

**Legislative Council
Panel on Welfare Services and Panel on Health Services
Meeting of Joint Subcommittee on Long-term Care Policy
on 21 November 2017**

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

Supplementary Information

At the meeting of the Joint Subcommittee on Long-term Care Policy on 21 November 2017, the support for carers of elderly persons and of persons with disabilities was discussed. The Chairman requested the Government to provide a consolidated written reply after the meeting in response to the views expressed by the deputations/individuals and a Member:

- (i) Regarding the Pilot Scheme on Living Allowance for Carers of Elderly Persons from Low Income Families and the Pilot Scheme on Living Allowance for Low-income Carers of Persons with Disabilities, the application requirements were stringent, the application procedures were complicated and the number of places provided was inadequate.
- (ii) The provision of residential respite service, temporary day care service, emergency placement service, temporary elderly sitting service and case management service was inadequate.
- (iii) A Member said that the overcrowding situation in public hospitals was further aggravated by inadequate long-term care services. He called on the Government to address the difficulties encountered by the deputations/individuals in taking care of elderly persons or persons with disabilities.

This note sets out our response.

Response to Item (i)

2. In June 2014, the Government launched a Pilot Scheme on Living Allowance for Carers of Elderly Persons from Low Income Families through the Community Care Fund. The Pilot Scheme aims at providing carers of elderly persons from low income families with a monthly financial assistance of \$2,000 to supplement their living expenses so that elderly persons in need of long-term care may, with the help of their carers, receive proper care and remain living in the community. The second two-year phase of the Pilot Scheme was rolled out in October 2016, bringing the total number of beneficiaries under the two phases of the Pilot Scheme to 4 000. As at end-January 2018, 3 961 carers of elderly persons received the living allowance under the two phases.

3. On the other hand, the Government launched another two-year Pilot Scheme on Living Allowance for Low-income Carers of Persons with Disabilities through the Community Care Fund in October 2016. This Pilot Scheme also aims at providing carers of persons with disabilities from low income families with a monthly financial assistance of \$2,000 to supplement their living expenses so that 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. It is expected that 2 000 carers of persons with disabilities will benefit from this Pilot Scheme. As at end-January 2018, 1 514 carers of person with disabilities received the living allowance.

4. It is a new attempt to introduce carer allowance in Hong Kong. The Social Welfare Department (SWD) has commissioned the Sau Po Centre on Ageing of the University of Hong Kong to evaluate the second phase of the Pilot Scheme on Living Allowance for Carers of Elderly Persons from Low Income Families and the Pilot Scheme on Living Allowance for Low-income Carers of Persons with Disabilities, both launched in October 2016, to help the Government consider the way forward. The study includes a review of the existing eligibility criteria, procedures and the amount of allowance. The evaluation is expected to be completed in the third quarter of 2018.

Response to Item (ii)

5. The Government provides respite service for both elderly persons and persons with disabilities. Respite service for elderly persons offers temporary and short-term day care or residential care service for elderly persons living in the community who require assistance from family members or relatives in personal care. The service aims at relieving carers' stress from giving constant care to elderly persons and allowing them to take a short break when necessary, thereby encouraging and helping elderly persons to stay in the community. For day respite service for elderly persons, apart from the designated day respite places currently provided by over half of the day care centres/units for the elderly (DEs/DCUs) in the territory, day respite service is also available for elderly persons in need in all DEs/DCUs through the use of casual vacancies.

6. Residential respite service for persons with disabilities is attached to the residential care homes for persons with disabilities (RCHDs) subvented by SWD, providing short-term residential care for persons with disabilities so that their families or carers may, with advance planning, take a short break or attend to personal business. This also helps these families or carers temporarily relieve their caring duties and stress. The number of residential respite service users in 2016-17 was 3 331. Day respite service is also attached to some district support centres for persons with disabilities (DSCs), Day Activity Centres and RCHDs, providing persons with disabilities with short-term day care so that their family members or carers may attend to personal business or unexpected commitments.

The number of day respite service users in 2016-17 was 3 117. In addition, day care service for persons with severe disabilities covers a range of services such as nursing care, rehabilitation service, social and personal care services. It aims at supporting family members or carers to take care of persons with severe disabilities, thereby enhancing the opportunity for these persons with severe disabilities to stay in the community. The target group is persons with severe intellectual disabilities/severe physical disabilities aged between 15 and 59. The service is provided in DSCs, community rehabilitation day centres, and care and attention homes for severely disabled persons. To meet the demand for day care service arising from the growing number of ageing persons with disabilities, the Government increased recurrent expenditure by \$12.1 million in 2017-18 to provide 80 additional day care service places in DSCs and extend the service to persons with intellectual disabilities assessed as having onset of ageing. The total number of service places has been increased to over 200.

