

Ombudsman probes respite services for supporting carers of elderly persons and persons with disabilities

The following is issued on behalf of the Office of The Ombudsman:

The Ombudsman, Mr Jack Chan, today (August 9) announced the launch of a direct investigation to carefully examine the respite services for supporting carers of elderly persons and persons with disabilities.

In recent years, there have been tragic incidents from time to time when carers succumb to unbearable pressure. Failure to rescue in cases involving "the elderly caring for the elderly", "the elderly caring for the disabled", and "the disabled caring for the disabled" have also resulted in tragic incidents. The hardships of life and immense pressure faced by carers are long-standing livelihood problems. Meanwhile, the Office of The Ombudsman has noticed that the current-term Government has put in place various targeted support measures for carers, including expanding the network of respite services and launching the designated hotline for carer support.

The Social Welfare Department is responsible for planning and overseeing respite services, which provide short-term day and residential respite services to elderly persons and persons with disabilities in need, to temporarily relieve carers both physically and mentally. However, government statistics showed that the respite services may be underutilised. The Office has also noted that there are concerns over existing respite services, including location spread imbalance, complicated application procedures and lack of support.

Mr Chan said, "Carers are the life pillars for the elderly and persons with disabilities. Their caregiving role is crucial and indispensable for the survival of the care recipients. Although the Government has adopted a multipronged approach in rendering support for the carers, I want to carefully examine whether there is room for further enhancement of the existing support measures, in order to better alleviate the difficulties faced by the carers and improve their living standards. Hence, I have decided to launch a direct investigation operation to examine the operational arrangements for respite services for the elderly and persons with disabilities, including service planning, application procedures, support and information provided for carers, monitoring on usage and service quality, as well as promotion and publicity, with a view to making targeted recommendations to the Government for improvement where necessary."

The Ombudsman welcomes views from members of the public on this topic. Written submissions should reach the Office of The Ombudsman by September 9, 2024:

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