

Legislative Council Meeting of 2 June 2021

Motion on “Enhancing support for carers”

Purpose

During its meeting of 2 June 2021, the Legislative Council (LegCo) passed the motion on “Enhancing support for carers” (at **Annex A**) moved by the Hon LEUNG Che-cheung. On behalf of the Government, the Secretary for Labour and Welfare has responded to the motion at the sitting (at **Annexes B1&2**, Chinese version only). The progress of the relevant matters set out in the motion is reported in the ensuing paragraphs for Members’ information.

Support for Carers of Elderly Persons and of Persons with Disabilities

2. Currently, the Social Welfare Department (SWD) provides elderly persons, persons with disabilities and their carers in need with services, such as case management, care skills training, counselling, home care and respite, through District Elderly Community Centres (DECCs)/Neighbourhood Elderly Centres (NECs), home care service teams, Day Care Centres/Units for the Elderly, Parents/Relatives Resource Centres, Social and Recreational Centres for the Disabled, District Support Centres for Persons with Disabilities, Support Centres for Persons with Autism, service teams for Home Care Service for Persons with Severe Disabilities and Integrated Support Service for Persons with Severe Physical Disabilities in various districts throughout the territory. These services aim at supporting elderly persons and persons with disabilities to live in the community and relieving the stress of their carers.

Respite Service

3. Respite service provides short-term and emergency care service for elderly persons and persons with disabilities in need, so as to encourage and assist them to continue living in the community. Respite service helps relieve the stress of carers and allows them to take a short break when in need.

4. As regards residential respite service for elderly persons, in addition to the 56 designated residential respite places provided by some subvented residential care homes for the elderly (RCHes) and contract homes, SWD provides 280 designated residential respite places in 140

private RCHEs participating in the Enhanced Bought Place Scheme (EBPS) across the territory. For elderly persons in urgent need of short term residential respite service during non-office hours (including midnight), their carers may directly approach the RCHEs providing designated residential respite service to arrange for admission.

5. As regards respite service for persons with disabilities, SWD has since March 2021 purchased around 40 places from private residential care homes for persons with disabilities (RCHDs) participating in the Bought Place Scheme (BPS) to provide designated residential respite service. Carers may at any time approach the relevant RCHDs directly for application.

6. SWD launched the website of “Vacancy Enquiry System for Residential Respite Service for Persons with Disabilities, Residential Respite Service for the Elderly and Emergency Placement for the Elderly” in 2019 for the public to search for vacancies that suit their needs and make applications to the service units concerned accordingly.

Foreign Domestic Helpers as Carers

7. Foreign domestic helpers (FDHs) play a major role in caring for elderly persons in many families. To strengthen the skills of FDHs in taking care of frail elderly persons and support their ageing in place, SWD implemented the Pilot Scheme on Training for FDHs in Elderly Care in March 2018. SWD extended the Pilot Scheme to DECCs in seven designated districts in July 2019. The training of the Pilot Scheme mainly covers 12-hour common topics in elderly care and care skills, and includes four electives on caring for elderly persons with dementia and stroke. To encourage FDHs’ participation, DECCs will arrange care services or activities for elderly persons in need when the concerned FDHs are in training.

8. To further enhance the scalability of the Pilot Scheme and increase the number of training places, the Government plans to implement Phase II of the Pilot Scheme, which is expected to provide around 1 350 training places, for two years starting from October 2021. We will sum up the experience during the implementation of Phase II of the Pilot Scheme and consider its way forward in due course.

Cash Allowance

9. Regarding cash allowance, the Government launched in June 2014 and October 2016 the Pilot Scheme on Living Allowance for Carers of Elderly Persons from Low-income Families (Pilot Scheme for Carers of Elderly Persons) and the Pilot Scheme on Living Allowance for Low-income Carers of Persons with Disabilities (Pilot Scheme for Carers of Persons with Disabilities) respectively with funding from the Community Care Fund. Phase IV of the Pilot Scheme for Carers of Elderly Persons and Phase III of the Pilot Scheme for Carers of Persons with Disabilities commenced in April 2021 for 30 months till September 2023. The total number of beneficiaries of the two Pilot Schemes are 8 000 and 3 500 respectively. The total funding approved are \$882.95 million and \$496.82 million respectively.

