

**For discussion
on 14 April 2025**

**Legislative Council
Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting**

Promoting Digital Inclusion

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on the work progress in promoting digital inclusion by the Government, and outlines future plans and directions.

Background

2. The Government has been committed to promoting digital inclusion and encouraging active participation from various sectors of society to help those in need, in particular the elders, to understand and use technology products and services, and to integrate into the digital society. According to government statistics, the rate of persons aged 65 and above using the Internet increased from around 56% in 2018 to around 84% in 2023, reflecting the widespread use of digital technologies among the elders. This includes activities such as using the Internet for information searches, social interactions, entertainment, shopping and mobile payment, etc.

3. As the proportion of elders using digital technologies increases, the Government will continue to introduce and enhance various digital inclusion measures to help the elders better master and apply digital technologies.

Work on Digital Inclusion under “Smart Silver”

4. To promote the adoption of digital technologies by the elders, we have launched the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Outreach Programme for the Elderly since 2014, collaborating with elderly service organisations to visit elders across the territory as well as organise various activities for them to experience digital life, encouraging greater use of digital technologies.

5. We have also introduced the Enriched ICT Training Programme for the Elderly in 2019, collaborating with district organisations and Elder Academies to provide free ICT advanced training courses for the elders with basic digital knowledge in the community regularly. At the same time, we launched the “Elderly IT Learning Portal”, a web-based learning portal designed and developed with digital technology learning materials suitable for the elders.

6. According to the post-activity surveys, the vast majority of the elderly respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the above-mentioned outreach/ training activities. To further consolidate the current work on digital inclusion for elders, the Digital Policy Office (DPO) launched the “Smart Silver” Digital Inclusion Programme for Elders in December 2024, integrating with the above regular programmes, while also providing funding through the Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship Development Fund (SIE Fund) to support district services organisations in setting up community-based help desks across the territory to provide regular and fixed-point training on digital technologies and technical support for elders.

7. The latest progress of various digital inclusion measures implemented by the DPO under the “Smart Silver” programme is elaborated in the ensuing paragraphs.

The ICT Outreach Programme for the Elderly and Mobile Outreach Service Stations

8. Non-profit-making elderly services organisations (NPOs) were commissioned under the ICT Outreach Programme for the Elderly to visit elders across districts in Hong Kong, including those living in residential care homes, receiving care services at day care centres and at home, as well as the hidden elders. The programme aims at enabling the elders to experience digital living, with activities including teaching them to understand and use digital technology products, introducing smart robots to demonstrate fitness exercises, rehabilitation treatment with virtual reality and archer games on augmented reality to strengthen their muscle and hand-eye coordination. Over 145 000 elders have participated in the programme since its launch. The outreach programme for 2023 to 2025 will conclude at the end of April 2025.

9. We have openly invited institutions/ organisations to submit project proposals for the new round of outreach programme (2025 to 2026) in January 2025, the evaluation of proposals is in progress. It is expected that the services will be launched in the middle of this year. The funded elderly services organisations will place special emphasis on caring for hidden elders in the community, proactively reaching out to those who are less visible. They will provide outreach services and introduce the relevant measures under the “Smart Silver” programme, encouraging the elders’ active participation. Through learning digital technologies, elders will be able to manage daily affairs more independently and stay connected with their family members, thereby improving their quality of life.

10. Besides, the outreach programme has launched the mobile outreach service stations at community locations frequently visited by the elders starting from 2021, and proactively introduce to the elders useful mobile applications, answer their questions about using smartphones, and provide anti-fraud information and cyber security tips. A total of 360 mobile outreach service activities have been conducted so far, serving some 25 000 elders in the community. In view of the positive response from elders in the community, we regularised this service in 2023 and plan to conduct at least 300 mobile outreach activities in the new round of the outreach programme, with an estimated participation of no less than 18 000 elders.

The Digital Inclusion Programme for Elders

11. It was announced in the 2024-25 Budget that the SIE Fund would allocate \$100 million by batches in the coming three years to implement the Digital Inclusion Programme for Elders. The programme aims to assist elders aged 60 or above in understanding and using digital technology products and services, ensuring that they can adopt digital technologies effectively and safely, and integrate them into the digital society.

