

Government launches Healthy Mind Pilot Project at three District Health Centre/District Health Centre Expresses

The Government announced today (August 15) the launch of the Healthy Mind Pilot Project at three District Health Centre (DHC)/District Health Centre Expresses (DHCEs) to offer free initial mental health assessments to members of the public on a trial basis at the community level starting today. Members preliminarily assessed to have mild symptoms of depression or anxiety will be referred to non-governmental organisations (NGOs) for further assessment and follow-up, so that they can receive appropriate support at an early stage.

The Pilot Project is being trialled at Tuen Mun DHC, Yau Tsim Mong DHCE and Eastern DHCE. Trained staff of these DHC/DHCEs will in parallel conduct preliminary mental health questionnaire assessments (including Patient Health Questionnaire – 2 (PHQ-2) and Generalised Anxiety Disorder – 2 (GAD-2)) for members aged 18 or above while conducting health risk assessments for them. The preliminary assessments will help identify the members' risks of emotional distress in relation to depression and anxiety.

Based on the assessment results and in accordance with the protocol, DHC/DHCE staff will refer members with mental health needs to partnering NGOs of the Pilot Project in the same district, namely the New Life Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association or Mind HK, for their professional personnel with mental health training (Wellbeing Practitioners) to follow up. The Wellbeing Practitioners will conduct emotional assessments for the cases and offer evidence-based low-intensity psychological therapy to those with mild to moderate symptoms of anxiety or depression through guided self-help treatment and psychoeducational groups, with a view to enhancing their capacity in managing their psychological health. For the high-risk cases identified, they will be referred to the Integrated Community Centres for Mental Wellness or multidisciplinary support services in the community for more comprehensive and professional care and support.

At present, DHCs/DHCEs have already covered basic assessments of emotional distress in its health risk assessments, while providing mental health services at the primary healthcare level, such as sleep health and training on mental relaxation. Furthermore, various DHCs/DHCEs collaborate with different service partners in the districts to refer members to the latter for getting support services to tackle emotional distress. Among these, Wong Tai Sin DHC, Southern DHC and Sai Kung DHCE are partnering with the JC JoyAge Project, in which members with mental health needs will be taken care of and supported by the dedicated teams under that project.

In his Policy Address last year, the Chief Executive put forward the initiative of launching a pilot scheme at three DHCs, in collaboration with community organisations, to provide mental health assessments for the public, thereby assisting individuals with mental health needs through early follow-up and referral of high-risk cases.

The Government aspires to leverage the roles of DHCs as co-ordinators of primary healthcare services and case managers to run the Pilot Project on a trial basis. By enhancing the emotional issues-related components of DHCs' health risk assessments, the Pilot Project aims to provide timely and appropriate mental health support services at the community level, such that individuals suffering from mild to moderate symptoms of depression or anxiety can receive evidence-based low-intensity psychological therapy.

Under the Pilot Project, the assessment as well as subsequent counselling and therapy services are all free of charge. Members of the public may visit the DHC website for more details on the Pilot Project (www.dhc.gov.hk/en/mental_health) and the service hours of the three DHC/DHCEs.