

## **31st Meeting of the Elderly Commission**

### **Summary for Press Briefing**

The Elderly Commission (EC) held its 31<sup>st</sup> meeting today (21 Jan 2003) with the following items on the agenda: -

(1) **Progress Report on Re-engineering Community Support Services for Elders**

- The Social Welfare Department (SWD) briefed EC on the progress of the exercise to re-engineer community support services for elders. The purpose is to provide holistic care and support to elders living in the community and actualize the concept of “continuum of care”.
- The re-engineering exercise covers **centre-based** and **home-based** services –
  - (a) Upgrading of social centres for the elderly (S/Es) to Neighbourhood Elderly Centres (NECs), and multi-service centres for the elderly (M/Es) to District Elderly Community Centres (DECCs) to provide expanded functions to elders and the community, including enhancing support to vulnerable elders through outreaching and networking, volunteer mobilization and counselling; and
  - (b) Upgrading of home help, home care and meal teams to Integrated Home Care Services Teams (IHCSTs) to provide enhanced personal and nursing care services to frail elders.
- Positive outcome of the re-engineering exercise –
  - (a) All the existing 35 M/Es will be upgraded to DECCs;
  - (b) For the 213 S/Es, 110 will be upgraded to NECs. 40 S/Es will be transformed to self-financing units to provide a variety of innovative elderly-related services such as senior volunteers development centres. Two S/Es housed in upper floors in commercial building and complex not very convenient to elderly users will be closed. The remaining 59 S/Es will continue to operate as standalone S/Es.
  - (c) 138 home help teams will be upgraded to IHCSTs to serve 21,170 existing users and admit no less than 1,120 frail elders and additional number of elders depending on service demand.
- Net additional resources of \$47 million will be injected into the programme. The revamped centre-based and home-based services will commence in phases in 2003-04 and form a solid infrastructure for supporting elders to

continue to live in the community.

(2) **In-situ Expansion of Day Care Centres for the Elderly to Meet the Special Needs of Demented Elders**

- SWD briefed EC on the development of dementia care services and its plan to provide in-situ expansion in day care centres for the elderly (D/E) to meet the needs of elders with dementia.
- In light of the outcome of two 3-year pilot projects on Dementia Units (DUs) in subvented residential care homes for the elderly (RCHEs) and Day Care Centre for Demented Elderly (D/DEs) respectively, SWD has mapped out the following way forward for dementia care services for elders –
  - (a) Instead of segregation and fragmented provision of different specialized service units, demented elders should be served in an integrated manner with the provision of a continuum of services in one care facility meeting the needs at their different stages of care level and conditions.
  - (b) ***Residential care setting.*** Dementia Supplement will be allocated to all eligible subvented RCHEs with demented elders, instead of subventing the setting up of DUs in a limited number of RCHEs. In 2002-03, the Dementia Supplement allocated to a total of 78 RCHEs was \$14.28 million.
  - (c) ***In-situ expansion of day care centres for the elderly.*** NGOs operating D/Es as well as the four operating the pilot DD/Es have been invited to participate in an in-situ expansion exercise, under which SWD will allocate additional resources for additional service places and strengthened capability for the centre to care for demented elders. The estimated additional funding for this exercise is \$7.92 million for a total of 220 additional D/E places. The enhanced services will commence from April 2003 onwards.
- In addition, SWD will –
  - (a) provide specialized training of a total of 760 care workers and home helpers and 680 professional staff serving the demented elders in subvented, self-financing and private elderly service units from 2002-03 to 2005-06;
  - (b) promulgate good environmental design in subvented RCHEs for demented elders by giving funding support for improvement works;
  - (c) provide Lotteries Fund grant to the enhanced D/Es for the purchase of additional furniture and equipment to cater for the needs of frail and

demented elders.

(3) **Progress Report on the Phasing out of Self-care Hostels and Homes for the Aged**

- SWD briefed EC on progress made in phasing out self-care hostels and homes for the aged.
- At an earlier meeting last June, EC noted that from both policy and resource utilization points of view, residential care services should concentrate on looking after elders with care needs. Elders' housing needs should be met through the housing programme, and their social and psychosocial needs through community support services. This is also in line with the recommendations made in a value for money report of the Director of Audit on residential services for the elderly in May 2002. EC endorsed the phasing out of self-care hostels and homes for the aged (H/A) and advised that elders concerned should be briefed about the community support services available to avoid causing them unwarranted concerns.
- EC noted that SWD had drawn up a plan to phase out self-care hostels and homes for the aged including those for the aged blind; and that since 1 January 2003, SWD had ceased accepting new applications for waitlisting for admission to self-care hostels and homes for the aged.
- EC further noted that –
  - (a) as at 31 December 2002, there were 5 607 applicants on the waiting lists for admission to self-care hostels and homes for the aged and 71 applicants for admission to homes for the aged blind. During the first half of 2003, frontline caseworkers will conduct a review of all the cases on the waiting lists with a view to ascertaining the elders' genuine welfare needs and offering them community care and support services and housing assistance as appropriate. They will be allowed to remain on the waiting lists if they so wish for admission when a place is available, although other community services will be introduced to them during the case review;
  - (b) for elders referred to SWD after December 2002, case workers will assess the elders' needs and make direct referral for community support services and housing assistance as appropriate.
- SWD has published a *Guidebook on Services for Elders* which sets out different types of community support services available. The Guidebook

will be disseminated to all elders on the waiting lists for self-care hostels and homes for the aged.

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