**Legislative Council**
**Panel on Welfare Services Meeting on 10 January 2000**

**Progress Report on the Implementation of Recommendations**
**put forth by the Research Team of the Evaluation Study on**
**"Social Networking for the Elderly Project"**

**Purpose**

In the Legislative Council Panel on Welfare Services meeting held on 1 February 1999, the Social Welfare Department (SWD) submitted an evaluation report on the "Social Networking for the Elderly Project". During the meeting, the Chairman requested SWD to submit a progress report in September 1999 on follow-up actions taken regarding the Research Team's recommendations with comments on the adequacy of staffing provision for support teams for the elderly.

**Progress Report**

2. Arising from recommendations of the Research Team headed by Professor Nelson CHOW of the University of Hong Kong Department of Social Work and Social Administration, SWD has implemented the following measures to improve on the social networking services for the elderly.

*Recommendation 1: Social networking services should continue and a proactive approach should be adopted to reach out to vulnerable elderly.*

3. Upon completion of the two-year experimental period of the "Social Networking for the Elderly Project", SWD has provided welfare subvention to non-governmental organizations to set up support teams for the elderly in their multi-service centres for the elderly since October 1998 to continue social networking service for vulnerable elderly people. As at end of October 1999, 32 support teams have been set up all over Hong Kong. Four more teams will come into operation by March 2001, a total of 36 teams will have been set up. Support teams for the elderly

have adopted a diversified and proactive outreach approach e.g. door-to-door visits, roadside stations, etc. to contact elderly people, and to provide them with social networking and volunteer services.   As at the end of October 1999, support teams have contacted 76,426 elderly people, which represents increase for four times over the number (17,499 elderly people) being contacted by the "Social Networking for the Elderly Project".   Besides, support teams for the elderly have implemented an elderly volunteers programme to encourage elderly people to continue to contribute to the community and to promote the positive image of elderly people in leading an active and productive life. As at the end of October 1999, there were 6,602 senior volunteers participating in volunteer services.

***Recommendation 2: The "Social Networking for the Elderly Project" should be integrated with the work of multi-service centres for the elderly and the 3-tier co-ordinating mechanism should be streamlined.***

4.      Support teams for the elderly are set up in multi-service centres for the elderly in providing social networking service for the needy and can hence make use of centre facilities and mobilize other staff.   SWD has also replaced the 3-tier co-ordinating mechanism (i.e. multi-service centres for the elderly, district co-ordinating committee and SWD) by a 2-tier mechanism with District Social Welfare Officers directly co-ordinate and supervise service provision of the support teams for the elderly.

***Recommendation 3: Enhanced publicity and promotion should be made to highlight the service characteristics and differences between the Social Networking for the Elderly Project and other similar services.***

5.      SWD and support teams for the elderly have joined hands to promote the service to the community, elderly people, volunteers and

service groups, through the mass media, posters, pamphlets, service newsletters, etc. In addition, support teams for the elderly have also organized exhibitions, health talks, door-to-door visits and roadside stations and visits to other service units to introduce the service and to recruit volunteers. Social workers and volunteers of support teams would also wear service badges for identification purpose.

***Recommendation 4: A new set of identification criteria should be devised so as to better identify vulnerable elderly people.***

6. A new set of criteria, including financial situation, living condition, healthy and disability status, sense of loneliness, self-care ability, need of social networking service and effectiveness of existing support network , etc. has been devised and put to use.

***Recommendation 5: Referral source should be widened. Closer linkage between various social and medical service agencies should be encouraged.***

7. District Social Welfare Offices and support teams for the elderly have been liaising with welfare service units, various kinds of service centre for the elderly, medical institutions, social groups, and volunteer organizations, etc. at the local level to introduce the social networking service provided by support teams and to invite referrals. Medical institutions, community geriatric assessment teams, visiting health teams, elderly health centres, clinics in housing estates are linked up to organize health talks for volunteers, and to provide direct service. SWD and the Department of Health have regular forums to discuss means to improve services for vulnerable elderly people.

***Recommendation 6: A standardized volunteer training package should be devised.***

8.      SWD has already compiled a standardized volunteer training package in collaboration with Hong Kong Council of Social Service and support teams for the elderly. The package was devised for support teams' reference in running volunteer training programmes.   The training package contains basic information on volunteerism, specialised training on skills in the care of the elderly, such as handling emotional problems of the chronically ill, home safety, knowledge about medicine, first-aid, nutrition, personal hygiene, common illness, dementia, depression and elderly suicide, use of rehabilitation equipment and aids, etc.   With this training package, volunteers can gain more knowledge and skills in serving vulnerable elderly people in a more effective manner.

