

**For discussion
on 30 October 2017**

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

PANEL ON WELFARE SERVICES

PANEL ON HEALTH SERVICES

JOINT SUBCOMMITTEE ON LONG-TERM CARE POLICY

Ageing of Persons with Disabilities

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on the latest progress of the implementation of the enhancement measures by the Government to address the ageing of persons with disabilities.

Background

2. The Labour and Welfare Bureau (LWB) and the Social Welfare Department (SWD) are mindful of the needs of ageing users of rehabilitation services. Owing to advancement in medical technology and on-going improvement in socio-economic conditions, persons with disabilities have a longer average life expectancy. In addition, rehabilitation service organisations serving persons with intellectual disabilities notice that their service users suffer from various chronic illnesses and related functional impairments earlier than ordinary people of the same age. The service needs of aged persons with other types of disabilities also become different due to changes in their physical well-being.

Enhancement Measures

3. To strengthen the support for ageing users of rehabilitation services, the Government has in recent years adopted a multi-pronged approach to implement various enhancement measures in collaboration with rehabilitation service organisations. These measures include the following:

Strengthening Medical Services

Enhancing the Visiting Medical Practitioner Scheme

4. In 2016-17, the Government increased the annual recurrent provision for the Visiting Medical Practitioner Scheme (VMPS) by about \$9.5 million to about \$26 million, with the aim to strengthen the provision of primary medical care and support for residents with disabilities. To help protect residents of residential care homes for persons with disabilities (RCHDs) and residential care homes for the elderly (RCHEs) against seasonal influenza and other episodic illnesses as well as to promote their health conditions, the Government plans to provide visiting medical practitioner services for all of them (including those living in private RCHDs), and continue to strengthen the existing VMPS being implemented in subvented RCHDs.

Enhancing Support for Rehabilitation Service Organisations

5. The Government strives to work with rehabilitation service organisations by offering them appropriate advice and assistance with a view to bringing about synergy. Under the co-ordination of the LWB, the Queen Elizabeth Foundation for the Mentally Handicapped has allocated funding to six non-governmental organisations (NGOs)/healthcare organisations, funding eight projects on the provision of check-up services (including optometric, hearing and dental screening) for service users with intellectual disabilities. These services will enable the carers of persons with intellectual disabilities to detect at an early stage the symptoms of early onset of ageing, thus facilitating referrals and follow-up actions as appropriate.

Exploring the Feasibility of Implementing a Collaboration Programme

6. In the long run, to enhance the medical service support for persons with intellectual disabilities suffering from chronic illnesses, the Administration and the Hospital Authority will explore the feasibility of implementing a collaboration programme to provide visiting specialist medical services for persons with intellectual disabilities living in residential care homes who are suffering from chronic illnesses.

Improving Rehabilitation Services

Increasing the Number of Places and Manpower of Day Care Service

7. 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 district support centres for persons with disabilities (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.

8. To enhance the support for ageing persons with disabilities and their carers, the Government allocated an additional provision of \$6.2 million in 2017-18 to increase the number of social workers in the DSCs by 16 to 48. The aim is to strengthen the provision of continuous support services for ageing service users through the adoption of case management service model and outreach service approach, so that these service users and their carers can receive timely and appropriate support.

9. In 2018-19, the Government will continue to provide additional places under the Extended Care Programme in day activity centres (DACs) and under the Work Extension Programme in sheltered workshops/integrated vocational rehabilitation services centres.

Enhancing Support Services for Residential Care Homes for Persons with Disabilities

10. To improve the quality of residential care services for ageing persons with disabilities, the SWD will form district-based speech therapy teams in 2018-19 to provide speech therapy services in hostels for moderately mentally handicapped persons (HMMHs), hostels for severely mentally handicapped persons (HSMHs), hostels for severely physically handicapped persons with mental handicap, and care and attention homes for severely disabled persons, so as to assist ageing service users in dealing with swallowing problems; and create health worker posts in supported hostels for persons with intellectual disabilities, physically handicapped persons and ex-mentally ill persons to enhance the healthcare services provided therein.

11. Moreover, the SWD plans to launch a four-year pilot scheme in 2018-19 by setting up a district-based professional team, comprising social workers, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, etc., to provide outreach services for residents of private RCHDs and RCHEs to meet their social and rehabilitation needs.

Strengthening Transport Services for Ageing Service Users

12. The Government has subsidised the phased procurement of 73 centre buses for the DACs cum HSMHs and community rehabilitation day centres to cater for the needs of ageing service users to go out for medical consultation and other rehabilitation activities. The operating organisations have started the procurement of the centre buses, which are expected to be put into operation in phases this year. The SWD has also allocated an additional recurrent provision of about \$18 million for 59 DACs cum HSMHs and four community rehabilitation day centres to increase the number of drivers and strengthen their bus service, so as to meet the needs of ageing users of rehabilitation services to go out for medical consultation and other activities.

