

# Pilot Alcohol Cessation Counselling Service subvented by DH commences

The Department of Health (DH) today (April 8) said that a DH-subvented programme, namely the Pilot Alcohol Cessation Counselling Service (the Pilot Programme) run by the Tung Wah Group of Hospitals (TWGHs), was launched today. The Pilot Programme will provide free counselling service for people identified to have probable alcohol dependence.

Under the two-year Pilot Programme, Hong Kong residents identified as having probable alcohol dependence, defined by scoring 20 or above at the [Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test](#) (AUDIT), are eligible to receive the counselling service free of charge. Delivered by counsellors of the TWGHs, the service comprises three components, namely initial assessment, evidence-based individual counselling intervention, and subsequent evaluation follow-up.

Information of the Pilot Programme has been uploaded to the DH's [Change for Health](#) website. Eligible persons who are interested to join the Pilot Programme can call the enquiry hotline of the TWGHs (2884 9876) or visit their webpage ([atp.tungwahcsd.org/DH\\_Alcohol/DH\\_Alcohol.pdf](http://atp.tungwahcsd.org/DH_Alcohol/DH_Alcohol.pdf)) for more details on enrolment method and service centre. The Pilot Programme also accepts medical and social service units in the community to refer cases in need to the counselling service. The DH and TWGHs will closely monitor the usage of the Pilot Programme. Further modes of cooperation with District Health Centres will also be explored in the future.

According to the information of the World Health Organization, the harmful use of alcohol is a causal risk factor in more than 200 diseases, injuries and other health conditions. The harmful use of alcohol is associated with a risk of developing health problems such as mental and behavioural disorders (including alcohol dependence), as well as major non-communicable diseases (such as liver cirrhosis and some cancers). Beyond health consequences, the harmful use of alcohol brings significant social burdens to individuals, families and society at large.

The Population Health Survey 2020-22 of the DH showed that the proportion of persons aged 15 or above with probable alcohol dependence (AUDIT score 20 or above) was 0.1 per cent (estimated 5 700 persons) in the 12 months preceding the survey. For consequences of alcohol use, findings showed that among those with AUDIT score 20 or above, 13.2 per cent reported having family or marital problems, while 26.7 per cent reported having job or work problems due to drinking.

A spokesman for the DH reminded that the most effective means to reduce the risk of alcohol-related harms is to avoid alcohol consumption. Alcohol drinkers are advised to appraise their drinking habits and appreciate the health benefits of cutting down or even stopping alcohol consumption completely. The Change for Health website of the DH has provided the

electronic alcohol screening and brief intervention (e-SBI) tool for drinkers to assess their own drinking risk and obtain brief health advice. Persons who are assessed to have harmful drinking or suspected to have alcohol dependence are advised to seek professional help.

For more information on the harmful effects of alcohol and changing drinking habits, please visit the Change for Health website of the DH at [www.change4health.gov.hk/en/alcohol\\_aware/index.html](http://www.change4health.gov.hk/en/alcohol_aware/index.html).