***Recommendation 7: Elderly people and volunteers should be encouraged to voice out their opinions on the service.***

9.      All support teams for the elderly have developed different strategies to collect feedback from the elderly and volunteers through telephone hot-line, regular sharing sessions with volunteers, consultation sessions with the elderly and service sharing sessions among staff, volunteers and the elderly, etc.   Moreover, SWD has also organized regular sharing sessions for staff of support teams for the elderly for exchanging work experience and skills.

***Recommendation 8: The clientele information system should be improved.***

10.      SWD has commissioned the CityU Professional Services Ltd. to revamp the clientele information system of the "Social Networking for

the Elderly Project".   Information on health condition, disability and mental status, sense of loneliness, living environment, self- care ability, support networks, dialects used, service need, particulars and information of volunteers and volunteer agencies have been included in the revised system to facilitate matching of vulnerable elderly with volunteers.   The design of the revised system has been completed and is now in operation.

**Service Statistics**

11.     As at the end of October 1999, the cumulative total service statistics of support teams for the elderly as compared to the "Social Networking for the Elderly" Project are as follows:

|  | **Social Networking for the Elderly Project** (October 1996 to September 1998) (2 years) | **Support Teams for the Elderly** (October 1998 to October 1999) (13 months) |
|---|---|---|
| (a) No. of elderly contacted | 17,499 | 76,426 |
| (b) No. of elderly put on the vulnerable elderly list | 14,461 | 32,066 |
| (c) No. of volunteers recruited | 7,062 | 16,532 (including 6,602 senior volunteers) |
| (d) No. of volunteer agencies recruited | 421 | 542 |
| (e)  Service  status  (no.of provision): | | |
| (i) Telephone contact / conern | 78,352 | 90,497 |
| (ii)  Visits | 55,470 | 67,304 |
| (iii) Personal Assistance | / | 7,072 |

* Notes: Personal assistance service includes escort service, temporary / short-term home help, caring and other personal assistance service.

**Staffing of Support Teams for the Elderly**

12.     Staffing provision for each multi-service centre for the elderly to implement the "Social Networking for the Elderly Project" was one Social Work Assistant.   For each support team for the elderly, staffing provision has been improved with one Senior Social Work Assistant, one Social Work Assistant, and one Clerical Assistant.   Since support teams for the elderly are set up in multi-service centres for the elderly, staff and resources of the centre can be easily mobilized and deployed.   Senior volunteers in the elderly volunteer programme run by the support teams also help to facilitate staff in locating vulnerable elderly people in the community.   From October 1998 to October 1999, support teams for the elderly had contacted more than 76,000 elderly people. Among them, more than 32,000 vulnerable and lone elderly were willing to receive social networking and volunteer services.   Support teams have recruited more than 16,000 volunteers from 542 volunteer organizations, among whom 6,602 are senior volunteers.   Based on the above information, service provision of the support teams for the elderly has significant development as compared with the " Social Networking for the Elderly Project'.   Therefore, current staffing provision of support teams for the elderly is considered adequate.

**Way Forward**

13.     Support teams for the elderly will further engage volunteers, in particular senior volunteers to strengthen informal support networks, as well as to mobilise various community resources to assist vulnerable elderly so that they can continue to live in the community as they grow old.   SWD will adopt outcome measures, e.g. reduction of sense of loneliness, improvement of caring functions of informal support networks, to evaluate the effectiveness of this service.

**Conclusion**

14.　　By joint efforts of support teams for the elderly, volunteers' involvement and participation of the public, SWD has smoothly implemented all the recommendations submitted by the Hong Kong University Research Team. Moreover, with adequate staffing and involvement of volunteers of all ages, support teams have come into contact and served 76,426 vulnerable elderly which is more than twice within a year as pledged by SWD in the meeting held on 1 February 1999. SWD will continue to monitor closely the development of the service to ensure that the needs of vulnerable elderly can be timely met and the volunteerism of all ages be properly promoted.

**Advice sought**

15.　　Members are requested to comment on the contents of this progress report.

Elderly Branch
Social Welfare Department
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