

For Information

Legislative Council Panel on Health Services

Updates on the Elderly Health Care Voucher Greater Bay Area Pilot Scheme

PURPOSE

This paper briefs Members on the latest progress of the Elderly Health Care Voucher Greater Bay Area Pilot Scheme (“Pilot Scheme”).

BACKGROUND

2. The Government launched the Elderly Health Care Voucher Scheme (“EHVS”) in 2009 which aims at providing financial incentives for elderly persons to choose private primary healthcare (“PHC”) services that best suit their health needs, and providing them with healthcare choices on top of the public healthcare services. The EHVS currently subsidises eligible Hong Kong elderly persons aged 65 or above with an annual voucher amount of \$2,000 to pay for private PHC services provided by 14 categories¹ of locally registered healthcare professionals who are enrolled in the EHVS. Pursuant to the framework of the Primary Healthcare Blueprint, the Government continues to enhance the EHVS by incentivising elderly persons to make good use of private PHC services. Enhancement measures includes the extension of the coverage of Elderly Health Care Vouchers (“EHCVs”) to include PHC services provided by four categories of the healthcare professionals enlisted under the Accredited Registers Scheme for Healthcare Professionals (“AR Scheme”) (i.e. audiologists, dietitians, clinical psychologists and speech therapists) in April 2023, and rolling out of the EHCV Pilot Reward Scheme² (“Pilot Reward Scheme”) in November 2023.

3. As at end-October 2024, over 12 100 healthcare providers in Hong Kong have enrolled in the EHVS, allowing elderly persons to use the EHCVs at over

¹ Including medical practitioners, Chinese medicine practitioners, dentists, nurses, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, radiographers, medical laboratory technologists, chiropractors, optometrists with Part I registration under the Supplementary Medical Professions Ordinance (Cap 359), audiologists, dietitians, clinical psychologists and speech therapists enlisted under the Accredited Registers Scheme for Healthcare Professionals.

² Under the Pilot Reward Scheme, elderly persons, upon claiming at least \$1,000 from their voucher account for designated PHC services such as appropriate health assessment, chronic diseases screening and management, may then be automatically allotted \$500 reward to their account for the same use.

38 700 service points. Over 1.69 million elderly persons (i.e. over 99% of the eligible elderly population³) have used EHCVs. The actual expenditure on the EHVS for 2022-23 and 2023-24 is \$2,785.9 million and \$3,333.1 million respectively, whereas the estimated expenditure for 2024-25 is \$3,960 million.

4. To provide convenience to eligible Hong Kong elderly persons residing in Shenzhen and nearby areas, the Government has launched the University of Hong Kong-Shenzhen Hospital (“HKU-SZH”) scheme since 2015 to enable Hong Kong eligible elderly persons to use the EHCVs to pay for the fees of designated outpatient healthcare services received at the HKU-SZH⁴. As at end-October 2024, more than 22 200 eligible elderly persons have used EHCVs at the HKU-SZH and its offsite Huawei Li Zhi Yuan Community Health Service Center (“LCYCHC”), involving a total amount of EHCVs of about HK\$67.49 million (about RMB 59.23 million).

ELDERLY HEALTH CARE VOUCHER GREATER BAY AREA PILOT SCHEME

5. The Chief Executive’s Policy Address 2023 announced the rolling out of the Pilot Scheme in 2024 to extend the coverage of the EHCVs to suitable medical institutions in the Greater Bay Area (“GBA”), initially to about five medical institutions in GBA cities where Hong Kong elderly persons have closer ties with and frequently visit as trial service points for provision of PHC services. It would also cover individual designated medical institutions providing dental services in locations such as Shenzhen.

6. There are two major objectives for implementing the Pilot Scheme. First, it aims to provide more convenience and flexibility for eligible Hong Kong elderly persons residing in Mainland cities in the GBA by providing more service point options for them to utilise EHCVs to meet their PHC needs and improve health condition. Secondly, it is intended to allow eligible Hong Kong elderly persons to use their EHCVs for receiving dental services across the boundary at medical institutions in Shenzhen or even other Mainland cities in the GBA, with a view to addressing the pressing demand of Hong Kong elderly persons in seeking dental services.

³ According to the Hong Kong Population Projections 2022-2046 of the Census and Statistics Department, there are a total of 1 702 000 persons aged 65 or above in 2024.

⁴ Starting from April 2023, eligible Hong Kong elderly persons can also use the EHCVs to pay for the fees of outpatient healthcare services at the LCYCHC, an offsite outpatient health centre of the HKU-SZH.