Study on Support for Carers

10. To thoroughly look into the needs of carers of elderly persons and of persons with disabilities in Hong Kong, the Labour and Welfare Bureau (LWB) has commissioned a consulting team to conduct a study on support for carers, with a view to exploring how the resources allocated by the Government could be effectively integrated, and examining the relevant measures of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), the academia and charitable organisations, so as to provide better support for carers of elderly persons and of persons with disabilities. It is expected that the study will be completed in 2021.

Long-term Planning for Elderly and Rehabilitation Services

11. In view of the keen demand for elderly and rehabilitation services of elderly persons and persons with disabilities, SWD will continue to actively identify suitable premises for community and residential care services through multi-pronged means, including reserving suitable sites in new/re-development projects, using vacant government premises/school premises/public housing units where practicable, incorporating conditions in suitable land sale sites to require private developers to construct specified welfare facilities, purchasing service places through Bought Place Schemes, encouraging NGOs' better utilisation of their sites for providing services under the Special Scheme on Privately Owned Sites for Welfare Uses, etc. In addition, the Government has invited the Hong Kong Housing Authority and the Hong Kong Housing Society to reserve

about 5% of the total domestic gross floor area in public housing development projects exclusively for welfare uses, in particular for RCHEs which are much needed by the community, without affecting the supply of public housing and other ancillary facilities. On 30 June 2020, the Finance Committee of LegCo approved an allocation of \$20 billion for the Government to purchase premises for the provision of welfare facilities. As far as residential care services are concerned, SWD is expected to provide around 5 500 additional residential care places for the elderly and around 2 200 additional residential care places for persons with disabilities from 2021-22 to 2025-26.

12. SWD has also commenced the purchase of an additional 5 000 EA1 places in total under EBPS in 2019-20 to increase the supply of subsidised residential care places for the elderly and enhance the overall service quality of private RCHEs. Around 2 900 EA1 places have so far been purchased, of which around 1 450 places have commenced service by the end of June 2021. In other words, around 3 550 additional places will commence service gradually in the coming years. In addition, SWD launched the Pilot Scheme on Residential Care Service Voucher for the Elderly in 2017 providing a maximum of 3 000 vouchers. The Pilot Scheme adopts the “money-following-the-user” approach, which does not only offer an additional choice for elderly persons in need of residential care services, but also serves as an incentive to RCHEs to enhance their services.

13. To ensure the sustainable development of the services, with particular regard to elderly services, the Government stipulated population-based planning ratios in the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines (HKPSG) in December 2018 in respect of subsidised residential care services, subsidised community care services, DECCs and NECs. As for rehabilitation services, the Government will incorporate the planning ratios for long-term residential care services, day rehabilitation services, pre-school rehabilitation services and community support services into HKPSG in 2021-22.

14. In addition, the Census and Statistics Department has been conducting a territory-wide survey on persons with disabilities and chronic diseases. Data on carers of persons with disabilities was covered in the latest 2019/20 round of the survey, of which the results are expected to be released at the end of 2021. The data item “elderly persons requiring care” has also been added in the 2021 Population Census in light of the ageing trend. LWB will make reference to the results when planning for elderly

and rehabilitation services in the future.

Provision of Elderly Services in the Mainland Cities of the Greater Bay Area

15. SWD implemented the Pilot Residential Care Services Scheme in Guangdong in June 2014 and regularised the scheme in January 2020. The Residential Care Services Scheme in Guangdong purchases services from two RCHEs operated by Hong Kong NGOs and located in Shenzhen and Zhaoqing respectively, with a view to providing an additional option for elderly persons who are waitlisting for subsidised care-and-attention places. The Government will keep in view the development of the operation of RCHEs in the Mainland cities of Greater Bay Area by Hong Kong enterprises and service providers and, subject to compliance of requirements and availability of resources, will consider facilitating more eligible Hong Kong people to choose to retire in Guangdong through the same means.

