

Government launches 24-hour Mental Health Support Hotline to provide one-stop support for people with mental health needs (with photos)

The Government launched today (December 27) the "18111 – Mental Health Support Hotline" to provide one-stop, round-the-clock support for people with mental health needs, rendering them immediate mental health support and referral services.

Addressing the kick-off ceremony of the Mental Health Support Hotline today, the Secretary for Health, Professor Lo Chung-mau, said, "The Government has been taking a comprehensive approach in promoting public mental health. To tender timely support to people who are in mental distress or with mental health needs, the Government introduced the Mental Health Support Hotline which is, for the very first time, fully funded by the Government to co-ordinate existing counselling services provided by the Government and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), allowing those in need to obtain assistance through calling an easy-to-remember phone number."

The Mental Health Support Hotline operates all year round with dedicated personnel answering the phone 24 hours a day, providing immediate support and counselling services to members of the public from all backgrounds and of all ages. Callers will also be referred to the most appropriate organisations depending on the nature of individual cases. The Mental Health Support Hotline co-ordinates about 20 related organisations to provide comprehensive mental support services to the public.

Professor Lo said, "We hope that anyone who encounters mental health needs will immediately recall this phone number 18111 and take the Mental Health Support Hotline as their first point for seeking assistance. Should any of your family members or friends have mental health needs, please encourage them to call the Mental Health Support Hotline. The carers themselves can also make use of this hotline to seek timely support. We stand ready to chat and we are all ears."

"The Government has picked this easy-to-remember hotline number with special thoughts. Simply remember that the '18111 – Mental Health Support Hotline' attends to mental health needs from all '18' districts in Hong Kong and 'one' who needs help will get 'one'-stop support just by calling 'one' dedicated hotline."

The hotline was one of the initiatives put forward in "The Chief Executive's 2022 Policy Address" to step up efforts in promoting mental health and bringing more happiness to citizens. From conceptualisation to implementation, the Advisory Committee on Mental Health (ACMH) has given

ample suggestions to ensure that the hotline can best meet the needs of those in mental distress.

The Chairman of the ACMH, Dr Lam Ching-choi, and former Chairman Mr Wong Yan-lung, SC, also officiated at the kick-off ceremony. Moreover, the two ACMH chairmen had an on-site interactive session to talk about the rationales behind the setting-up of the hotline and the work done to make it happen, as well as how the hotline will help support the public in a more effective manner.

Dr Lam said, "Through this hotline, we hope to provide comprehensive services to the callers while garnering information on their mental health needs. As such, we will have more data-based evidences to deepen and optimise our services when planning future initiatives so as to come up with more responsive support measures for persons in need."

Mr Wong said, "When one is in mental distress, an easy-to-recall phone number widely recognised in the community can very possibly be a way out. There are relevant successful experiences overseas as well. I call on the community to help promote this '18111 – Mental Health Support Hotline' so that people can get access to prompt support when they are in mental need."

Members of the Legislative Council and the ACMH as well as representatives from a number of NGOs and mental and emotional support service groups also showed up at the kick-off ceremony today in support of promoting mental health.

Another mental health initiative introduced in "The Chief Executive's 2022 Policy Address" was the setting-up of a service centre on a trial basis to provide emotional support and counselling services for ethnic minorities. The service centre located in Jordan will start serving ethnic minorities from tomorrow (December 28). Supported by a multi-professional team comprising social workers, counsellors and support staff conversant in ethnic minority languages, the service centre provides emotional support and counselling services to ethnic minorities and refers cases to other service platforms for additional support and/or treatment if needed. Operated by the Zubin Mahtani Gidumal Foundation Limited, the service centre opens from 9am to 6pm from Monday to Friday and offers counselling services beyond these hours when necessary. Members of the public can call the centre hotline at 9682 3100 for information, or visit the website www.zubinfoundation.org/our-work/ethnic-minority-well-being-centre/ to learn more about the service centre.

