

**For information on  
22 February 2019**

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
PANEL ON WELFARE SERVICES**

**Support for Carers of Elderly Persons  
and of Persons with Disabilities**

**Purpose**

This paper briefs Members on various support services provided by the Government for carers of elderly persons and 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 the provision of information, resources and training, thereby supporting elderly persons to age in place.

3. The Government is also committed to providing support for carers of persons with disabilities. Through the provision of 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.

## **Existing Support Services**

### **(1) Support for Carers of Elderly Persons**

4. 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 District Elderly Community Centres (DECCs) and Neighbourhood Elderly Centres (NECs), 60 Integrated Home Care Services Teams, 34 Enhanced Home and Community 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.

#### ***Carer Training***

5. To widely promote basic knowledge on elderly care, foster a culture of care for the elderly and develop care services for the elderly at the district level, the Government has since 2014-15 provided an additional annual recurrent allocation of about 6.7 million to the 210 subvented elderly centres in the territory for hosting carer training activities. Such training programmes cover the skills required for getting to know and communicate with elderly persons, daily personal care for the elderly, care for frail elderly persons, common diseases and basic care for the elderly, care for elderly persons with dementia, as well as awareness in elder abuse and depression.

#### ***Respite Service for Elderly Persons***

6. There are two kinds of respite service for elderly persons, namely short-term residential service and temporary day care service, specifically provided for elderly persons living in the community who require assistance from family members or relatives in personal care. The service aims at providing support to carers, relieving their stress and allowing them to take a short break when necessary, thereby encouraging and helping elderly persons to continue living in the community.

7. As regards residential respite service, in addition to the 55 designated residential respite places provided by subvented residential care homes for the elderly (RCHEs) and contract homes, the Social Welfare Department (SWD) also utilises the casual vacancies of the subsidised places in all subvented nursing homes, care-and-attention homes, contract

homes as well as private RCHEs participating in the Enhanced Bought Place Scheme (EBPS) to provide residential respite service. SWD has since 2014-15 been providing additional designated residential respite places in new contract homes commencing service, as well as in existing contract homes upon contract extension or retendering according to service needs.

8. As for day respite service, there are currently 39 subvented DEs/DCUs providing a total of 170 designated day respite places. All DEs/DCUs can also make use of any casual day care vacancies to offer respite service. SWD will continue to designate additional day respite places in newly established subvented DEs/DCUs.

9. To facilitate elderly persons and their carers in obtaining information on respite service, SWD has uploaded all the relevant information, including the number of places and vacancies, onto their website and will update the information on a weekly basis. In addition, with reference to the relevant recommendation of the Elderly Services Programme Plan, SWD is developing the residential respite service information system with a view to enabling the public and the referring offices to access real-time availability of residential respite places for the elderly and for persons with disabilities in the web portal. The information also covers emergency placement service for the elderly. The information system is expected to commence operation in the fourth quarter of 2019.

### ***Outreach Service***

10. All the subvented elderly centres in the territory 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), with a view to providing them with suitable services. In addition, the Support Teams for the Elderly (STE) attached to the 41 DECCs across the territory promote community services and identify elderly persons and carers in need of services (such as elderly singletons or families of elderly doubletons, disabled or aged carers) through various outreach services and community networks. The STEs also identify hidden or needy elderly persons and carers through established networks with district organisations, mutual aid committees, management companies, etc.

11. To ensure that needy carers receive appropriate support, the Government has allocated additional resources to subvented elderly centres and home care services teams since October 2018 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 carers in the community, for example by liaising with different neighbourhoods and mobilising members of the community, and offer them the necessary support services, such as temporary elder-sitting, thereby relieving their pressure.

***Pilot Scheme on Living Allowance for Carers of Elderly Persons from Low-income Families***

12. Through the Community Care Fund (CCF), the Government launched the Pilot Scheme on Living Allowance for Carers of Elderly Persons from Low-income Families in June 2014 and Phase II of the Pilot Scheme in October 2016, with a view to providing carers of elderly persons from low-income families with a living allowance to help supplement their living expenses so that elderly persons with long-term care needs may, with their carers' assistance, receive more proper care and continue ageing in a familiar community.