7. To take forward the Pilot Scheme, between November 2023 and early February 2024, the Government conducted a market research, sought opinions and recommendations from the Health Commission of Guangdong Province, conducted site visits for direct inspection of the facilities, equipment and operation of the medical institutions as well as met with management personnel to understand the institutions' management structure and model, as well as operation, etc. Having taken into account factors including service quality, experience in management and operation, as well as fee standards and level, the Government announced the list of medical institutions covered by the Pilot Scheme on 19 February this year.

Implementation Progress

8. With the Government's strenuous effort to take forward the initiative, the first pilot medical institution commenced service ahead of schedule in the second quarter of this year, while the remaining six commenced services in an orderly manner during the third quarter. Since then, the coverage of the EHCVs has been extended to seven integrated medical/dental institutions in the GBA, covering Guangzhou, Zhongshan, Dongguan and Shenzhen (see the table below). Together with the existing HKU-SZH and its offsite LCYCHC, the number of service points where eligible elderly persons can use their EHCVs in the GBA has significantly expanded to nine.

Category	Pilot Medical Institution/ Service Point	Location	Service Commencement Date
Providing integrated medical services ⁵	The First Affiliated Hospital, Sun Yat-sen University ("FAH-SYSU")	Guangzhou	28 June
	Zhongshan Chen Xinghai Hospital of Integrated Traditional Chinese and Western Medicine ("ZSCXH")	Zhongshan	18 July
	Shenzhen New Frontier United Family Hospital ("NFUFH")	Shenzhen	14 August

⁵ Dental services are included.

Category	Pilot Medical Institution/ Service Point	Location	Service Commencement Date
	Nansha Division of the First Affiliated Hospital, Sun Yat-sen University (“FAH-NS”) ⁶	Guangzhou (Nansha)	6 September
	Dongguan Tungwah Hospital (“Tungwah Hospital”)	Dongguan	6 September
Providing dental services	Shenzhen C.K.J Stomatological Hospital	Shenzhen	14 August
	Dental Bauhinia Specialty Service Center (Shenzhen)/Dental Bauhinia General Care Center (Shenzhen)	Shenzhen	14 August

9. The designated departments/dental care services provided by the pilot medical institutions which eligible Hong Kong elderly persons can use EHCVs to pay for healthcare services are set out at **Annex 1**. The arrangements for shared use of vouchers between spouses and the Pilot Reward Scheme⁷ under the EHVS are equally applicable to the pilot medical institutions. To ensure that the EHCVs can effectively support the policy objective of implementing PHC, the scope of use of EHCVs under the Pilot Scheme is identical to that in Hong Kong and under the HKU-SZH scheme, which does not include in-patient services, prepaid healthcare services and day surgery procedures. In addition, the EHCVs cannot be used solely for the purchase of goods, medication, medical equipment and products, nor be redeemed for cash. The fees for the healthcare services provided by pilot medical institutions are denominated in Renminbi. The pilot medical institutions will make EHCV claims for elderly persons, and the EHCV amounts deducted in Hong Kong dollars will be calculated according to a monthly updated voucher conversion factor under the EHVS. Pilot medical institutions are required to display the monthly voucher conversion factor at their cashier offices for the elderly’s reference. Elderly persons cannot use EHCVs together

⁶ Department of Stomatology of the Nansha Division of the First Affiliated Hospital, Sun Yat-sen University is pending service launch.

⁷ Elderly persons using EHCVs to receive designated PHC outpatient services for health checks, disease prevention and follow-up/monitoring of long-term conditions provided by designated departments of five medical institutions offering integrated services, or to receive designated dental outpatient services such as dental check-ups, scaling, extraction or filling provided by two dental care institutions, can accumulate EHCV spending and be allotted rewards.

with national medical insurance to pay for the fees of the same healthcare service encounter.

10. As at end-October 2024, 5 551⁸ eligible elderly persons have used EHCVs to pay for the fees of outpatient healthcare services received at medical institutions under the Pilot Scheme, involving 8 660 voucher claim transactions and a total claimed amount at approximately HK\$10.9 million. The usage of EHCVs by eligible elderly persons at various pilot medical institutions are set out at **Annex 2**.

Complaint and Monitoring Mechanism

11. The Government maintained close contact with the health authorities of Guangdong Province while supervising pilot medical institutions to ensure the effective implementation of the preparatory work and various supporting arrangements. The quality of clinical services and the fees charged by Mainland medical institutions are subject to strict supervision and regulation by relevant local authorities. Each pilot medical institution has set up its own enquiry and complaint hotline. In the event of any disputes, Hong Kong elderly persons may raise their concerns with the relevant medical institutions following established procedures, or where necessary lodge complaints against the medical institution concerned with the health authorities at the provincial or municipal level. Medical institutions and the local regulatory authorities will follow up on the matters seriously.