12. The Digital Inclusion Programme for Elders provides funding for 12 district service organisations to set up 40 community-based help desks across 18 districts in the territory to provide regular and fixed-point training on digital technologies and technical support. All help desks have gradually commenced services in December 2024 in places frequently visited by elders or with higher flow of visitors, such as community centres, District Council Members' offices, Community Living Rooms and elderly centres.

13. In addition to technical support, the implementing organisations will organise various activities to attract elders, such as digital technology experience days and interactive training sessions. The aim is to encourage active participation and provide a fun and relaxed environment for learning digital technologies. The implementing organisations will adopt a straightforward approach to encourage elders to learn how to use practical mobile applications and digital services in their daily lives. This includes guidance on downloading and registering as "iAM Smart" users, enrolling for using "Contactless e-Channel", booking venues under the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, checking appointment information for medical consultations, operating other commonly used government mobile applications and cyber security knowledge. Experienced staff or volunteers of the implementing organisations will station at the community-based help desks to provide personalised technical support to elders in need, enabling them to enjoy the benefits brought by digital services. We expect that the programme will benefit over 100 000 elders as a whole.

14. We are implementing a territory-wide promotional campaign for the Digital Inclusion Programme for Elders, including a launch ceremony-cum-fun day in December 2024 to introduce and promote related services through exhibition booths, organising promotional events with implementing organisations and the industry sectors, launching the dedicated website, and broadcasting promotional videos on television and radio, etc.

The Enriched ICT Training Programme for the Elderly

15. The Enriched ICT Training Programme for the Elderly offers over 330 free advanced training courses for the elders with basic knowledge of digital technology, covering areas such as smart healthcare, online shopping, mobile payment, social media and cyber security, as well as advanced functions of Government mobile applications (such as inviting family members to manage and browse health records through “HA Go”). In addition to face-to-face classes, some training courses also provide online teaching mode, which saves the elders from traveling to the class location and makes it convenient for some elders with limited mobility to learn advanced digital knowledge at home. We also engage young people to act as instructors and promote harmony across generations. Up to now, the programme has attracted more than 15 000 elders to participate.

16. The various digital inclusion programmes will work in tandem to achieve greater synergy and impact. For instance, elders who have completed the basic, regular and fixed-point training on digital technologies, will be introduced to participate in enriched ICT training programme, if they seek to deepen their digital knowledge. This will not only broaden elders’ digital knowledge and skills but also empower them to volunteer as instructors, teaching fellow elders how to navigate these skills, thereby allowing more elders to enjoy the benefits and conveniences brought by digital technologies.

17. The statistical figures and programme summary of the above-mentioned digital inclusion measures are at **Annex**

Web-based Learning Portal

18. The “Elderly IT Learning Portal” (the Portal) was launched in 2019 with the aim of facilitating the acquisition of digital skills by the elders, anytime and anywhere, based on their personal needs and interests. The Portal has rolled out 39 learning modules so far, with continuously updated contents, including the application of digital technologies in daily life, such as “iAM Smart”, social networking, anti-fraud information, streaming platforms and electronic food ordering. The Portal also recently introduced contents on smart city development, open data and big data, and simple programming, encouraging the elders to keep up with the times.

19. Apart from regular updates to the learning modules, the DPO actively enhances the Portal’s functionality and user interface, while diversifying content to improve user experience. The enhancements include strengthening the search function to help users filter suitable information about digital training courses, information on community-based help desks and mobile digital service stations. These improvements not only provide the elders with better experiences in self-learning of digital technologies with the platform but also make it easier for them to grasp information about the “Smart Silver” programme and its activities. So far, the Portal recorded over 1.5 million visits and over 54 million hits.

Digital Accessibility Campaign

20. The DPO has been committed to promoting Digital Accessibility through different channels, encouraging both government as well as public and private organisations to adopt accessible designs in their website and mobile applications to facilitate elders and people with disabilities in accessing online information and services. This includes requiring the websites of all bureaux and departments to meet the Level AA standard of the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines Version 2.0 promulgated by the World Wide Web Consortium and mobile applications to incorporate accessibility features, and providing different technical training and guidelines for reference by departments.

21. Currently, all of some 700 government websites and some 80 government mobile applications have fully implemented accessibility features. We also regularly conduct accessibility standard audits for government websites and mobile applications to ensure they comply with the prevailing accessibility standards.

