

For information

on 21 November 2017

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

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

JOINT SUBCOMMITTEE ON LONG-TERM CARE POLICY

**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. “Ageing in place as the core, institutional care as back-up” is the Government’s elderly care policy. In fact, ageing in place is the cherished wish of most elderly persons. To enable elderly persons to age in a familiar environment, the Government has all along been providing them with various types of support and care services at the community level. The Government has also been enhancing carers’ capability to take care of the elderly and relieving their stress through provision of information, resources and training, thereby supporting elderly persons to age in the community.

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' 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

Carer Training

4. Carers play an important role in elderly care. The Government delivers support services to carers of elderly persons through 210 subvented District Elderly Community Centres (DECCs) and Neighbourhood Elderly Centres (NECs), 94 home care service teams and 74 Day Care Centres/Units for the Elderly (DEs/DCUs) throughout the territory. These services include provision of information, training and counselling services, assistance in forming mutual aid groups, and demonstration and loan of rehabilitation equipment, etc.

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 regularised the “District-based Trial Scheme on Carer Training” rolled out in October 2007. An additional annual recurrent allocation of some \$6.7 million is provided to all subvented elderly centres throughout the territory for organising carer training activities. The training programmes include understanding elderly persons and the communication skills required, 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 knowledge in elder abuse and depression. Through various kinds of support services, carers will not only acquire more information and skills to enhance their capability to take care of elderly persons, but also build up social and support networks for exchanging views and experiences with other carers. This can help relieve their pressure from caring for elderly persons.

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 45 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, as well as contract homes to provide residential respite service. Since March 2012, all private RCHes participating in the Enhanced Bought Place Scheme have also joined force in offering residential respite service. Since 2014-15, SWD has been providing additional designated residential respite places in new contract homes commencing service, as well as in existing contract homes extending/renewing their contracts. According to the recommendations of the Elderly Services Programme Plan, the Government will explore the use of non-subsidised residential care places for provision of respite services.

8. As for day respite service, there are currently 37 subvented DEs/DCUs providing a total of 160 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 to check the 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. With reference to the recommendations of the Elderly Services Programme Plan, SWD will explore the possibility of setting up a real-time vacancy enquiry system for designated residential respite service.

Outreach Service

10. At present, all the subvented elderly centres are 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.

11. In addition, the support teams for the elderly under the 41 DECCs across the territory will promote community services and identify elderly persons and carers in need of support services (such as elderly singletons or families of elderly doubletons, disabled or aged carers) through various outreach services and community networks, including visits to families. The support teams will also identify hidden and vulnerable elderly persons and carers through established networks with District Council members, mutual aid committees, management companies, etc. DECCs will also promote the neighbourhood support network by launching, for example, house captain schemes, with a view to reaching out to needy elderly persons and their carers.

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

12. The Government launched the Pilot Scheme on Living Allowance for Carers of Elderly Persons from Low Income Families under the Community Care Fund in June 2014 to provide needy carers of elderly persons with financial assistance to supplement their living expenses, so that elderly persons in need of long-term care services may, with their carers' assistance, receive proper care and remain living in a

familiar community. Phase II of the Pilot Scheme was rolled out in October 2016 for two years. In order to benefit more eligible carers, an additional 2 000 places are provided under Phase II of the Pilot Scheme to make a total of 4 000 beneficiaries for the entire Pilot Scheme. Under the Pilot Scheme, a living allowance of \$2,000 is disbursed monthly to each eligible carer, and a maximum of \$4,000 per month is disbursed to each of those carers taking care of more than one elderly persons at the same time. DECCs and NECs serve as the service providers under 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.

13. SWD has commissioned the Sau Po Centre on Ageing, the University of Hong Kong to conduct an evaluation on Phase II of the Pilot Scheme together with the Pilot Scheme on Living Allowance for Low-income Carers of Persons with Disabilities which was also launched in October 2016, with a view to helping the Government map out the way forward for both schemes. Matters such as the eligibility criteria, the amounts of allowance, and whether the schemes should be regularised will all be included in the evaluation. The evaluation study is expected to be completed in the third quarter of 2018.

The Pilot Scheme on Community Care Service Voucher for the Elderly

14. The Second Phase of the Pilot Scheme on Community Care Service Voucher for the Elderly was launched in October 2016 to provide more service modes catering for the diversified needs of elderly persons. These include centre-based service only (full-time or part-time),

home-based service only and a mixture of centre-based and home-based services. Voucher holders are free to choose centre-based and/or home-based services and may use the monthly voucher values to purchase residential respite services if necessary. As regards home care services, in addition to rehabilitation exercises, nursing care, personal care, household cleaning, escort services and meal delivery services, service units also provide such services as elder-sitting, on-site carer training, environmental risk assessment and advice on home modifications to support the carers. To further strengthen community care and support services, the Government plans to provide an additional 1 000 vouchers under the Second Phase of the Pilot Scheme in 2018-19, bringing the total to 6 000.

