

LCQ10: Provision of support for elderly singletons and carers

Following is a question by the Hon Shang Hailong and a written reply by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Mr Chris Sun, in the Legislative Council today (June 7):

Question:

The editorial of a newspaper has pointed out that recently, tragedies resulting from elderly singletons and carers with disabilities lacking support have happened one after another in Hong Kong. Such situations are worrying and have also highlighted the necessity for the authorities to step up support work. Regarding the provision of support for elderly singletons and carers, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as there are currently no emergency support services targeted at carers in Hong Kong, and if carers fall ill, they cannot entrust their family members who need to be looked after to the care of others, whether the Government will consider setting up one-stop centres for carers in various districts to provide emergency support services;

(2) whether it will consider, in collaboration with social welfare organisations, encouraging kaifongs to care for their elderly singleton neighbours and motivating elderly singletons to participate more in community activities through work such as organising talks and setting up street counters in different locations, as well as conducting publicity door to door in buildings, thereby strengthening the spirit of neighbourliness, and co-building a harmonious and friendly society;

(3) whether it will strengthen co-operation with social welfare organisations and non-governmental organisations to make every effort to enhance the work of identifying "hidden elderly singletons" and "hidden carers"; and

(4) whether it will leverage district organisations and District Services and Community Care Teams to strengthen the outreach work in support of elderly singletons and carers (e.g. distributing promotional leaflets door to door in public housing estates, and even delivering meals to elderly singletons), so as to build up district networks and assist in finding out more hidden elderly singletons and hidden carers?

Reply:

President,

My reply to the question raised by the Member is as follows:

(1) The Government provides subsidy for non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to operate respite services to provide short-term residential or day care services for elderly persons and persons with disabilities living in the

community who require personal care assistance from family members or relatives and to reduce the pressure of carers. Moreover, the Government provides home-based support services (including home respite service) for elderly persons and persons with disabilities through the Integrated Home Care Services (Frail Cases), the Enhanced Home and Community Care Services, the Home Care Service for Persons with Severe Disabilities and the Integrated Support Service for Persons with Severe Physical Disabilities.

Respite service users are not required to undergo the Standardised Care Need Assessment Mechanism and may directly approach service units for enquiry and application. Persons in need may also be referred by Integrated Family Service Centres (IFSCs)/Integrated Service Centres (ISCs), Medical Social Services Units (MSSUs), elderly service units, special schools or rehabilitation service units. If elderly persons or persons with disabilities have urgent short-term residential care needs, they or their carers can search for the vacancy situation of the designated respite service places provided by residential care homes (RCHs) under the Enhanced Bought Place Scheme or the Bought Place Scheme for Private Residential Care Homes for Persons with Disabilities through the "Vacancy Enquiry System for Residential Respite Service for Persons with Disabilities, Residential Respite Service for the Elderly and Emergency Placement for the Elderly" of the Social Welfare Department (SWD). They or their carers may approach the relevant RCHs directly to confirm the vacant places and arrange for admission. If they have other service needs, the RCHs will, after admitting the elderly persons or persons with disabilities, refer them to the relevant service units for follow-up.

Besides, the SWD provides various community support services for elderly persons, persons with disabilities, patients who are chronically ill as well as their carers directly or through subvented NGOs. The service units include IFSCs/ISCs, MSSUs, District Elderly Community Centres (DECCs), Neighbourhood Elderly Centres (NECs), District Support Centres for Persons with Disabilities, Integrated Community Centres for Mental Wellness, Parents/Relatives Resource Centres, Support Centres for Persons with Autism, home care services, etc. These service units provide a series of prevention and support services, such as case management, counselling, outreaching service, referral service, mutual aid groups, carer skills training, stress relieving groups and recreational activities, with a view to providing comprehensive support to carers and enhancing their caregiving abilities and quality of life.

(2) There are currently 213 subvented DECCs and NECs (Elderly Centres) providing a range of support services for elderly persons at the community level, including counselling, referral, assistance in applying for long-term care services, emotional support and carer training, etc to facilitate elderly persons to age in place. The Elderly Centres also collaborate with community support service units in the district to make more effective use of community resources in building an elderly-friendly community.

The Elderly Centres also organise various activities in the districts, including seminars, carer training courses, volunteer trainings, mobile counter services, outreaching activities, etc, in order to encourage elderly

persons to actively participate in community activities.

(3) and (4) The Government has been closely collaborating with various subvented NGOs and welfare organisations to provide support for elderly persons, persons with disabilities and their carers in need. The Government is progressively setting up District Services and Community Care Teams (Care Teams) in 18 districts to rally community resources and efforts. The Labour and Welfare Bureau and the SWD are actively exploring the Care Teams' participation and assistance in supporting the related work.