22. Besides, in order to facilitate the elders to browse web information and use online services, we launched the Elderly-friendly Website/ Mobile Application Design Guide to provide recommendations for government departments and industries to reference and encourage them to adopt these designs, to meet the needs of an aging society.

23. To encourage more enterprises, public and private organisations to adopt accessible design, the DPO supports the Hong Kong Internet Registration Corporation Limited (HKIRC) in hosting the Digital Accessibility Recognition Scheme¹. During the implementation of the 2022-23 Recognition Scheme, HKIRC proactively reached out to around 65 public organisations, to promote accessible website/ mobile application design, including the Consumer Council, the Occupational Safety and Health Council, and the Hong Kong Palace Museum, etc., while promoted to approximately 300 private organisations, including the MTR Corporation Limited, the Citybus Limited, and the Hang Seng Bank Limited, etc. Eventually, around 60 public organisations and 180 private organisations have adopted or enhanced accessible website/ mobile application design, and received awards. The 2024-25 Recognition Scheme will also introduce a new Elderly-friendly Award. A total of about 650 applications have been received and are currently being reviewed. The awards ceremony is scheduled to be held in May this year tentatively.

Future Plans

24. Through a series of elderly-targeted training courses and practical activities, we expect the rate of persons aged 65 and above using the Internet to reach the new target of 87% by 2025, while enhancing the

¹ Formerly known as the Web Accessibility Recognition Scheme

ability of the elders to use digital technology in daily life.

25. The DPO will continue expanding regional collaboration networks, encouraging implementing organisations under the “Smart Silver” programme to unite the efforts of all sectors of society and work together to benefit more elders in taking forward various digital inclusion measures. Some implementing organisations also work closely with District Council members and Care Teams to leverage their community networks and outreach opportunities to promote the programme in the community, and provide training and support to help elders master digital technologies.

26. Meanwhile, the DPO maintains close ties with different government departments, industry, professional bodies and local organisations to explore collaborations that expand the programme’s reach. For instance, we recently facilitated partnerships between implementing organisations and Police Community Relations Office to co-organise training courses to teach members of the Senior Police Call how to use smartphones and introduce them to commonly used government mobile applications, strengthening their digital literacy while broadening promotional efforts. The DPO also plans joint seminars with the Hong Kong Police Force, the innovation and technology industry and other relevant government departments to introduce anti-fraud information and the latest trends in digital technologies to the staff of implementing organisations, so as to support the work of frontline staff more effectively, thereby providing more comprehensive support services for the elderly.

27. In addition to focusing on promoting digital inclusion to the elders, we will continue to invite young volunteers from the industry and professional organisations to serve as course instructors for the Training Programme, and invite secondary school students to volunteer at mobile digital service stations to assist community elders in using digital technologies. This intergenerational approach not only eases the adoption of digital technologies by elders, but also fosters youth social responsibility and empathy through community service.

28. Through the diverse collaborations mentioned above, the DPO hopes to enable citizens of different age groups to enjoy the conveniences brought by digital technology and further promote digital inclusion.

Advice Sought

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

Innovation, Technology and Industry Bureau
Digital Policy Office
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The ICT Outreach Programme for the Elderly

Statistics (Since first round in 2014 until now)	
Number of elders received services	Over 145 000 elderly participants
Number of activities conducted	Over 49 000
Number of NPOs	14 (including six rounds of programme, some of these organisations have participated in more than one round of programme)
Overview of current round of programme (As of February 2025)	
Six implementing organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Hong Kong Chinese Women’s Club • Hong Kong Children & Youth Services • Hong Kong Lutheran Social Service, LC-HKS • The Neighbourhood Advice-Action Council • Tung Wah Group of Hospitals • Yang Memorial Methodist Social Service
Implementation period	April 2023 – April 2025
Number of elders received services	About 46 000 elderly participants
Number of activities conducted	About 11 000
Programme content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of applications to communicate with family members, relatives and friends, or to produce personalised photos and videos and share with family and friends • Provide rehabilitation and functional strengthening activities, physiotherapy training and cognitive training for elderly with gerontechnology products (e.g. motion sensing games) • Facilitate the elders to enjoy using technology through multi-sensory stimulation and 3D simulated scenes • Interact with other people in metaverse and experience the new ICT • Arrange youth volunteers to visit institutions, and share the benefits in using ICT and gerontechnology with the elders • Assist elders in conducting smart health management and remote telehealth consultation with professional nurses • Provide basic health assessments and recommendations to the elderly by using the AI-powered mirror • Use augmented reality technology combined with different applications for reminiscence therapy or art therapy • Enhance emotional management of the elders by interacting with smart robots • Provide virtual tours for elders by facilitating them to explore the community through technologies

