

**For information
on 29 May 2017**

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

**PANEL ON WELFARE SERVICES
PANEL ON HEALTH SERVICES**

JOINT SUBCOMMITTEE ON LONG-TERM CARE POLICY

**Community support services
for mentally ill and ex-mentally ill persons**

PURPOSE

This paper briefs Members on the community support services provided by the Government for patients with mental illness and ex-mentally ill persons, as well as related welfare issues.

BACKGROUND

2. Currently, the Hospital Authority (“HA”) provides a spectrum of medical services for around 240 000 patients with mental health needs each year, including in-patient, specialist out-patient, day hospital and community support services. Among these patients, about 49 000 have been diagnosed as having severe mental illness (“SMI”) (e.g. schizophrenia). International trend shows that in the treatment of patients with mental illness, there has been an increasing focus on community and ambulatory care support. The HA has allocated more resources in recent years to enhance community psychiatric services, so as to enable patients in relatively stable condition to receive treatment and support in the community. Moreover, the HA has launched a number of initiatives to facilitate the recovery of patients with mental illness and their re-integration into society. The Social Welfare Department (SWD) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) provide community support and other welfare services for ex-mentally ill persons and their families. These initiatives are set out in ensuing (i) to (xii).

Mental Health Support Services provided by HA

(i) *The Early Assessment Service for Young People with Early Psychosis (EASY) Programme*

The HA launched the Early Assessment Service for Young People with Early Psychosis (“EASY”) Programme in 2001-02 for people aged between 15 and 25 who suffered from early psychosis. The multi-disciplinary intervention team of the programme provides continuous, one-stop and stage-specific support for the target patients during the first two years after their first episode of illness. Evidence shows that the programme can identify persons suffering from early psychosis at an early stage and offer them with prompt treatment, so as to prevent their conditions from deteriorating and avoid unnecessary psychiatric in-patient admission. In addition to the case assessment and therapeutic solutions provided by the professional intervention team for patients, the EASY service team also implements educational programmes on mental health, and conducts seminars and workshops for social workers, teachers, doctors, parents and members of the public, with a view to enhancing their awareness of early psychosis and the EASY Programme. In 2011-12, the HA expanded the programme to cover all adults aged 64 or below and extended the period of intensive treatment to the first three critical years of illness to benefit more patients. Currently, the HA provides psychiatric specialist services to about 3 900 patients with early psychosis annually.

(ii) *Case Management Programme*

The HA launched the Case Management Programme for patients with SMI by phases since 2010-11 to proactively provide intensive, continuous and personalised support for patients with SMI residing in the community. Under the programme, case managers (including psychiatric nurses, occupational therapists and registered social workers, etc.) work closely with other service providers (particularly the Integrated Community Centres for Mental Wellness (“ICCMWs”) set up by the SWD) to provide community support for the target patients. In 2014-15, the programme was extended to cover all 18 districts across the territory to benefit about 15 000 patients with SMI residing in the community. From 2015-16 onwards, the HA has been introducing a peer support element into the programme by phases to enhance the community support for patients with SMI. Ten rehabilitated ex-service users are currently hired by the HA to

serve as peer support workers to help patients achieve their personal rehabilitation goals and acquire the skills to manage their mental health problems.

(iii) Intensive Care Teams

In order to provide timely support for emergency and serious cases in the community, Intensive Care Teams were set up by the HA in all seven clusters in 2011-12 to strengthen the intensive support and long-term follow-up for high-risk patients with mental illness residing in the community.

(iv) Standard Community Psychiatric Service

To strengthen the support for patients with relatively stable mental conditions but still in need of community support to maintain their mental stability, the Standard Community Psychiatric Service of the HA provides transitional community support service to facilitate their adaptation and re-integration into society.

(v) Mental Health Direct Hotline

The HA established the Mental Health Direct hotline (Tel: 2466 7350) in January 2012 by enhancing the 24-hour telephone psychiatric advisory service provided by the Castle Peak Hospital since 1982. The aim is to further augment mental health services and strengthen the support for ex-mentally ill patients and their carers. Mental Health Direct is a 24-hour psychiatric advisory hotline operated by professional psychiatric nurses who answer calls from patients with mental illness, their carers, relevant stakeholders and members of the public, and provide professional advice on mental health issues and arrange timely referrals for them.

(vi) Medical-social Collaboration

To further enhance collaboration and communication between the medical and social sectors, the HA and SWD set up a task group in collaboration with the NGOs operating ICCMWs to revisit the existing service model for adults with SMI. The Service Framework of Personalised Care for Adults with SMI in Hong Kong (“the Service Framework”) developed by the task group was published in mid-2016. The Service Framework seeks to

articulate a clear delineation of roles of different service providers, which would help eliminate service gaps and enable service providers to better respond to the needs of patients and families. Currently, the task group is, based on the recommendations in the Service Framework, drawing up a standardised needs-risks-strength assessment framework, and exploring the establishment of an effective mechanism for patient information sharing. The aim is to promote closer collaboration between medical institutions and social service organisations, so as to provide better care for patients with different needs and risks.