12. On the other hand, the Department of Health (“DH”) has also established a liaison mechanism with the Mainland regulatory authorities to enhance information exchange and collaborative efficiency between the two regions, in order to improve the overall regulatory effectiveness on voucher usage in the Mainland and facilitate the follow-up of relevant complaints. In addition, modelling on the existing operation mode of the HKU-SZH scheme, the DH has put in place a mechanism to monitor the EHCV usage including routine checking, investigations of aberrant voucher claims and follow-up actions on complaints. Elderly persons can report suspected breach of conditions of the EHVS by pilot medical institutions to the Health Care Voucher Division of the DH through the EHVS hotline.

⁸ An elderly person might have received services at more than one pilot medical institution.

Electronic Health Record Sharing System (eHealth)

13. To assist elderly persons to better record and manage their health and EHCV usage, as well as to facilitate healthcare professionals to deliver continuous and personalised healthcare, starting from the commencement of service by the first pilot medical institution (i.e. 28 June 2024), elderly persons using EHCVs at any designated medical institution in the GBA must be registered with eHealth. After joining eHealth, elderly persons can use the mobile app to check their EHCV balance and usage record, as well as access important information such as their medications, allergies and adverse drug reactions, appointments and investigation records at any time.

14. Besides, the Government piloted the new “Cross-boundary Health Record” and “Personal Folder” functions of the eHealth App at the HKU-SZH in July this year to enhance the continuity of medical care for Hong Kong citizens through facilitating their secure use of electronic health records (“eHRs”) across the boundary. The “Cross-boundary Health Record” function allows elderly persons eligible to receive EHCVs to apply for their eHRs in eHealth over the past three years in advance before their consultations at the designated medical institutions. During the consultation, they can allow healthcare professionals to access and browse the relevant eHRs to assist in diagnoses and treatment. This function is only applicable to hospitals outside Hong Kong that are specified and certified by the Health Bureau to ensure the safety of citizens’ medical data. Meanwhile, the “Personal Folder” function allows eHealth users to deposit medical-related records obtained during consultations received in medical institutions outside Hong Kong into their eHealth personal accounts to facilitate storage and use of personal medical-related records obtained in and outside Hong Kong, including access by authorised healthcare providers in Hong Kong through eHealth during follow-up consultations. The two aforementioned functions have been extended to FAH-SYSU, ZSCXH, FAH-NS, Tungwah Hospital and NFUFH under the Pilot Scheme since September this year. The Government will continue to extend the eHealth cross-boundary functions to more medical institutions under the Pilot Scheme on a gradual basis. Taking into account the implementation experience, we will also further streamline the workflow and enhance the user experience to better support citizens’ cross-boundary healthcare needs.

EXTENDING THE PILOT SCHEME

15. The local community has responded very positively to the Pilot Scheme upon its launch. Elderly beneficiaries opine that the additional service points in the GBA have greatly enhanced their convenience and provided them with more options of medical treatment. The Chief Executive's Policy Address 2024 announced the extension of the Pilot Scheme to cover nine Mainland cities in the GBA. The Government is preparing for the extension by providing additional service points, with a view to achieving full coverage of the nine Mainland cities in the GBA. The initial plan is to commence the relevant arrangements by the fourth quarter of 2025.

ADVICE SOUGHT

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

Health Bureau
Department of Health
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Elderly Health Care Voucher Greater Bay Area Pilot Scheme
Designated Outpatient Clinics/Departments and Outpatient Healthcare Services of Pilot Medical Institutions

