

SWD announces gradual resumption of subsidised welfare services

In view of the stabilised epidemic situation, subsidised welfare services operated by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) will be resumed by phases, a spokesman for the Social Welfare Department (SWD) said today (May 9).

In gist, subsidised welfare services will be resumed in a gradual and planned mode whilst keeping a vigilant watch over the COVID-19 epidemic. The running of groups and small-scale programmes, such as talks, will be resumed on a pre-scheduled and appointment basis, with proper infection control measures put in place. For centre-based services, no drop-in is allowed for the time being unless the epidemic further improves, with the flow of people at the centres properly managed. For home-based services, rehabilitation training and other assistive services for both persons with disabilities (PWDs) and the elderly should gradually be resumed to cater for the rehabilitation needs of the clientele, in addition to the existing delivery of meals, escort, nursing care, administration of medicine and personal care services.

Details of service resumption in specific areas are as follows.

Rehabilitation services

- Starting from May 11, operators of pre-school rehabilitation services will further strengthen individual training for service users. Service units may arrange appropriate modes of training, such as centre-based training, e-learning and home training, having regard to service users' circumstances and their parents' preference. Small groups will also be run for no more than three children each at this stage. To align with the resumption of K3 classes in kindergartens on June 15, special child care centres should resume classroom training for upper classes on that day. Pre-school rehabilitation service operators concerned should also provide make-up training sessions for children, especially those being promoted to primary schools, during summer holidays.
- From May 15, home care services for PWDs, namely home care service for persons with severe disabilities and integrated support service for persons with severe physical disabilities, should gradually increase their intensity and frequency with a view to resuming full-range service provision. Services in sheltered workshops, integrated vocational rehabilitation services centres, integrated vocational training centres and day activity centres should also be resumed gradually from May 15.

- Starting from May 27, service users of district support centres for persons with disabilities, integrated community centres for mental wellness, social and recreational centres for the disabled and community rehabilitation day centres may join pre-enrolled groups and programmes, while no drop-in is allowed for the time being.

Elderly services

- Starting from May 15, integrated home care services and enhanced home and community care services should gradually increase their intensity and frequency with a view to resuming full-range service provision.
- Day care centres/units for the elderly should increase service intake gradually to around 30 per cent of their service users from May 15. The service intake should further increase from May 27, with the aim of reaching around 50 per cent of their service users.
- Starting from May 27, service users of district elderly community centres and neighbourhood elderly centres may join pre-enrolled groups and programmes, while no drop-in is allowed for the time being.

Family and child welfare services

- With effect from May 27, the running of groups and programmes by integrated family service centres (IFSCs), as well as the use of play corner/room, should be resumed on an appointment basis. Extended hours sessions in IFSCs should be resumed on the same day.
- Child care centre service will remain open only to children from needy families on an appointment and need basis for the time being.

Youth and community services

- Starting from May 27, service users of centre-based services such as integrated children and youth services centres, children and youth centres, counselling centres for psychotropic substance abusers and community centres may join groups and use centre facilities on an appointment basis. Service centres may continue to provide online group programmes and other services.
- With the resumption of classes for higher forms in secondary schools from May 27, school social work service should resume stationing in

secondary schools correspondingly.

- With the resumption of P4 to P6 classes with effect from June 8, after-school care programme should be resumed correspondingly.

Services for residential care homes for the elderly (RCHEs) and residential care homes for persons with disabilities (RCHDs)

- With effect from May 27, multi-disciplinary outreaching support teams for the elderly and professional outreaching teams for private RCHDs should resume providing rehabilitation training service for service users at private RCHEs and RCHDs, etc. Assessors under the Standardised Care Needs Assessment Mechanism for Elderly Services should resume conducting care needs assessment for needy service users at RCHEs.

Service operators should keep their service users informed of the latest arrangements and provide suitable personal protective equipment (PPE) to their staff having regard to relevant guidelines issued by the Centre for Health Protection of the Department of Health. The SWD will continue to monitor the situation and work with stakeholders to ensure smooth, gradual resumption of subsidised welfare services; and will render assistance to individual service operators which encounter difficulties in acquiring PPE in resuming their services.