

SWD's response to Ombudsman's direct investigation report

Regarding a report released by the Ombudsman today (August 17) on its direct investigation into the Pilot Scheme on Community Care Service Voucher (CCSV) for the Elderly (the Scheme), the Social Welfare Department (SWD) responds as follows:

The SWD expresses its gratitude for the advice of the Ombudsman and is pleased to note that the Ombudsman recognises the effectiveness of the Scheme. The SWD accepts and will actively follow up on the report's recommendations to enhance the effectiveness of the Scheme.

To encourage elderly persons to age in place, the Scheme provides more diversified community care services for elderly persons who have been assessed and recommended as suitable for receiving residential care services or community care services under the Standardised Care Need Assessment Mechanism for Elderly Services. Under the principle of co-payment by CCSV holders and the Government, eligible elderly persons can choose their own recognised service providers, service types and service packages which suit their needs. As of the end of July 2023, a total of 7 377 elderly persons were receiving services through the Scheme.

The Scheme will be regularised in September this year. The number of beneficiaries will increase from the existing 8 000 to 12 000 in 2025/26 by phases. The scope of the CCSV will also be expanded to include rental of assistive technology products to enhance the quality of life of the elderly and alleviate the pressure on their carers. Upon regularisation of the Scheme, CCSV holders will be able to purchase services from two recognised service providers at the same time, thus increasing the flexibility of using CCSV services.

The SWD will also launch the Voucher Information System for the Elderly in September this year, through which CCSV holders will be able to access real-time information on voucher usage, search for recognised service providers, etc.

The SWD hopes that the new measures to be introduced after regularisation will attract more eligible elderly persons to use CCSV services and encourage more service providers to participate in the Scheme. As recommended by the Ombudsman, the SWD will step up publicity on CCSV services to the elderly and their carers through newspaper or television interviews on real cases to raise the public awareness about the Scheme.

The SWD will continue to listen to the views of the industry and different stakeholders, and review the implementation of relevant measures under the Scheme, so as to refine the Scheme in a timely manner to meet the needs of the elderly.