

**For information on  
1 June 2020**

**Legislative Council  
Panel on Welfare Services  
Panel on Health Services  
Joint Subcommittee on Long-term Care Policy**

**Application of gerontechnology in elderly care services**

**Purpose**

This paper sets out the progress in promoting the application of gerontechnology in elderly care services.

**Innovation and Technology Fund for Application in Elderly and Rehabilitation Care**

2. Gerontechnology combines elderly service with innovative technologies. It helps to improve the lives of elderly persons as well as reduce the burden and stress of their carers and care service staff. Gerontechnology is one of the important strategies for coping with an ageing society. To promote the use of gerontechnology, the Chief Executive's 2017 Policy Address announced the earmarking of \$1 billion for setting up a fund to subsidise elderly and rehabilitation service units to try out and procure technology products.

3. In December 2018, the Government established the Innovation and Technology Fund for Application in Elderly and Rehabilitation Care (the I&T Fund), allowing all non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and private organisations currently receiving subsidies from the Social Welfare Department (SWD) and providing residential care services for the elderly or persons with disabilities (PWDs), community care and support services for the elderly, and day rehabilitation and community support services to apply for procuring / renting or trying out technology products.

4. On procuring / renting technology products, apart from devices, equipment and tools that help enhancing the effectiveness and quality of care, products subsidised by the I&T Fund also include mobile applications and the corresponding hardware and software. For example, systems that can effectively and accurately record activities, health conditions and medical records, etc, of elderly persons and PWDs. Institutions may also apply for subsidies to try out newly developed technology products in their elderly or rehabilitation service units.

5. SWD has established a Secretariat to the I&T Fund to oversee the management of the I&T Fund and support the Assessment Panel. The Assessment Panel comprises members from the academia, professionals from the information and technology and social welfare sectors, as well as representatives of the relevant Government bureaux and departments. The Assessment Panel will assess applications received and recommend the funding amount to be approved based on the set criteria, including feasibility, sustainability and cost-effectiveness of the products, benefits the products brought to service users, and experience, ability and professional knowledge of the applicant organisations to use technology products, etc.

6. Social welfare institutions may apply for the I&T Fund to procure / rent items on the reference list of Recognised Technology Application Products<sup>1</sup>. If the products applied for purchase / rental are not on the reference list, the Assessment Panel will consider the circumstances of the individual case and decide whether to approve funding after consulting an expert group. Applicant organisations may also identify technology research and development companies as working partners to try out newly developed technology products designed specifically for the nursing and rehabilitation needs of the elderly or PWDs. The amount of subsidy provided under the I&T Fund covers staff training cost on using technology products and warranty/maintenance costs of the products for a maximum of five years.

7. Two rounds of applications were received under the I&T Fund in 2019, and a total grant of about \$140 million was approved, subsidising 770 elderly and rehabilitation service units to procure or rent over 2 900 technology products. Elderly care service units accounted for more than

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<sup>1</sup> The reference list of Recognised Technology Application Products was jointly drawn up by the Secretariat to the I&T Fund and the Hong Kong Council of Social Service and other stakeholders.

\$89 million of the amount approved, involving about 480 service units and over 2 100 technology products. Popular products approved for elderly service units included electric climbers, smart hospital beds with extra low position, occupational therapy / physiotherapy / speech therapy equipment and assessment tools, etc. The third round of applications for the I&T Fund was closed on 27 April 2020, and the Secretariat received applications from some 450 service units involving about 1 700 items. Vetting of the applications is currently underway. It is estimated that the I&T Fund will be progressively disbursed in the five-year period starting from 2019-20.

### **Promotion of Gerontechnology**

8. The Hong Kong Council of Social Service (HKCSS) is an important partner of the Government in the promotion of gerontechnology. The Chief Executive's 2017 Policy Agenda stated that HKCSS would be commissioned to promote the use of technology among social welfare institutions providing elderly and rehabilitation care services and carers. In the 2018-19 Budget, the Government set aside additional recurrent allocation of about \$3.75 million for HKCSS to employ extra staff to promote the use of technology products in long-term care services among social welfare institutions and carers, and to serve a co-ordinating role to facilitate partnership among various stakeholders.

9. HKCSS provides a platform for social welfare institutions to share experience in using gerontechnology to enhance their services. It also carries out gerontechnology education through various measures, for example, by producing short videos for broadcasting on online platforms, social media, public transportation, premises in the districts, etc, thereby enhancing public knowledge and awareness of gerontechnology.

### **Free Wi-Fi**

10. Through the allocation of some \$205 million by the Lotteries Fund, the Government launched a four-year pilot project to provide free Wi-Fi service at about 1 350 service units operated by SWD-subsidised NGOs progressively from January 2020, so as to meet the needs of elderly and rehabilitation care service units in using innovation and technology products, strengthen the connection between elderly persons and other

service users with the community, and enhance service quality.

### **Advice Sought**

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

**Labour and Welfare Bureau  
Social Welfare Department  
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