

# Ombudsman probes Hospital Authority's assistive device loan service (with photo)

The following is issued on behalf of the Office of The Ombudsman:

The Ombudsman, Mr Jack Chan, today (June 10) announced the launch of a full investigation into the procedures and mechanisms currently employed by the Hospital Authority (HA) in providing an assistive device loan service to the public.

Hospitals under the HA have long provided patients and their families or carers with a loan service of assistive devices, such as wheelchairs, canes and walking frames to support patients in their daily routine and rehabilitation during recovery. While this service is undoubtedly beneficial to the public and worthy of support, available information indicates that the borrowing and returning procedures are rather cumbersome and overly stringent. For example, when a device is returned, the deposit payer must present the deposit receipt to collect the refund in person at the hospital; authorising a representative is not acceptable. Moreover, without the receipt, a refund will be denied even if the deposit payer visits the hospital in person and provides proof of the device's proper return.

Mr Chan said, "Assistive devices are essential to facilitating the early recovery and daily lives of patients with needs, and alleviating the burden on families and carers. The Office has noted that the HA's current loan arrangements may cause varying degrees of inconvenience to patients and their families and carers. Given the significant number of borrowers and a deposit as high as \$3,500 for each assistive device, denying refunds due to missing receipts would not only lead to conflicts, but also imposes a financial burden on patients and their families. In this light, I have decided to launch a full investigation into the HA's current procedures and mechanisms for assistive device loan services to identify any areas for improvement. Pertinent recommendations will be made for the benefit and convenience of the public."

The Ombudsman welcomes views from members of the public on this topic. Written submissions should reach the Office of The Ombudsman by July 10, 2025:

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