Community Mental Health Support Services Provided by SWD

(vii) Medical Social Services

Medical social workers of SWD are stationed in the psychiatric hospitals and specialist out-patient clinics of the HA to provide timely psychological and social counselling services as well as financial assistance for patients with mental illness, ex-mentally ill persons and their families, with a view to helping them cope with or solve their emotional, daily living and family problems arising from mental illnesses, and facilitating their rehabilitation and re-integration into society. In addition, when medical and allied health professionals assist these patients in determining suitable discharge plans, medical social workers will provide professional advice from social work perspective, and make referrals for needy patients and their families to apply for rehabilitation services and community resources.

(viii) Integrated Community Centres for Mental Wellness

To strengthen community support for ex-mentally ill persons, persons with suspected mental health problems and their families/carers having regard to their needs at different stages of rehabilitation, SWD has revamped the community mental health support services and set up 24 ICCMWs across the territory in October 2010 to provide timely “district-based” one-stop community mental health support services, including casework counselling, occupational therapy, outreaching services, day training, consultation services, social and recreational activities, public education activities and referral of needy cases to the HA for assessment and treatment. The Government continues to

increase resources for enhancing the services of the ICCMWs, with a view to providing more intensive counselling and support services for ex-mentally ill persons and their families/carers, thereby relieving the stress on their families/carers and providing services for more people in need. SWD's recurrent provision for the ICCMWs has increased from \$135 million upon commencement of service in 2010 to over \$286 million (estimated expenditure) in 2016-17. Up to March 2017, the ICCMWs provided services for more than 61 000 ex-mentally ill persons and persons with suspected mental health problems.

(ix) Pilot Project on Peer Support Service

With funding from the Lotteries Fund, SWD commenced a two-year Pilot Project on Peer Support Service in Community Psychiatric Service Units (Pilot Project) in March 2016. Under the Pilot Project, 11 ICCMW operators are responsible for providing training services to equip suitable ex-mentally ill persons to serve as peer supporters, who will then offer emotional and recovery support for ex-mentally ill persons in need. As at the end of March 2017, a total of 50 full-time or part-time peer supporters were employed by ICCMWs, half-way houses or vocational rehabilitation service units to provide peer support service, which included counselling service through telephone contacts or interviews, assisting the professional staff of the operators in conducting outreaching or concern visits, and organising group activities and education programmes on mental health to enhance public understanding and acceptance of ex-mentally ill persons in a positive way.

(x) Parents / Relatives Resource Centre for Ex-mentally Ill Persons

The Parents / Relatives Resource Centre for Ex-mentally Ill Persons operated by NGO under the subvention of SWD are set up to provide families and relatives of ex-mentally ill persons with emotional support, enhance their knowledge, skills and ability to take care of the ex-mentally ill persons, as well as facilitate the establishment of a support network among the parents/relatives for exchange of views and mutual help. In 2015-16, the subvented Parents / Relatives Resource Centre for Ex-mentally Ill Persons is granted additional resources to increase social workers to bolster support for persons with disabilities and ex-mentally ill persons as well as their families and relatives.

Other Welfare Services

(xi) Residential Care Services

SWD provides various residential care services for ex-mentally ill persons through subvented NGOs, including long stay care homes, half-way houses and supported hostels. Long stay care homes provide discharged chronic mental patients with long-term residential care and active maintenance services; half-way houses provide ex-mentally ill persons with transitional community rehabilitation service in preparation for their re-integration into the community; supported hostels provide group home living for ex-mentally ill persons who can live semi-independently with a fair amount of assistance in daily activities.

(xii) Day Training and Vocational Rehabilitation Services

To assist ex-mentally ill persons in improving their social adjustment capabilities and enhancing their social and vocational skills, SWD provides through subvented NGOs sheltered workshops, supported employment service, integrated vocational rehabilitation services centres, On the Job Training Programme for People with Disabilities, Sunnyway - On the Job Training Programme for Young People with Disabilities, “Enhancing Employment of People with Disabilities through Small Enterprise” Project, etc. to provide vocational rehabilitation services to persons with disabilities, including ex-mentally ill persons, and help them seek employment in the open market.

WAY FORWARD

3. To ensure that our mental health regime can rise up to the challenges of a growing and ageing population, the Government embarked on a review of the mental health policy and services. The Review Committee on Mental Health, set up in May 2013, published the Mental Health Review Report (“the Report”) in April this year. The Report recommends the Government –

- to strengthen the cross-sectoral (medical, educational and social) and multi-disciplinary (doctors, nurses, occupational therapists and clinical psychologists, etc.) service model in providing services for persons with mental health needs; and
- to build a mental-health friendly society through community support and ambulatory services to facilitate re-integration into the community.

4. To enhance the support for people with mental health needs, the Government will allocate additional resources to the HA in the current financial year to employ additional staff and further enhance psychiatric services in the community, including the conduct of a comprehensive review on the service planning for community psychiatric services and the staffing arrangements for case managers, and the hire of additional peer support workers. We will also continue to monitor the existing service quality and ensure that adequate services can be provided for patients with mental illness under the premise of protecting safety of the public and patients.

5. Furthermore, the Government will further increase the number of social workers and supporting staff at ICCMWs in the current financial year, including 24 social workers and 72 welfare workers, so that more in-depth support can be given to ICCMWs, in order to facilitate ex-mentally ill persons to re-integrate into the community. Moreover, SWD has been conducting an evaluation on the Pilot Project, and will regularise the peer support service.

ADVICE SOUGHT

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

Labour and Welfare Bureau
Food and Health Bureau
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