Promotion of Flexible Work Arrangements among Private Enterprises

16. In most cases, carers are family members of the care recipients. Through a wide range of publicity channels and various promotional activities, the Government has been actively encouraging employers to adopt “employee-oriented” good human resource management measures, including the implementation of family-friendly employment practices (FFEPs). Employers are encouraged to adopt measures of FFEPs that best serve the interests of their enterprises and employees, having regard to their individual circumstances, affordability, the unique business environment, operations of specific industries as well as the actual needs of the employees. FFEPs may include putting in place flexible work arrangements (such as flexitime or flexible working hours, five-day work week, work from home or remote work) and providing special leaves and living support to meet employees’ family needs.

Conclusion

17. The majority of the elderly persons and persons with disabilities hope that they can continue living in the community. Carers have an important role to play in this regard. The Government will, through different channels, continue to provide support and training to elderly persons, persons with disabilities and their carers. The Government will keep listening to the views of stakeholders. Upon receipt of the study report of the consulting team, the Government will integrate and prioritise the resources allocated in this area.

Labour and Welfare Bureau
July 2021

(Translation)

Council meeting of 2 June 2021

**Hon LEUNG Che-cheung's motion on
"Enhancing support for carers"**

Wording of the Motion

That persons with physical or intellectual disabilities and some elderly people are lacking in self-care abilities and their living and dietary needs have to be taken care of by their family members; but due to the lack of professional care knowledge and the need to sacrifice their job opportunities to take long-term care of their family members, most carers are subject to heavy financial burden and mental pressure; in this connection, this Council urges the Government to comprehensively step up its support for carers, and the relevant proposals include:

- (1) enhancing the various existing carer allowance schemes under the Community Care Fund, including lowering the application thresholds of the allowance schemes, increasing the allowance amounts, and introducing a flat-rate and reimbursement-based transport subsidy, so as to reduce carers' financial pressure;
- (2) setting up a comprehensive carer support system in the long run with the formulation of care service agreements based on carers' needs by the three parties of the Government, professional service organizations and carers, so as to enable carers to receive support from the professional organizations and monthly subsidies as well as enjoy rest days, etc., as a social recognition of their devotion and contribution;
- (3) setting up carer support service centres in various districts to provide carers with appropriate training and services such as emotional relief;
- (4) increasing the number of emergency places and streamlining the relevant application procedure to enable needy persons to receive respite arrangements within a short time, so that carers may temporarily put aside their caring responsibilities to attend to other urgent matters and provide them with an opportunity to adjust themselves and relieve their pressure;

- (5) expediting the construction of various types of residential care homes for persons with disabilities and setting a waiting time target for residential care homes for persons with disabilities and special needs, so as to shorten the waiting time concerned and in turn better reduce the caring pressure on carers;
- (6) expanding the quota and scope of the Pilot Scheme on Training for Foreign Domestic Helpers in Elderly Care to enhance the provision of professional skill training for foreign domestic helpers in taking care of persons with physical or intellectual disabilities and elderly people, so that they can be equipped with the relevant skills, with a view to reducing the caring pressure on carers;
- (7) setting up a carer database for the regular collection of carer-related information and data, so as to facilitate the formulation of an appropriate carer policy and long-term service planning for persons with physical or intellectual disabilities in Hong Kong;
- (8) actively promoting flexible work arrangements among private enterprises, especially promoting family-friendly employment measures, to assist carers in making flexible arrangements for their working hours and those to take care of their families; and
- (9) expediting the completion of the carer support study undertaken by the multi-disciplinary consultancy team of The Hong Kong Polytechnic University commissioned by the Labour and Welfare Bureau, so as to expeditiously implement various recommendations and enable carers to receive timely support.