13. In June 2018, the Commission on Poverty (CoP) endorsed the implementation of Phase III of the Pilot Scheme for a period of two years from October 2018 to September 2020. Under Phase III of the Pilot Scheme, the amount of allowance disbursed to each eligible carer has been increased from the original \$2,000 to \$2,400 per month. If the carers have to take care of more than one elderly person at the same time, the amount of allowance disbursed has been increased from the original \$4,000 to \$4,800 per month. The total quota of beneficiaries under the three phases of the Pilot Scheme is 6 000. There are 50 approved non-governmental organisations (NGOs) involving a total of 159 DECCs and NECs serving as service providers in Phase III of the Pilot Scheme to provide carers and elderly persons with the necessary support and follow-up services, which include arranging training, conducting home visits and offering emotional counselling to carers when necessary, etc.

14. The Sau Po Centre on Ageing, the University of Hong Kong, commissioned by SWD, is conducting an evaluation on the Pilot Scheme together with the Pilot Scheme on Living Allowance for Low-income

Carers of Persons with Disabilities, with a view to helping the Government map out the way forward for both schemes. The evaluation study is expected to be completed in 2018-19. Upon completion of the evaluation, the Government will carry out detailed analysis and consideration and review matters such as the existing eligibility criteria, the level of allowance, and whether the pilot schemes should be regularised, etc.

### ***Pilot Scheme on Community Care Service Voucher for the Elderly***

15. The Second Phase of the Pilot Scheme on Community Care Service Voucher for the Elderly was launched in October 2016. Voucher holders are free to choose centre-based and/or home-based care services and may use the monthly voucher values to purchase residential respite service if necessary. Service units also provide such services as elder-sitting, on-site carer training, environment risk assessment and advice on home modifications to support the carers. To strengthen community care and support services, the Government provided an additional 1 000 vouchers in October 2018, bringing the total to 6 000, and extended the Second Phase of the Pilot Scheme until September 2020.

### ***Pilot Scheme on Training for Foreign Domestic Helpers on Elderly Care***

16. Foreign domestic helpers (FDHs) are playing a major role in caring for the elderly persons in many Hong Kong families. With funding from the Lotteries Fund, SWD in collaboration with the Department of Health and six DECCs, has launched the 18-month Pilot Scheme on Training for FDHs on Elderly Care since March 2018 to strengthen the basic knowledge and skills of FDHs in taking care of frail elderly persons, with the aim of enhancing the elderly persons' quality of life in the community and support ageing in place for them. The Pilot Scheme is implemented in Wan Chai, Kowloon City and Tsuen Wan Districts, providing a total of 300 free training places. The training mainly covers common topics in elderly care and care skills, and also includes electives on caring for elderly persons with dementia and stroke. DECCs participating in the Pilot Scheme also arrange care services or activities for the needy elderly persons when their FDHs are attending the training.

### ***Support for Carers Project***

17. To strengthen support for needy elderly persons and their carers and encourage community participation, SWD launched the three-year "Support for Carers Project" in October 2018, inviting property

management organisations to join. The Project aims to provide basic training to frontline property management personnel through DECCs and NECs under the respective SWD District Social Welfare Offices, so as to equip them with knowledge on how to identify and assist needy elderly persons and carers, as well as information on welfare services in the community, so that they may make use of the community resources in time when necessary to facilitate ageing in place of elderly persons. At present, there are 49 property management organisations, including private property management companies, Hong Kong Housing Authority and Hong Kong Housing Society, joining the Project, covering some 3 000 residential buildings in the territory.

## **(2) Support for Carers of Persons with Disabilities**

### ***District Support Centres for Persons with Disabilities***

18. There are currently 16 district support centres for persons with disabilities (DSCs) throughout the territory, providing district-based one-stop support for persons with disabilities, their families and carers. The DSCs facilitate the access of persons with disabilities to the services they need at the same centre within the district, thus helping them integrate into the community. The DSCs will formulate appropriate training, caring, social, psychological and personal development activities taking account of the various needs of service users, and provide support and training for carers of persons with disabilities with a view to relieving their burden and enhancing their caring capabilities. Day care services (such as nursing care, rehabilitation, social activities and personal care services) are also provided for persons with severe disabilities aged between 15 and 59 at the DSCs, with the aim to strengthen the caring capabilities of their families or carers, thereby enhancing the opportunities for these persons with severe disabilities to continue living in the community. Moreover, the Government allocated additional resources in 2014-15 to provide two additional social workers at each of the DSCs for implementing the case management service approach, so as to enhance the support for persons with disabilities and provide them with more suitable services.

