

Narration:

In view of the ageing population in Hong Kong, the Elderly Commission formulated a blueprint for the future development of elderly services in 2017, the Elderly Services Programme Plan (or in short “the ESPP”).

Our elderly population is increasing rapidly. In 2016, there was one elderly person in every six in Hong Kong. In ten years’ time, there will be one elderly person in every four citizens, and rising to about one in three after twenty to thirty years.

What should we do to prepare for such a large number of elderly persons?

First of all, we need to provide suitable support and care services. As future generations of elderly persons will have higher expectations on the services, our elderly services must keep up with the times.

In order to deliver the multi-faceted services, the community has to plan ahead in terms of manpower, land and finance.

Dr. C K Law,
Secretary for Labour
and Welfare:

The mission of the Government’s policy on elderly services is to provide our elderly persons with a sense of security, a sense of belonging and a sense of worthiness.

In the light of the ageing population, the ESPP proposed a total of four strategic directions and 20 recommendations to serve as the blueprint for future service development. These will prepare the society for the challenges to come so that we can continue to provide the needed support to our elderly.

Apart from serving as a blueprint, the ESPP is also a framework for conducting service reviews in the years to come.

Since we may not be able to fully predict every change brought about by the ageing population, we have adopted the concept of a “living document” in

formulating the ESPP, such that the ESPP can be reviewed and updated as appropriate to ensure that our elderly services can keep up with the times and the changing needs of the society.

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The first of the four key strategic directions mentioned by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare is to achieve “ageing in place” and reduce institutionalisation rate through significantly strengthening community care services. This involves a multi-pronged approach to address the surge in demand for elderly services in future.

We estimated that the demand for subsidised long-term care services was about 60 000 in 2016, and this demand will reach 130 000 by 2046, more than double the figure in 2016.

At the same time, while elderly persons in general prefer “ageing in place”, many of them and their family members will opt for waitlisting subsidised residential care services when they apply for subsidised long-term care services, leading to an over-reliance on residential care services. Looking at subsidised services, the number of persons using and queuing for residential care services has for a long time remained at three times the number of those waitlisting community care services.

Consequently, while we are increasing the number of subsidised residential care places, we also need to consider how to re-balance the share of residential care services and community care services. The target of the ESPP is to improve the ratio of these two types of services from 3:1 currently to 1:1 in the long run.

Specifically, the ESPP has proposed to enhance health education and management for elderly persons. By organising various activities and providing services for elderly persons with mild impairment, they could better maintain their physical and mental health through the principle of “prevention is better than

cure”.

For elderly persons who require care services in order for them to live in their own homes, the ESPP has proposed to increase the number of community care places, enhance transitional care support to elderly persons who have just been discharged from hospitals and strengthen support services to carers, enabling elderly persons to age in the community.

As for elderly persons who need residential care services, we will continue to increase the number of subsidised residential care places. Meanwhile, we will also enhance service quality by reviewing the existing regulations and strengthening training in the industry.

On the other hand, we will strengthen facilities and manpower planning. We will enhance the current planning mechanism and reinstate planning ratios for elderly facilities.

As regards manpower, we will implement a host of measures to improve the employment prospects of the elderly care industry, encourage the use of technology, strengthen training and explore how to attract new entrants to join the industry, etc.

The second strategic direction of the ESPP is to enable informed choices and timely access to quality services.

The future generations of elderly persons will have greater expectations on services due to their higher educational attainment and better financial conditions.

In order to enable informed choices, we need to explore the development of a case management model, so that elderly persons can choose suitable services and plan for their own caring arrangements with the assistance of dedicated case managers. In addition, the ESPP has recommended the utilisation of information and communication technology, as well

as changing the current service mode. For example, to allow our elders more opportunities to decide what they like to see in the activities they join at the elderly centres.

The third strategic direction is to further streamline service efficiency and promote integrated service delivery. The goal is to match the healthcare services and living environment with the needs of an ageing society. Specifically, we will strengthen support for discharged elderly patients, enhance the co-ordination between hospitals and social welfare organisations, and improve the age-friendliness of the community, etc.

The fourth strategic direction is to ensure financial sustainability and accountability of elderly services.

Due to the sharp surge in demand and a shrinking work force, the ESPP has proposed to enhance the existing financing arrangements to ensure sustainability of our elderly services. The ESPP has proposed three directions to be explored. The first is to allocate resources to elderly persons most in need, through suitable co-payment arrangements. The second is to develop more self-financing services, and the third is to explore alternative financing options such as long-term care insurance.

Dr. C K Law,
Secretary for Labour
and Welfare:

For our elderly persons to lead a fruitful and comfortable life in their twilight years, different sectors of the society will have to cooperate to strengthen the planning and development of our elderly services. Let us work together and make the necessary preparations to achieve our mission of providing our elderly with a sense of security, a sense of belonging and a sense of worthiness.

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If you would like to know more about the Elderly Services Programme Plan, please visit the Labour and Welfare Bureau's website : www.lwb.gov.hk