新聞公報

立法會：勞工及福利局局長就「加強對照顧者的支援」議案開場發言（只有中文）

以下是勞工及福利局局長羅致光博士今日（六月三日）在立法會會議上就「加強對照顧者的支援」議案的開場發言全文：

代主席：

我感謝梁志祥議員提出今次的動議辯論，可以讓我們聽到各位議員的意見，以及讓我可代表政府向各位議員闡釋各項現有支援照顧者的措施。

現時的照顧者支援服務

正如我在二〇二〇年十一月二十三日就支援照顧者向福利事務委員會簡報，我們致力協助體弱長者及殘疾人士在社區生活，並提供各種服務支援他們的照顧者。這些服務包括向照顧者提供輔導服務、復康器材示範和借用服務、協助成立互助小組、提供照顧技巧訓練、資訊、現金津貼及為有需要並符合資格的長者及殘疾人士提供住宿或日間暫託服務等。

在長者及護老者的津助服務方面，政府透過全港211間長者地區中心／長者鄰舍中心、92支家居照顧服務隊、90間長者日間護理中心／單位，以及約550個長者暫託服務名額，為長者及其護老者提供社區支援。另外，我們透過多個試驗計劃為長者及其護老者提供社區支援，例如「離院長者綜合支援計劃」、「支援在公立醫院接受治療後離院的長者試驗計劃」、「長者社區照顧服務券試驗計劃」及「支援身體機能有輕度缺損的長者試驗計劃」。因應外傭在不少家庭中擔當着主要護老者的角色，政府亦推行了「外傭護老培訓試驗計劃」，加強培訓外傭照顧長者的技巧，以提高長者在社區的生活質素，支援長者「居家安老」。

至於殘疾人士及其照顧者的津助服務方面，政府透過19間家長／親屬資源中心、17間殘疾人士社交及康樂中心、16間殘疾人士地區支援中心、五間自閉症人士支援中心、八支嚴重殘疾人士家居照顧服務隊及嚴重肢體傷殘人士綜合支援服務隊、約240個嚴重殘疾人士日間照顧服務名額，以及約500個暫託服務名額，為殘疾人士及其照顧者提供社區支援。

現金津貼方面，由關愛基金撥款的「為低收入家庭護老者提供生活津貼試驗計劃」及「為低收入的殘疾人士照顧者提供生活津貼試驗計劃」，分別向合資格的護老者及殘疾人士照顧者提供經濟支援。

照顧者支援研究

隨着人口老化及社會環境的改變，照顧者的數量及需要的支援服務預期會有所增加。有見及此，勞工及福利局展開一項照顧者支援研究，以全面探討香港長者和殘疾人士照顧者的需要。顧問團隊已向持份者包括照顧者、專業人士及服務提供者，了解照顧者的需要和對服務的期望，並會對支援照顧者提出可行建議，以持續地支援照顧者。研究工作預期於二〇二一年內完成，局方將參考研究報告，審視及整合提供予照顧者的支援。

總結

代主席，我會細心聆聽各位議員就支援照顧者的意見。待聽取大家的發言後，我會再作綜合回應。

本人謹此陳辭。

完

2021年6月3日（星期四）
香港時間11時33分

新聞公報

立法會：勞工及福利局局長就「加強對照顧者的支援」議案總結發言（只有中文）

以下是勞工及福利局局長羅致光博士今日（六月三日）在立法會會議上就「加強對照顧者的支援」議案的總結發言全文：

主席：

再次多謝梁志祥議員提出有關動議辯論，亦感謝另外14位議員發表有關照顧者政策各方面的意見。我在此就各位提出的意見作一些簡短的回應。

正如很多議員均指出，現時不論殘疾人士的照顧、長者的照顧而言，實際上重點皆以「家居／社區照顧服務為主，院舍照顧服務為輔」。不過當然，當很多照顧者在能力上面對困難，亦期望他所照顧的人可得到院舍照顧服務。今天安老院舍服務輪候時間長，殘疾人士院舍輪候時間更加長，所以過往數年現屆政府從多方面努力爭取土地、人力等各方面資源，希望可以盡量能夠爭取這些服務——特別是院舍照顧服務——得以能夠落成，令輪候時間可以縮短，減輕照顧者多方面的壓力。

所以大家也知道，政府上星期五（五月二十八日）在財務委員會會議希望得到大家支持，亦很感謝大家支持批款注資獎券基金，因為過往幾年，我們因要急起直追興建很多有關設施，該開支增加的速度相當快。正如上星期五有議員提出，實在我們長遠也要思考如何解決獎券基金收入和支出可能不平衡的情況。當然，要尋求解決方法，需要時間思考方法處理，但無論如何，我們仍然繼續盡量爭取時間，不論是實質興建或做詳細設計，又或是初步、較詳細的可行性研究，這些工作仍需推展。