Improving the Facilities of Rehabilitation Service Units

13. The Government will earmark \$1 billion for setting up a fund to provide subsidies for rehabilitation and elderly service units to try out and procure technology products, with a view to improving the quality of life of ageing service users, and reducing the burden and pressure on care staff and carers of persons with disabilities and elderly persons. The Government will formulate the operational details of the new fund. The preliminary idea is to enable various rehabilitation and elderly service units to procure technology products that are available for sale in the market and included in the recognised procurement list of the fund. The fund will also provide subsidies for service units to implement pilot schemes, in collaboration with other organisations, to try out new applied technologies and carry out outcome evaluations, with a view to facilitating continued use by the industry in the future. On the other hand, the Government will commission the Hong Kong Council of Social Service to promote the use of technology among welfare organisations, and carers of persons with disabilities and elderly persons.

14. The Government spares no effort in improving the facilities of rehabilitation service units, so as to provide more appropriate services for ageing service users. In this connection, the SWD has updated the Reference Furniture and Equipment List for rehabilitation service units by, among other things, including some facilities designed for ageing service users (such as geriatric chairs, shower chairs and mobile hoists) as standard facilities. The schedule of accommodation for the HSMHs and that for the HMMHs have also been updated.

Encouraging Innovative Modes of Service Delivery

15. The SWD will continue to co-ordinate the provision of appropriate services by rehabilitation service organisations to meet the needs of ageing persons with disabilities, and encourage subvented rehabilitation service organisations to actively respond to the needs of their service users under the requirements of the Funding and Service Agreements. For example, some rehabilitation service organisations have experimented providing DAC cum HSMH services especially for elderly persons with intellectual disabilities, and made appropriate adjustments to the facilities, manpower arrangement and service content to accommodate the needs of ageing persons with intellectual disabilities, including the use of technological apparatus to strengthen the care for elderly persons with intellectual disabilities. The Government will make reference to this experience and continue to encourage rehabilitation service organisations to try out innovative modes of service delivery to provide more appropriate services for ageing service users.

Enhancing Support for Carers

Providing Allowance for Low-income Carers of Persons with Disabilities

16. In order to ease the financial pressure on carers arising from the need to take care of persons with disabilities, the Government launched a two-year Pilot Scheme on Living Allowance for Low-income Carers of Persons with Disabilities in October 2016, under which an eligible carer for a person with disabilities may receive a monthly allowance of \$2,000. If the carer is required to take care of more than one person with disabilities at the same time, a monthly allowance of up to \$4,000 will be disbursed. The aim is to ease the financial pressure on carers arising from the need to take care of persons with disabilities, so that those persons with disabilities in need of long-term care may, with the help of their carers, receive proper care and remain living in the community.

Stepping up Health Education for Parents and Carers of Persons with Intellectual Disabilities

17. To step up health education for parents and carers of persons with intellectual disabilities and provide them with more healthcare training in respect of their children with intellectual disabilities and enhance their knowledge of disease prevention, the LWB set up a task force, and invited Department of Health and relevant government departments, NGOs, parents' associations and persons with intellectual disabilities to participate in the production of an information kit on basic

health and disease prevention. Upon its anticipated completion in the fourth quarter of 2017, the information kit will be distributed to NGOs and parents' associations so that they can hold talks and promotional activities on the use of the kit for frontline staff in residential care homes, persons with intellectual disabilities and their parents or carers.

Setting up a "Special Needs Trust"

18. Parents of children with special needs are worried about the care for their children after they have passed away. In particular, they are concerned about how to ensure that their assets are used to meet the daily needs of their children in the future according to their wishes. The Government has decided to take the lead in setting up a "special needs trust", with the Director of Social Welfare as the trustee, to provide reliable and affordable trust services for managing the assets of deceased parents. Regular disbursement will be made to the carers of their children, who may be individuals or organisations, in accordance with the parents' wishes. This is to ensure that their assets will be used for meeting the long-term daily needs of their children. The LWB will continue to follow up with stakeholders on the details regarding the setting up of the trust.

Follow-up Action

19. The LWB will, in collaboration with relevant government departments and organisations, monitor the implementation of the above measures, and examine issues relating to the ageing of persons with disabilities when formulating a new Hong Kong Rehabilitation Programme Plan.

Advice Sought

20. Members are invited to note the content of the paper.

**Labour and Welfare Bureau
Social Welfare Department
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