

## 以照顧者為本 建立全面支援

### Building a holistic and humane support system for carers

照顧者為照料親人弄至心力交瘁，最終精神崩潰，了結親人和自己的生命……這些叫人心碎的報導，並不陌生。

We have all heard them before – heart-rending reports of embattled carers being pushed to the brink of sanity, killing someone in the family under their care, and finally ending their own lives.

如此家庭慘劇看似個別事件，但照顧者長期身心疲累、面對沉重壓力，恐已成廣泛性的問題。

根據香港大學於 2018 年的一項調查，受訪的護老者當中，有四分之一屬於容易出現健康及情緒問題的「高危群組」。

香港堪稱全球最長壽地區之一，但在支援照顧者方面，又能否交出亮麗的成績表？



Isolated as the tragic incidents may seem, the fatigue and distress among carers are endemic. According to a 2018 study by The University of Hong Kong, a quarter of the surveyed carers who had to look after their elderly family members were at a high risk of having physical and mental health issues.

With one of the world's longest life expectancy rates, how can Hong Kong turn quantity into quality, and show carers that they are not alone in their struggles?

平機會於 2020 年 9 月向立法會福利事務委員會提交意見書，倡議多項措施，以加強支援照顧者，並紓解她／他們在 2019 冠狀病毒病疫情下的困境。

In September 2020, the EOC made a submission to the Legislative Council Panel on Welfare Services, advocating for various measures to enhance support for carers amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

了解詳情 Learn more : [www.eoc.org.hk/eoc/upload/202092317316182903.pdf](http://www.eoc.org.hk/eoc/upload/202092317316182903.pdf)

## 掌握數據 對症下藥 Paint a better picture with better data

照顧者並非單一組別。她／他們的照料對象不盡相同，可能是有特殊教育需要的兒童、受認知障礙症影響的長者，又或是行動不便的家庭成員等，而不少照顧者本身也是年長或殘疾人士。若要制訂切合照顧者需要的政策，必先準確掌握處於不同情況的照顧者數目。

目前，香港政府並沒有專門就照顧者發布統計數字，遑論更詳細的資料，例如被照顧的家庭成員數目、年齡和健康狀況，以及照顧者本身的年齡和健康狀況、她／他們有否申請政府津貼或使用非政府機構服務、是否家中唯一照顧者等。

因此，我們只能從過往一些零散的調查數據作出粗略估算，而這些研究亦往往並非從照顧者的角度出發。例如，根據政府統計處於 2015 年發布的《香港統計月刊：香港的殘疾

人士及長期病患者》，有 203,700 名居家的殘疾人士和 175,600 名居家的長期病患者表示有別人照顧其日常生活。然而，全港的照顧者人數不止於此，因為智障人士的照顧者並未納入上述計算。

根據行政長官於 2020 年 11 月公布的施政報告，勞工及福利局正進行一項深入研究，為擬定全面的照顧者政策提供實證基礎。此舉是邁往正確方向的一步；政府需專門就照顧者蒐集全面數據，以辨識她／他們面對的各種困難，進而制訂更適切的支援措施。

Carers are not a homogeneous group. Some look after children with special educational needs; some take care of elders affected by dementia; some attend to family members with mobility challenges; and many are senior citizens or people with disabilities themselves. Without an accurate grasp of the number of carers facing different situations, it is futile to speak of a policy that suits their needs.

To date, there is no official tally of the total number of carers in Hong Kong, let alone a detailed breakdown according to the number of family members under their care, the age and health conditions of the cared-for, the carer's own age and health conditions, whether the carer has applied for Government allowances or used NGO-run services, and whether he or she is the sole carer, among other relevant factors.



Consequently, only a sketchy picture can be made out of the bits and pieces of data from past studies that were not carer-centric. For instance, in *Hong Kong Monthly Digest of Statistics: Persons with Disabilities and Chronic Diseases in Hong Kong*, published by the Census and Statistics Department in 2015, it was found that nearly 203,700 persons with disabilities and

175,600 persons with chronic diseases had someone to take care of their day-to-day living. Nonetheless, the figures were a sure underestimate, as they did not include carers of persons with intellectual disability.

According to the Chief Executive's 2020 Policy Address delivered last November, the Labour and Welfare Bureau is conducting an in-depth study designed to provide empirical support for formulating a comprehensive carer policy. This is a welcome move. Indeed, there is a need to collect data specifically about carers in a more holistic manner, so that their challenges can be better identified, and alleviated with more tailored support.

## 擴大津貼計劃的對象 Enhance inclusiveness of financial support schemes

政府目前為照顧者提供兩項津貼計劃，分別是「為低收入的殘疾人士照顧者提供生活津貼試驗計劃」及「為低收入家庭護老者提供生活津貼試驗計劃」。

然而，兩項計劃均規定領取傷殘津貼的人士不能申請照顧者津貼，原因是她／他們「不會被視為合適及有能力的照顧者」。平機會認為，符合領取傷殘津貼的資格，並不代表沒有能力擔當任何照顧工作，故政府應重新審視這項假設。事實上，部分殘疾人士會共同生活、建立關係和互相照顧。因此，政府宜避免將所有傷殘津貼受惠者視為不合資格，而應考慮因應殘疾人士的個人能力和情況，作出適當和彈性處理。

另一個不合資格申請照顧者津貼的組別，是「長者生活津貼」的受助人。一如上述情況，「以老護老」是常見現象，不少長者均有照顧身邊的另一位長者或殘疾人士。隨著香港人口急劇老化（根據政府統計處於2016年的推算，2038年每三名香港人中便有一人為長者），可預見照顧者老齡化的趨勢將有增無減。政府應考慮放寬限制，讓年長的照顧者可利用津貼尋求外間協助或服務，以減輕負擔。

值得一提的是，以上兩項照顧者津貼計劃均屬試驗性質。鑑於冠狀病毒病疫情影響未退，加上本港長遠對照顧的需求將不斷增加，政府應考慮將兩項計劃恆常化，並適時提高津貼金額。

The Government currently runs two carer allowance schemes with its Community Care Fund, namely the "Pilot Scheme on Living Allowance for Low-income Carers of Persons with Disabilities" and the "Pilot Scheme on Living Allowance for Carers of Elderly Persons from Low-income Families".