有議員也提到，興建這些設施在香港受土地資源，甚至是人力資源的限制，提到在粵港澳大灣區方面的工作，這與政府特別就大灣區發展的想法是一致。實際上，現時在安老院方面，我們透過兩間香港的非政府機構以購買服務的形式在大灣區提供安老院服務，給香港的長者有多一個選擇。日後，我們希望能夠與大灣區各城市合作，如何鼓勵香港不論是私營或非政府機構，如能興建一些符合我們要求的安老院，我們會繼續考慮在適切的院舍購買服務予香港的長者，當然亦包括現時可能已居於大灣區的長者，未來有多一個選擇，這些工作我們會繼續努力。

回到整個照顧者政策，其核心還是如何提供家居／社區照顧服務的支援，以及所需的培訓。議員提到是否應該在全港18區成立一些專責照顧者支援或培訓服務（的中心）。大家可以想像，如只有18間中心，而全香港可能有十多萬名長者可能需要別人經常照顧，連同其家人，實際上其壓力會更加大。反之，現時我們全港有211間長者地區中心／長者鄰舍中心，自從在二〇〇三年重組這些服務後，照顧者的支援和培訓已成為其工作的一部分。也可以說在過往十多年，我們不斷增加資源希望這些地區服務單位，包括剛才提到的211間長者地區中心／長者鄰舍中心、92支家居照顧服務隊、90間長者日間護理中心／單位等，如何提供照顧者的支援和培訓，我們覺得更為廣泛，而且過往提供的資源也不少。

反而現時我們從檢視照顧者政策而言，是如何有效重整及優化這些過往已投放在家居／社區照顧支援服務的資源，以令服務使用者包括其照顧

者得到更加有效的支援及其所需要的培訓。大家明白到，要訓練一些照顧者，本身也面對一個挑戰，因為當他接受培訓時，可能需要有人看管需要其照顧的殘疾人士或長者。所以，譬如很多議員提到外傭的培訓，即「外傭護老培訓試驗計劃」，由最初300個培訓名額增加至930個（應為950個），至今年十月新一階段，名額會增至1 350個——該計劃有一條件，就是當機構提供培訓予照顧者，同時要提供支援服務予其一直照顧的人士，讓他得到照顧，這樣照顧者才能安心接受有關培訓，所以這配套也並非很簡單的工作。雖然表面上1 350個培訓名額也不少，但如果你想像在37萬名外傭中，差不多近三分之一正在做照顧長者的工作，實際上仍是偏低的數目。不過這只是試驗計劃，我們希望長遠檢視如何有效提供這服務。

很多議員皆提到，現時透過關愛基金為一些不論是長者或殘疾人士照顧者提供津貼，這亦是今次檢視整個照顧者政策其中一個要看看如何處理這類津貼的問題。我希望大家明白，現時津貼因透過關愛基金撥款，而關愛基金是一個信託基金，設有其條件，基本上就是為一些有經濟需要的人士提供援助，所以將（家庭每月入息限額）訂於住戶每月入息中位數的75%的理由正是如此。至於日後如何提供一些收入上的支援，如需考慮恆常化，便會有不同的想法。這有待顧問研究，以及通過過往一年多以來聽取不同持份者的意見後，總結經驗，然後檢視如何做。稍後當工作完成後，我們希望向立法會作詳細交代。

主席，我相信從政府而言，如何提供支援予照顧者是非常重要的，因為長者人數、殘疾人士人數都相當多，所以一定要如剛才容海恩議員所說，除家人外，還不斷需要社區、鄰舍、政府和社會各界齊心，才能有效提供適當的支援。一個很明顯的例子是有認知障礙症的長者，實在現時我們沒有一個很好、完整的實際數字，不過我們相信今天已有超過十多萬名長者患有認知障礙症。我通常也會談到一個數字，即在30、40年後，走在街上，每20人中便有一個可能患有認知障礙症。所以要提供這支援，一定不是純粹由政府或家庭，而是整個社區大家都要齊心做，這工作才能做好。

多謝主席。

完

2021年6月3日（星期四）
香港時間13時41分