and personal hygiene, etc. as required by the person(s) with disabilities concerned. Some carers of persons with disabilities with behavioural or emotional problems may need to calm these persons down before the above daily living care can be provided. The time spent on calming them down can be counted as caregiving time. In addition, the number of hours for the carer to attend training can be counted as caregiving hours.