7. In addition, emergency placement service is also provided for both elderly persons and persons with disabilities. Emergency placement service is provided in some subvented residential care homes for the elderly (RCHEs) and nursing homes (NHs) to offer temporary or short-term residential care service. It seeks to keep watch of elderly persons who lack immediate care/accommodation until their family members are located and they can return home or other alternatives are arranged. At present, 17 RCHEs and six NHs are providing a total of 65 emergency places. At the same time, emergency placement service also provides temporary residential care for persons with disabilities with pressing needs so that they will not be in distress due to the lack of timely care and shelter. Applications for emergency placement can be made directly by caseworkers of SWD or non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to Po Leung Kuk Wing Lung Bank Golden Jubilee Sheltered Workshop and Hostel. At present, there are six such places in the hostel. There were two cases receiving the service in 2016-17.

8. SWD has all along been dedicated to promoting the use of case management services. Case managers provide case management services through one-stop support services for service users and their carers so as to co-ordinate and arrange appropriate care services. As regards services for the elderly, the Pilot Scheme on Residential Care Service Voucher (RCSV) for the Elderly, launched in March 2017, provides case management service for RCSV holders to assist them in selecting suitable recognised service providers (RSPs) and provide them with follow-up support after their admission to RSPs. Moreover, in December 2017, SWD rolled out the Pilot Scheme on Home Care and Support for Elderly Persons with Mild Impairment, under which social workers of participating NGOs have to conduct assessments and arrange home care and support services for elderly persons through the case management approach. As for services for persons with disabilities, SWD has since 2014 introduced case management services for DSCs, home care service for persons with severe disabilities (HCS) and integrated support service for persons with severe physical disabilities (ISS), so as to plan and coordinate inter-disciplinary services for persons with disabilities to receive timely

rehabilitation and welfare services at different stages of their life. To enhance the support for ageing persons with disabilities and their carers, SWD allocated an additional provision of \$6.2 million in 2017-18 to increase the number of social workers in DSCs for strengthening case management and outreach services. This can effectively identify the needs of persons with disabilities and provide them with suitable services or referral, so that they and their carers can receive timely and appropriate support.

Response to Item (iii)

9. The Government has been adopting a multi-pronged approach to increase the provision of residential care and day care places for the elderly. The Government will continue to build new contract RCHEs, proactively identify suitable sites for new homes, explore the feasibility of incorporating RCHEs into new developments and redevelopment projects and convert vacant buildings into RCHEs. SWD has earmarked sites in 27 development projects for the construction of new contract RCHEs and DE/DCUs. It is estimated that about 2 400 residential care places (including subsidised and non-subsidised places) and about 880 day care places for the elderly will be progressively provided starting 2017-18. Separately, the Government is also implementing the Special Scheme on Privately Owned Sites for Welfare Uses, under which NGOs are encouraged to optimise the use of their land to provide or increase those welfare facilities considered by the Government as being in acute demand, through expansion, redevelopment or new development. Based on the rough estimation of the applicant organisations, if all the projects under the Special Scheme could be implemented smoothly, there will be an additional provision of about 9 000 places for elderly services, including about 7 000 residential care places and about 2 000 day care places for the elderly. This will help alleviate the pressure on service demand and shorten the service waiting time.

10. Apart from increasing service provision through setting up new contract RCHEs and DEs/DCUs, the Government has also launched the Pilot Schemes on RCSV and Community Care Service Voucher (CCSV) for the Elderly. A total of 3 000 RCSVs are being issued by five batches from 2017 to 2019 under the Pilot Scheme on RCSV which gives elderly persons in need of residential care service an additional choice and provides an incentive for RCHEs to improve their services. The Second Phase of the Pilot Scheme on CCSV was launched in October 2016 to provide a mixture of centre-based and home-based services catering for the diversified needs of elderly persons. The Government plans to provide an additional 1 000 CCSVs in 2018-19, bringing the total to 6 000, to further support ageing in place for elderly persons with moderate or severe impairment.

11. Moreover, the Government just launched the Pilot Scheme on Support for Elderly Persons Discharged from Public Hospitals After Treatment in February 2018. Through medical-social collaboration, eligible elderly persons discharged from hospitals who have difficulty in taking care of themselves during rehabilitation

will be provided with appropriate transitional residential care and/or community care and support services. The Pilot Scheme aims at enabling them to continue ageing in place in a familiar community after receiving transitional services, thereby preventing their premature long-term institutionalisation in RCHEs.

12. SWD has also been dedicated to providing persons with disabilities and their carers with various subvented community care services, with the aim to help persons with disabilities to stay in the community and assist their carers in coping with the difficulties in taking care of them. These services include parents/relatives resource centres, respite service, DSCs, HCS, ISS, day care service for persons with severe disabilities and integrated community centres for mental wellness, through which emotional support, personal and nursing care, rehabilitation training, day care, home respite, escort, cash subsidy for renting respiratory support medical equipment and purchasing medical consumables, etc. are provided. SWD will conduct timely review of these services so as to meet the needs of persons with disabilities.

Labour and Welfare Bureau
Social Welfare Department
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