

LegCo Panel on Welfare Services

Relaxing the Eligibility Criteria for Emergency Alarm System

The Administration was requested at the LegCo Panel on Welfare Services meeting on 1 February 1999 to review the eligibility criteria for emergency alarm system (EAS) and report back to the Panel when more details were worked out. This paper reports the progress on relaxing the eligibility criteria for EAS.

Emergency Alarm System

2. Under the provision of the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme, a special grant can be given to elderly recipients who meet the eligibility criteria to install an EAS, a device to allow those living on their own to seek help quickly in an emergency. The grant is made as a one-off installation grant or in the form of monthly payment to meet the service charges.

Relaxing the eligibility Criteria

3. It has been proposed that the age requirement be lowered from 70 to 60 for singleton elderly recipients applying for assistance for EAS. The Administration has reviewed the eligibility criteria for EAS and consider that it is more appropriate to lower the age limit from 70 to 65,

taking into account the fact that many persons in their early sixties are still robust and healthy. The revised eligibility criteria for EAS which have been implemented since November 1999 are as follows:

- (a) The applicant should be a single person, or living in a family with other family members who cannot take care of him/her (e.g. the other family member is infirm or disabled); and
- (b) satisfy one of the following conditions:
 - (i) aged 65 or over;
 - (ii) aged between 60 to 64 and is certified to be more than 50% disabled, or is suffering from such medical conditions which, in a public medical officer's opinion, may develop into life threatening conditions and require immediate attention.

Present position

4. As at 30 September 1999, about 5 600 elderly CSSA recipients were granted special grant to cover charges for EAS. The great majority (5 200 or 93%) of the recipients were aged 70 or above, and 400 or 7% disabled.

Publicity

5. To ensure that the service of EAS is generally known to elderly CSSA recipients, we have widely publicized the EAS through non-

governmental organisations, the Support Teams for the elderly, and the media. We have also distributed to our customers and the public pamphlet on EAS which provides a guide for elderly persons and their family members on choosing an EAS that suits their needs and preference, and to advise them of the financial assistance available from the Social Welfare Department.

Social Welfare Department
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