Mobile Outreach Service Stations

Statistics (Since end of 2021 until now)	
Number of elders received services	Over 25 000 elders
Number of activities conducted	Over 360
Number of NPOs	Eight (including two rounds of programme, some of these organisations have participated in more than one round of programme)
Overview of current round of programme (As of February 2025)	
Six implementing organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Hong Kong Chinese Women’s Club• Hong Kong Children & Youth Services• Hong Kong Lutheran Social Service, LC-HKS• The Neighbourhood Advice-Action Council• Tung Wah Group of Hospitals• Yang Memorial Methodist Social Service
Implementation Period	April 2023 – April 2025
Number of elders received services	About 23 000 elders
Number of activities conducted	About 340
Programme content	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduce common mobile applications to elders• Answer elders’ questions on the use of smartphones

The Digital Inclusion Programme for Elders

Programme Summary (Since December 2024)	
Number of elders received services	Over 15 000 elderly participants
12 Implementing organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Hong Kong Island Social Services Charitable Foundation • Fong Chung Social Service Centre • The Hong Kong Society for the Aged • Kowloon Federation of Associations • Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui Welfare Council • The Lok Sin Tong Benevolent Society, Kowloon • The Federation of New Territories Youth Foundation • Putonghua Culture Association • Sai Kung District Community Centre • New Territories Association of Societies (Community Services) Foundation • New Home Association - New Territories West Service Centre • Chinese YMCA of Hong Kong Brilliant Multicultural Centre
Implementation period	December 2024 – November 2026
Expected number of elders received services	Over 100 000 elderly participants
Number of community-based help desk set up	40
No. of training activities held	At least two sessions of training activities per week at each help desk (each session lasts for one hour)
Number of help desk session held	At least 12 sessions of technical support per week at each help desk (each session lasts for two hours)
Programme content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up community-based help desks at suitable locations to provide regular and fixed-point training on digital technologies and technical support to elders aged 60 or above, particularly the singleton or doubleton elders living in the old districts and public housing. • Focus on training the elders to use mobile applications for digital government services that bring convenience to their daily lives, including “iAM Smart”, “eHealth”, “HA Go”, “18 CM Clinics”, “SmartPLAY”, “HKeMobility”, and cyber security knowledge. At the same time, elders will be introduced to other suitable mobile applications, such as instant messaging, entertainment, and electronic food ordering services.

The Enriched ICT Training Programme for the Elderly

Statistics (Since first round in 2019 until now)	
Number of elders received services	Over 15 000 elderly participants
Number of courses organised	Over 330
Number of classes organised	Over 900
Number of elder academy	16 (including three rounds of programme, some of the academies have participated in more than one round of programme)
Overview of current round of programme (As of February 2025)	
12 implementing organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caritas Wu Cheng-chung Secondary School Elder Academy • Elder Academy at Hong Kong Metropolitan University • Hong Kong Island Elder Academies Cluster • Lai Chack Elder Academy • Lingnan Hang Yee Memorial Secondary School Elder Academy • LingnanU Elder Academy • LST YKH & Buddhist HWCP Innovation Elder Academy • New Territories West Elder Academies Cluster • Pui Shing Elder Academy • Research Centre for Gerontology and Family Studies, the Hong Kong Polytechnic University • Tak Sum Elder Academy • TM Hope Elder Academy
Implementation period	February 2024 – February 2026
Number of elders received services	Around 3 300 elderly participants
Number of courses organised	Around 100
Number of classes organised	Around 190
Main content of courses	<p><u>E-government</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “iAM Smart”, “SmartPLAY”, “Contactless e-Channel” • “MyObservatory”, “My Library”, “GovHK Notifications”, “RTHK On The Go” mobile applications <p><u>Mobile applications related to Smart Living</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smart Healthcare, instant messaging software, social media • Mobile payment, traffic and transport mobile applications, mobile applications frequently used in the Mainland • Online shopping, takeaway food ordering mobile applications <p><u>Exploring and understanding digital technologies</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cyber security, big data, Artificial Intelligence • Gerontechnology, simple programming, Internet of Things