(2) Support for Carers of Persons with Disabilities

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

15. The Government launched the two-year Pilot Scheme on Living Allowance for Low-income Carers of Persons with Disabilities through the Community Care Fund in October 2016 to provide needy carers of persons with disabilities with financial assistance to supplement their living expenses, so that persons with disabilities in need of long-term care may, with their carers' assistance, receive proper care and remain living in the community. Under the Pilot Scheme, a monthly allowance of \$2,000 will be disbursed to each eligible carer. If a carer takes care of more than one person with disabilities at the same time, a maximum of \$4,000 per month will be given.

Services of Parents/Relatives Resource Centres

16. The six parents/relatives resource centres 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. 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.

Respite Service

17. 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 291 residential respite service places as at end-October 2017. 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-October 2017, there were a total of 158 day respite service places in the territory.

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.

Home Care Service for Persons with Severe Disabilities

20. 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-September 2017, there were a total of over 3 700 HCS cases.

Integrated Support Service for Persons with Severe Physical Disabilities

21. 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-September 2017, there were a total of over 1 000 cases receiving the service.

Integrated Community Centres for Mental Wellness

22. Since 2010, SWD has been providing, through the 24 integrated community centres for mental wellness (ICCMWs) service points 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, the Government allocated an additional annual recurrent expenditure of about \$32 million to further increase the manpower of the ICCMWs, including 24 social workers and 72 welfare workers, so as to enhance support for those in need in the community (including carers of ex-mentally ill persons).

New Initiatives

(1) Support for Carers of Elderly Persons

23. The 2017-18 Policy Agenda has proposed a new initiative to allocate additional resources to all subvented elderly centres and home care services teams (Integrated Home Care Services Teams and Enhanced Home and Community Care Services Teams) in the territory to enhance outreaching services for supporting carers looking after frail elderly persons, including disabled or aged carers. The additional resources will

mainly be deployed for recruiting more social workers and other supporting staff in relevant elderly services units.

24. With the additional resources, elderly centres and home care services teams will make use of various outreach services and community networks by, for example, liaising with different neighbourhoods and mobilising members of the community to identify hidden and needy elderly persons in the community more effectively. 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.

25. In addition, the current-term Government will implement a series of new initiatives to strengthen support for carers of elderly persons with dementia. This includes regularising the Dementia Community Support Scheme and expanding it to all 41 DECCs in the territory so that cross-sectoral and multi-disciplinary support services can be provided for elderly persons with mild or moderate dementia and their carers at the community level through a medical-social collaboration model; and increasing the number of social workers in all NECs in the territory, with a view to enhancing the support services for demented elderly persons living in the community and their carers.

26. Foreign domestic helpers (FDHs) currently play the role of key carers of elderly persons in many families. SWD is planning to implement an 18-month Pilot Scheme on Training for FDHs on Elderly Care under the Lotteries Fund in 2018-19. The Pilot Scheme aims at strengthening the skills of FDHs in taking care of elderly persons, so as to enhance elderly persons' quality of life in the community and support

ageing in place. The Pilot Scheme will be implemented in three selected districts in Hong Kong Island, Kowloon and the New Territories respectively targeting 300 FDHs who are/will be taking care of elderly persons. The FDHs will be equipped with basic knowledge and skills for providing care for the frail elderly to help elderly persons adopt healthy lifestyles and reduce potential risks. SWD will implement the Pilot Scheme in collaboration with the Department of Health and DECCs subvented by SWD. To facilitate and encourage FDHs' participation, not only will the training under the Pilot Scheme be free of charge, but the participating DECCs will also arrange activities for the elderly persons when the training is being conducted. Upon successful completion of the training, FDHs will be awarded attendance certificates as well.

(2) Support for Carers of Persons with Disabilities

27. The 2017-18 Policy Agenda has also proposed two new initiatives regarding support for carers of persons with disabilities. First, the Government will increase funding allocated to the Financial Support Scheme for Self-help Organisations for Persons with Disabilities/Chronic Illnesses. Currently, SWD provides funding through the Scheme to support the operation and development of self-help organisations, and foster the spirit of self-help and mutual help among persons with disabilities/persons with chronic illnesses and their families. At present, the total amount of annual funding allocated to the Scheme is about \$15 million. The Government plans to increase the funding from 2018-19 onwards to provide additional financial support for self-help organisations.

28. Secondly, SWD commissioned two non-governmental organisations 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 plans to regularise the Pilot Project in 2018-19.

Advice Sought

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

Labour and Welfare Bureau

Social Welfare Department

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