

LCQ16: Innovation and Technology Fund for Application in Elderly and Rehabilitation Care

Following is a question by the Hon Stanley Li and a written reply by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Mr Chris Sun, in the Legislative Council today (May 31):

Question:

In December 2018, the Government set up the Innovation and Technology Fund for Application in Elderly and Rehabilitation Care (the Fund) to subsidise eligible elderly and rehabilitation service units to procure, rent and trial use technology products. The eligibility for application for procurement and rental of technology products has been extended to all non-subsidised private or self-financing residential care homes for the elderly (RCHEs) and persons with disabilities from the Eighth Tranche launched in September 2022 onwards. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the respective numbers of applications received and approved by the Fund in the first to the eighth tranches, with a breakdown by the type of service units making the applications;
- (2) of the respective amounts of grants allocated by the Fund for the procurement, rental and trial use of technology products so far, and their relevant proportions in the grants; and
- (3) as there are views that the Government's proposal to increase the minimum area of floor space per resident of RCHEs will result in an increase in the operating costs of RCHEs, whether the Government will consider relaxing the ceiling of grants under the Fund for RCHEs' applications, so as to better assist RCHEs in enhancing the quality of their services?

Reply:

President,

(1) In December 2018, the Government allocated \$1 billion to set up the Innovation and Technology Fund for Application in Elderly and Rehabilitation Care, which subsidises eligible elderly and rehabilitation service units to procure, rent or try out technology products, with a view to improving the quality of life of service users and reducing the pressure on care staff and carers.

The Government has, since September 2022, expanded the eligibility for the Fund from subvented service units to all private or self-financing residential care homes for the elderly (RCHEs) and for persons with disabilities (RCHDs), increasing the total number of eligible service units

to around 2 200. Thus far, grants totalling about \$520 million have been approved, subsidising about 1 600 elderly and rehabilitation service units to procure or rent over 13 000 technology products. The number of applications by category of service units and the number of applications approved are set out at Annex.

(2) The Fund has allocated a total of about \$520 million for the procurement and rental of technology products, of which \$5 million is for renting products. In addition, the Fund has allocated an additional \$7.6 million for the trial use of new technology products.

(3) Taking account of their floor area, environment, staffing requirement and service users' needs, eligible service units can apply for the Fund to procure or rent suitable technology products, e.g. medical care ultra-low beds and companion robots. The Social Welfare Department regularly reviews the use of the Fund and collects feedback from applicants, service users and care staff on the Fund and technology products through site visits and questionnaires, and would adjust the mode of operation of the Fund as and when necessary.