Pilot Medical Institution	Location	Designated Outpatient Clinics/Departments accepting EHCVs/Applicable Services	
		Number	Details
The First Affiliated Hospital, Sun Yat-sen University	Guangzhou	15	Department of Internal Medicine, Department of Surgery, Department of Gynecology, Department of Ophthalmology, Department of Otolaryngology, Department of Stomatology, Department of Dermatology, Department of Rehabilitation Medicine, Department of Laboratory Medicine, Department of Traditional Chinese Medicine, Department of Neurology, Department of Cardiovascular Medicine, Department of Nutrition, Health Management Center and Department of Emergency Medicine
Zhongshan Chen Xinghai Hospital of Integrated Traditional Chinese and Western Medicine	Zhongshan	13	General Outpatient Clinic, Internal Medicine Department, Surgical Department, Health Check Center, Disease Prevention Center, Emergency Department, Dental Department, Disease Prevention Center by Herbal Medicine, Rehabilitation Department, Massage Department, Orthopaedics Department, Gynaecology Department and Ophthalmology Department
Shenzhen New Frontier United Family Hospital	Shenzhen	9	Family Medicine, Health Management, Dental, Ophthalmology, Surgery, Orthopaedics, Internal Medicine, Gynaecology and ENT (Ear, Nose, Throat)
Nansha Division of the First Affiliated Hospital, Sun Yat-sen University	Guangzhou (Nansha)	14	Department of Internal Medicine, Department of Surgery, Department of Gynecology, Department of Ophthalmology, Department of Otorhinolaryngology (Ear, Nose, Throat), Department of Stomatology*, Department of Dermatology, Department of Rehabilitation Medicine, Department of Traditional Chinese Medicine, Department of Neurology, Department of Cardiovascular Medicine, Department of Nutrition, Health Management Center and Department of Emergency Medicine
Dongguan Tungwah Hospital	Dongguan	14	Internal Medicine Department, Surgery Department, Orthopedics Department, Gynecology Department, Ophthalmology Department, Stomatology Department, Emergency Medicine Department, General Medicine Practice, Clinical Nutrition Department, Traditional Chinese Medicine Department, Physical Examination Department, Dermatology Department, Rehabilitation Department and Clinical Psychology Department
Shenzhen C.K.J Stomatological Hospital	Shenzhen	／	Dental Care Services
Dental Bauhinia Specialty Service Center (Shenzhen)/ Dental Bauhinia General Care Center (Shenzhen)	Shenzhen	／	Dental Care Services

*operation yet to commence

**Elderly Health Care Voucher Greater Bay Area Pilot Scheme
Usage of EHCVs by Elderly Persons at Respective Pilot Medical Institutions
(as at 31 October 2024)**

Table 1: Statistics on EHCVs claimed under the Pilot Scheme

Pilot medical institution	Days of implementation	Number of claim transactions		Amount of voucher claimed (HK\$)		Number of elderly persons who have used EHCVs at the service point
		Total	Average number of claim transactions per day	Total	Average amount of vouchers per claim transaction	
The First Affiliated Hospital, Sun Yat-sen University	126	1 062	8	531,777	500.73	414
Zhongshan Chen Xinghai Hospital of Integrated Traditional Chinese and Western Medicine	106	1 272	12	619,561	487.08	475
Shenzhen New Frontier United Family Hospital	79	835	11	869,420	1,041.22	632
Nansha Division of the First Affiliated Hospital, Sun Yat-sen University	56	113	2	43,691	386.65	50
Dongguan Tungwah Hospital	56	355	6	214,365	603.85	170
Shenzhen C.K.J Stomatological Hospital	79	4 868	62	8,295,313	1,704.05	3 684
Dental Bauhinia Specialty Service Center (Shenzhen) / Dental Bauhinia General Care Center (Shenzhen)	79	155	2	326,113	2,103.95	126
Total:		8 660	103	10,900,240	1,258.69	5 551^{Note 1}

Note 1: An elderly person might have received services at more than one pilot medical institution

Table 2: Use of vouchers by service type under the Pilot Scheme

Pilot medical institution	Number of claim transactions (Percentage against the number of transactions under the Pilot Scheme)								Total number of claim transactions (v) [=(i)+(ii)+(iii)+(iv)]
	Preventive (i)		Follow-up/ Monitoring of long-term condition (ii)		Management of acute episodic condition (iii)		Rehabilitation (iv)		
The First Affiliated Hospital, Sun Yat-sen University	103	9.70%	696	65.54%	183	17.23%	80	7.53%	1 062
Zhongshan Chen Xinghai Hospital of Integrated Traditional Chinese and Western Medicine	184	14.47%	563	44.26%	346	27.20%	179	14.07%	1 272
Shenzhen New Frontier United Family Hospital	325	38.92%	359	42.99%	150	17.96%	1	0.12%	835
Nansha Division of the First Affiliated Hospital, Sun Yat-sen University	7	6.19%	78	69.03%	24	21.24%	4	3.54%	113
Dongguan Tungwah Hospital	131	36.90%	148	41.69%	74	20.85%	2	0.56%	355
Shenzhen C.K.J Stomatological Hospital	1 286	26.42%	2 374	48.77%	46	0.94%	1 162	23.87%	4 868
Dental Bauhinia Specialty Service Center (Shenzhen) / Dental Bauhinia General Care Center (Shenzhen)	53	34.19%	68	43.87%	15	9.68%	19	12.26%	155
Total:	2 089	24.12%	4 286	49.49%	838	9.68%	1 447	16.71%	8 660