19. To meet the demand for day care service arising from the growing number of ageing persons with disabilities, the Government increased the recurrent expenditure by \$12.1 million in 2017-18 to provide 80 additional day care service places in the DSCs and extend the service to those persons with intellectual disabilities assessed as having early onset of ageing. The number of places of Day Care Service for Persons with Severe Disabilities in the DSCs has thus been increased to 160. Moreover, in order to

enhance the support for ageing persons with disabilities and their carers, the Government allocated an additional provision of \$6.2 million to increase the number of social workers in the DSCs for providing outreach services, with a view to effectively extending the current community services network to persons with disabilities who lack support so that they and their carers can receive timely and appropriate support.

### ***Integrated Community Centres for Mental Wellness***

20. Since 2010, SWD has been providing, through the 24 integrated community centres for mental wellness (ICCMWs) in all districts across the territory, one-stop and district-based community support services ranging from prevention to risk management for ex-mentally ill persons, persons with suspected mental health problems, their families and carers and local residents. In 2015-16, SWD allocated an additional annual recurrent expenditure of \$12.7 million to increase the number of professional social workers in the ICCMWs to provide more intensive counselling and support for the families and carers of ex-mentally ill persons with a view to alleviating their pressure of taking care of ex-mentally ill persons and consolidating their mutual help networks. In 2017-18 and 2018-19, the Government respectively allocated an additional annual recurrent expenditure of about \$32 million and \$31.4 million to set up clinical psychologist posts and increase the manpower of professional social workers and supporting staff for ICCMWs so as to enhance support for those in need (including carers of ex-mentally ill persons) and step up mental health promotion and education in the community.

### ***Home Care Service for Persons with Severe Disabilities and Integrated Support Service for Persons with Severe Physical Disabilities***

21. A package of integrated home-based services is provided for persons with severe disabilities living in the community through the Home Care Service for Persons with Severe Disabilities (HCS). The aim is to enable persons with severe disabilities to continue living in the community and relieve the pressure of their families and carers. Services provided include personal care, escort service, occupational therapy/physiotherapy rehabilitation training and carer support service. At present, there are a total of six HCS teams in the territory. As at end-December 2018, there were a total of over 4 400 HCS cases.

22. The Integrated Support Service for Persons with Severe Physical Disabilities (ISS) renders support to persons with severe physical disabilities who need constant attention and care by relieving them as well

as their families and carers of the financial burden of medical equipment and consumables, and enabling them to continue living in their familiar community. The ISS, implemented through the case management approach, provides one-stop support services, including casework counselling, occupational therapy/physiotherapy, nursing care service, financial support service and carer support service. There are currently two ISS teams in the territory. As at end-December 2018, there were a total of over 1 000 cases receiving the service.

### ***Parents/Relatives Resource Centres***

23. The six parents/relatives resource centres (PRCs) subvented by SWD aim at serving as the focal points for the people in need to share their experiences and seek mutual support with the assistance of the centre staff, with a view to promoting their acceptance of their family members with disabilities, enhancing their understanding of the latter's needs, and strengthening their capability to take care of these family members at home. In October 2015, SWD allocated an additional annual provision of \$3.2 million to increase the number of social workers in these six centres, thereby enhancing the support for parents and relatives/carers of persons with disabilities and ex-mentally ill persons and providing more appropriate services for them. As at end-December 2018, there were a monthly average of over 5 500 family-members. In addition, SWD established the Professional Support Team to Parents/Relatives Resource Centre (PST) in September 2015. Through liaising with parents/relatives resource centres, social workers and professional therapists of the PST form support groups, and organise customised workshops and talks for parents. Telephone enquiry service for parents and carers is also provided to give them timely and appropriate support.

### ***Support Centres for Persons with Autism***

24. SWD commissioned two NGOs in April 2016 to launch the Pilot Project on Strengthening the Support for Persons with Autism and Their Parents/Carers for a period of 30 months. Through multi-disciplinary teams comprising clinical psychologists, social workers and occupational therapists, the Pilot Project aims to strengthen the support for persons with autism and their parents/carers, rehabilitation units and frontline staff serving persons with autism. Services provided include enhancing the living, social and employment skills of young persons with high-functioning autism to help them cope with various challenges during their transition into adulthood; offering support services to parents/carers of persons with autism; and providing advisory service and professional



training for subvented rehabilitation service units and frontline staff serving persons with autism. The Government regularised the Pilot Project in 2018-19 and set up three Support Centres for Persons with Autism (SPAs) in 2018-19.