However, recipients of the Disability Allowance are not deemed to be "fit and capable carers" under both schemes, and thus ineligible for the respective allowances. This assumption needs a rethink, since being entitled to the Disability Allowance does not necessarily mean that one cannot perform caring roles and functions. Indeed, cases of people with disabilities being in a relationship and looking after each other are not unheard of. The blanket ban on Disability Allowance recipients from even applying for carer allowance should therefore be revised with due regard to their individual capacity and circumstances.

Another group ineligible for carer allowance are recipients of the Old Age Living Allowance. Again, it is not uncommon for an elderly person to look after another elderly person or a person with disability. The trend is likely to persist as the city's population ages rapidly, with the Census and Statistics Department projecting in 2016 that nearly one in every three Hongkongers will be a senior citizen in 2038. Easing the restriction would mean easing the burden on elderly carers, who could use the additional allowance to hire assistance services.

It is also worth noting that these are pilot schemes only. Given the increasing demand for caregiving in Hong Kong both in the COVID-plagued present and the longer term, the Government should consider regularising them and raising allowance levels when appropriate.



## 讓照顧者「停一停、抖一抖」 Give carers a time-out

每個人都需要歇息的空間，照顧者尤加需要定時「放空」，以免壓力爆煲。隨之而來的問題是，誰可代替自己進行照顧的工作呢？

一些海外地區便立法訂明，合資格的照顧者每年可享有某日數的暫顧服務，例如日本有 84 天、澳洲有 63 天、以及加拿大 60 天。暫顧服務有不同類型，包括家居照顧、日間中心及院舍照顧。日本和澳洲更提供過夜的家居或鄰舍暫顧服務，以幫助需要夜間照顧的人士，亦為平日徹夜難眠的照顧者提供了珍貴的喘息空間。無論形式如何，暫顧服務旨在讓院舍或專業人員暫時代替照顧者工作，紓緩他們長期照顧的壓力。

在香港，日間護理中心及護理院舍的暫顧服務長期不足。無疑，土地匱乏和護理人手短缺令暫顧服務供不應求的問題難以在短期內解決，但政府可探討更創新和靈活的方案，例如招聘兼職護理員或訓練社區居民，為同區內的長者和殘疾人士提供日間暫顧服務，地點可以是服務提供者的住所，或是被照顧者的住所。

「照顧」絕對是重要的公共健康議題，影響著每個人的生活質素。制訂全面的照顧者支援政策，不單是為了照顧者與被照顧者的身心健康，亦是為了整體社會的福祉，實在不容再拖。

There is no shame in taking a break from it all. Indeed, being able to take time out is essential to avoiding “carer burnout” and directly related to the quality of care. The question is, of course, who can take your place when you are away?

In some overseas jurisdictions, eligible carers are entitled in law to a prescribed period of respite care services every year (e.g. as long as 84 days in Japan, 63 in Australia, and 60 in Canada). The services come in various forms, including at-home, day centres and care homes. In Japan and Australia, overnight in-home or neighbourhood respite services are also available, which are of particular value to carers looking after those suffering from restlessness at night. Whatever the form, the objective is to allow principal carers to rest and destress while care facilities or professional caregivers perform their roles on a temporary basis.

In Hong Kong, the number of places for respite care services at day care centres and residential care homes has been consistently inadequate. While the scarcity of land in the territory and the shortage of healthcare staff may pose significant roadblocks to meeting the demand in the short term, the Government could explore more innovative solutions to fill the gap, such as engaging part-time care workers or training more talents to provide respite day care services for elders and people with disabilities living in the same neighbourhood, either at their own residence or where the service user lives.

At the end of the day, caregiving is an important public health issue that bears on the quality of life of each and every one of us. It is high time we map out and implement a comprehensive carer support strategy – both for the wellbeing of carers and the cared-for, and for the benefit of society as a whole.

### 與照顧者同行

#### 照顧者咖啡室

由香港婦女中心協會營運，為照顧者提供放鬆和喘息的空間

[www.womencentre.org.hk/Zh/Services/carer/carer\\_cafe](http://www.womencentre.org.hk/Zh/Services/carer/carer_cafe)

#### 照顧照顧者

由十多個社福機構及民間團體組成的平台，分享照顧經驗及倡議政策改革

[www.facebook.com/careforcarershk](https://www.facebook.com/careforcarershk)

#### 照顧者大大聲

網上互助小組，專門支援照顧認知障礙症患者的人士

[www.facebook.com/groups/carers.voice](https://www.facebook.com/groups/carers.voice)

### We're all in this together

#### Carer Cafes

A space for carers to unwind, operated by the Hong Federation of Women's Centres

[www.womencentre.org.hk/Zh/Services/carer/carer\\_cafe](http://www.womencentre.org.hk/Zh/Services/carer/carer_cafe)

#### Care for Carers

A platform set up by over 10 civil society groups to share caregiving tips and advocate policy reform

[www.facebook.com/careforcarershk](https://www.facebook.com/careforcarershk)

#### Carers Voice

An online mutual support group for carers of people with dementia

[www.facebook.com/groups/carers.voice](https://www.facebook.com/groups/carers.voice)

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