

Special arrangements for subsidised welfare services and services of Social Welfare Department

In view of the latest epidemic situation, a spokesperson for the Social Welfare Department (SWD) today (November 30) announced the special arrangements for welfare services subsidised by the SWD from December 2. Details of the arrangements are as follows:

(1) All day care centres or units for the elderly, sheltered workshops, integrated vocational rehabilitation services centres, integrated vocational training centres and day activity centres will remain open with scaled-down capacity (i.e. 50 per cent attendance to sustain the rehabilitation and training needs of service users and to relieve the burden of carers).

(2) Apart from (a) and (j) which are provided as normal, the other services will be provided on a limited scale as stated below. Groups may be conducted online or physically with adequate social distancing in place, and mass programmes will be suspended:

- a. Residential care services;
- b. Integrated Family Service Centres (providing casework service);
- c. Integrated Services Centres (providing casework service);
- d. Short-term Food Assistance Service;
- e. Integrated Home Care Services (providing services including meals, escort, nursing, administration of medicine, assistance with personal hygiene and procurement of necessities);
- f. Enhanced Home and Community Care Services (providing services including meals, escort, nursing, administration of medicine, assistance with personal hygiene and procurement of necessities);
- g. Home Care Service for Persons with Severe Disabilities (providing services including escort, nursing, administration of medicine, assistance with personal hygiene and procurement of necessities);
- h. Integrated Support Service for Persons with Severe Physical Disabilities (providing services including escort, nursing, administration of medicine, assistance with personal hygiene and procurement of necessities);
- i. Visiting Medical Practitioner Service for Residential Care Homes;
- j. Hotline services;
- k. Specialised Co-parenting Support Centres; and
- l. Humanitarian Assistance for Non-refoulement Claimants.

Areas within the above service units designated for public use, such as resource corners and game corners, will temporarily be closed.

(3) Centre-based services subsidised by the SWD, such as district elderly community centres, neighbourhood elderly centres, social and recreational centres for persons with disabilities, integrated children and youth services

centres, children and youth centres and community centres, will only operate on a limited scale (such as meal service provided by elderly centres and standardised care need assessment for elderly services) in order to reduce the risk of infection arising from the gathering of people. Groups may be conducted online or physically with adequate social distancing in place, whereas mass programmes and drop-in services will not be provided at this stage.

(4) Operators of pre-school rehabilitation services (including special child care centres) may arrange appropriate modes of individual training, such as centre-based training, e-learning and home training, for service users having regard to the epidemic situation, service users' circumstances and their parents' preference. Special child care centres, though with classroom training and child care service suspended, will remain open depending on the situation to serve those in special need.

(5) The SWD-subsidised multi-disciplinary outreaching support teams for the elderly and professional outreaching teams for private residential care homes for persons with disabilities will temporarily stop visits to residential care homes but will provide training and support services through other modes.

(6) For other services not covered by (1) to (5) above, non-governmental organisations operating them may decide whether to continue to provide them under their respective Funding and Service Agreements having regard to their circumstances.

While the aforementioned arrangements will continue until further notice, aided child care centres and special child care centres will suspend their service delivery until the commencement of Christmas holidays as all kindergartens as well as primary and secondary schools will suspend face-to-face classes until the beginning of school Christmas holidays. Service operators should keep their service users informed of the latest arrangements and provide suitable personal protective equipment for their staff having regard to the relevant guidelines issued by the Centre for Health Protection of the Department of Health. They should step up measures to prevent communicable diseases, including keeping the premises clean, requiring service users and staff to wear masks and to wash hands with alcohol-based hand rub, and enhancing measures on the screening of body temperature.

Regarding the SWD's own services, the SWD's service units providing direct public services for members of the public will maintain their provision of emergency services and essential services. Departmental hotline services will be in operation as normal. Other services such as those of Integrated Family Service Centres (IFSCs) and Social Security Field Units (SSFUs) will continue to be open to the public. The IFSCs will provide casework service as well as group work service on a limited scale, with extended hours of service to be provided through telephone. For social security applications, relevant application forms are also provided next to the drop boxes of SSFUs and can be downloaded from the SWD's website (www.swd.gov.hk). Completed forms can be returned to the relevant SSFUs by

post, fax or email or through drop boxes of SSFUs. After receiving the applications, the SSFU staff will contact applicants for processing their applications. For enquiries, please call the staff on duty during office hours.

Service users are advised to call the hotline number 2343 2255 for details of the service provision. To reduce the risk of infection arising from the gathering of people, service users are advised to contact the staff of service units by telephone in advance, so that interviews can be scheduled as appropriate. All visitors must wear masks, have their body temperature checked and maintain social distancing.

Meanwhile, the SWD has strengthened infection control at all service units. Staff will be reminded to take necessary infection control measures.