### ***Respite Services***

25. Similar to elderly care services, we also provide short-term residential care service for needy persons with disabilities in some of the residential care homes for persons with disabilities. The aim is to temporarily relieve carers from their caring duties, allowing them to attend to personal affairs and alleviate their stress. On the provision of short-term residential care service, there were a total of 297 residential respite service places as at end-December 2018. Moreover, we provide day respite service for persons with disabilities so that their families or carers may attend to their personal commitments or sudden engagements during daytime when temporary day care service is offered. As at end-December 2018, there were a total of 158 day respite service places in the territory.

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

26. Through CCF, the Government launched the Pilot Scheme on Living Allowance for Low-income Carers of Persons with Disabilities in October 2016 to provide needy carers of persons with disabilities with financial assistance to supplement their living expenses, so that persons with disabilities with long-term care needs may, with their carers' assistance, receive proper care and remain living in a familiar community.

27. In June 2018, CoP endorsed the implementation of Phase II of the Pilot Scheme for a period of two years from October 2018 to September 2020. Under Phase II of the Pilot Scheme, the amount of allowance disbursed to each eligible carer has been increased from the original \$2,000 to \$2,400 per month. If the carers have to take care of more than one person with disabilities at the same time, the amount of allowance disbursed has been increased from the original \$4,000 to \$4,800 per month. The total quota of beneficiaries under the two phases of the Pilot Scheme is 2 500.

## **New Initiatives**

### **(1) Support for Carers of Elderly Persons**

28. To meet the demand for beds in public hospitals during the seasonal peak of influenza, and to increase the number of residential respite places for the elderly, SWD introduced a special measure from February to September 2018 to purchase about 250 additional residential places from private RCHEs participating in EBPS to provide residential respite service for elderly persons. The measure has been extended to September 2019. In view of the positive response to this special measure, the 2018 Policy Address has announced that the Government plans to regularise the measure in 2019-20 to provide designated residential respite places in private RCHEs participating in EBPS, thereby relieving the stress of carers.

29. To further strengthen community care and support services, the 2018 Policy Address has also proposed that the Government would provide an additional 1 000 vouchers under the Second Phase of the Pilot Scheme on Community Care Service Voucher for the Elderly in 2019-20, bringing the total to 7 000, to support ageing in place for elderly persons with moderate or severe impairment. In addition, in view of the positive responses from FDHs and their employers to the Pilot Scheme on Training for FDHs on Elderly Care, the Government is planning to extend the Pilot Scheme to more districts, providing around 800 training places in total, to further strengthen the training of FDHs in basic knowledge and skills in taking care of frail elderly persons, so as to support their ageing in place.

### **(2) Support for Carers of Persons with Disabilities**

30. The Government has entrusted the Rehabilitation Advisory Committee to formulate a new Hong Kong Rehabilitation Programme Plan to set out the strategic directions and measures to address the service needs of persons with disabilities at different stages of life. Considering that many persons with disabilities have expressed their wishes to continue living at home so as to postpone their admission to residential care homes, the Government will strengthen a range of community support services for their families before the completion of the new plan. This will enable persons with disabilities to choose to continue to live with their families in the community and at the same time ease the stress of their family members. Initiatives on community support for families of persons with disabilities are as follows:

- (i) set up five additional DSCs and strengthen rehabilitation training and service in order to enhance their service capacity and quality;
- (ii) in view of the special service needs of persons with autism, increase the number of SPAs from three to five and enhance the manpower of the existing centres;
- (iii) allocate new resources to provide home-based care services for about an additional 1 800 persons with disabilities living in the community and to enhance transport support for the services;
- (iv) from the first quarter of 2019, increase the number of PRCs progressively from six to 19 and set up specialised units for ethnic minorities in five of the PRCs to step up support for parents and relatives/carers of persons with disabilities; and
- (v) expand the service targets of ICCMWs to secondary school students with mental health needs to strengthen professional support for them.

### **Advice Sought**

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

**Labour and Welfare Bureau**  
**Social Welfare Department**  
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