

# DH launches Community Dental Support Programme to further enhance dental services for underprivileged (with photo)

The Department of Health (DH) announced today (May 13) that the Community Dental Support Programme (CDSP) will be launched on May 26 to provide additional dental services to the underprivileged with financial difficulties, in addition to the existing dental grants under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme and the emergency dental services provided by government dental clinics. The CDSP is expected to provide a service capacity of at least double that of the current quotas of dental general public sessions (GP sessions) at government dental clinics (i.e. about 40 000 participants every year).

At the end of last year, the DH invited eligible non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to participate in the CDSP to provide additional service points. To date, 32 NGOs (see Annex) have been assessed and are participating in the CDSP, providing nearly 80 dental service points covering all 18 districts in Hong Kong. At the same time, in addition to tooth extraction and pain relief services, the scope of dental services will expand and provide tooth filling services when deemed appropriate by dentists to encourage retaining tooth. Furthermore, compared to the current GP sessions which address one tooth per visit, participants under the CDSP can receive treatment for up to three teeth at each visit.

The Government, in December 2024, formulated the Oral Health Action Plan according to the development strategies and recommendations made by the Working Group on Oral Health and Dental Care. The CDSP focuses on providing subsidised dental services to the underprivileged who have difficulties in accessing dental care. Service users of the CDSP must be a holder of a Hong Kong identity card, be enrolled in the Electronic Health Record Sharing System (eHealth), and be a current beneficiary or recipient of any of the following measures:

- Old Age Living Allowance (OALA) of the Social Welfare Department (SWD);
- Community Care Service Voucher Scheme for the Elderly (level 2 of co-payment category) of the SWD;
- Integrated Home Care Services (Frail Cases) (IHCS (Frail Cases)), or Enhanced Home and Community Care Services (EHCCS) or Home Support Services (HSS) (Level 1 or Level 2 fee charge or co-payment category) of the SWD; or
- Patients of Hospital Authority (HA) who have been provided Medical Fee Waiver (full waiving and partial waiving) of the HA.

Under the CDSP, each service user can apply for subsidised dental services which cover preventive and curative oral health and dental care services once every 180 days. Subject to the assessment by the attending registered dentist, a service user will be provided with specified subsidised dental services, including:

1. oral health assessment;
2. medication for dental pain relief (when necessary);
3. X-ray examination;
4. dental filling or extraction, with each tooth counted as a "Teeth Filling/Extraction Quota".

Each service user is required to pay an administration fee of \$50 directly to the NGO for each tooth (teeth filling or teeth extraction services), of which a maximum fee of \$150 is required (treatment for a maximum of three teeth will be provided for every 180 days). If the service user receives IHCS (Frail Cases), EHCCS or HSS (Level 1 fee charge or co-payment category) of the SWD, or is eligible under the Medical Fee Waiver (full waiving) of the HA (including recipients of OALA aged 75 or above), the Government will subsidise the administration fee in full. While current beneficiaries of the CSSA Scheme under the SWD may apply for the CDSP, they can also make use of the dental grants under the CSSA to receive comprehensive dental services.

Through the eHealth app, service users can check their consultation records, including consultation date and treatment items. Later this year, relevant electronic oral health records will also be available through the app to help service users better understand and monitor their dental conditions.

The DH is organising briefing sessions for the District Services and Community Care Teams (Care Teams) in various districts to introduce the background and details of the CDSP so that the underprivileged with financial difficulties in the community can better understand and participate in the CDSP through the Care Teams' district networks.

The DH has set up a dedicated webpage ([www.communitydental.gov.hk/en/cdsp/](http://www.communitydental.gov.hk/en/cdsp/)) with a complete list of NGO dental clinics participating in the CDSP. Interested and eligible persons can visit the webpage starting from today, select and contact the clinic of their choice to make an appointment in advance for government-subsidised dental care services on or after May 26. Individuals who have questions about the eligibility for the CDSP should contact the registered social worker who is following up their case.

Optimising arrangements for dental general public sessions

On the other hand, the DH will increase the service quotas of the GP

sessions by nearly 30 per cent from June onwards and optimise the registration process for the convenience of the public.

The online registration system for dental general public session (ORDGP) has been operating smoothly since its launch on December 30, 2024. Members of the public, especially the elderly, no longer need to go to the dental clinics to queue up in the early morning to compete for a service quota. The DH further introduced an over-subscription ballot and waiting list mechanism to optimise the use of public resources. Since the launch of the ORDGP four months ago, the average utilisation rate of the GP sessions is as high as 99 per cent.

Following the passage of the Dentists Registration (Amendment) Bill 2024 by the Legislative Council in July last year and introduction of new pathways for qualified non-locally trained dentists, the DH has made progress in dentist recruitment, with more than 65 new recruits, including nine non-locally trained dentists with limited registration. The actual manpower ratio of active dentists has increased from 69 per cent (as at September 1, 2024) to 81 per cent at present. With improved manpower supply, the DH will increase the total service quotas of GP sessions by about 30 per cent starting from next month.

Furthermore, in order to make it more convenient for the general public in using the service, the ORDGP will introduce enhancements at the end of June to streamline the registration process, including real-time identity authentication by logging in to the "iAM Smart" or "eHealth" apps, an auto-complete function to minimise the need for repeated entries, the addition of an appointment cancellation function and an upgraded waiting list mechanism by replacing the current manual process with automatic distribution of service quotas from the waiting list. These enhancements will improve the operational efficiency of the ORDGP. Details will be announced in due course.

The DH will implement the development strategies and recommendations made by the Working Group on Oral Health and Dental Care, and continue to help members of the public manage their own oral health through publicity, education, promotion and development of primary oral health and dental care, emphasising on prevention, early identification, and timely intervention to encourage people to retain their teeth. The DH will also focus on the provision of essential dental services to the underprivileged who have difficulties in accessing dental care services, including those with financial difficulties, persons with disabilities or special needs and high-risk groups, through public or subsidised models.

