

Appointment Of Deputies For Individuals No Longer Capable Of Decisions

Question

Ms Tin Pei Ling
MacPherson SMC

To ask the Minister for Social and Family Development what is the assessed efficacy of the pilot programme started in 2014 involving the appointment of a panel of volunteers as deputies for individuals who are no longer capable of making decisions for themselves.

Answer

Mdm Speaker, there are mentally incapacitated individuals who do not have family members, friends, or anyone else to be their proxy decision makers. The number is currently small, but it could increase. In fact, I think it will increase. MSF will amend the Mental Capacity Act this year to allow professional donees and deputies to be appointed under such scenarios. For those who do not have anyone to apply for deputyship and are unable to afford private sector services, we have also established a panel of professionals, who could apply to the court to be appointed as deputies for these individuals. There are currently 18 public-spirited professionals from the financial, healthcare, legal and social work sectors on this panel.

As each deputyship case involves multiple steps, the pilot is still on-going. Nevertheless, the feedback that we have received has been positive about how the vulnerable individuals have benefited. Just to cite one example, how the assets of a particular individual without capacity were put to good use, so that she could enjoy better quality care at the nursing home. Transport arrangements were also made to enable her to continue participating in her weekly church activities which she enjoys. This is just one example of the many different things that can happen when we bring this on board.

We are now refining the work processes based on our experiences with the pilot, as well as inputs from key partners, such as social workers, to allow more vulnerable individuals to benefit. We would also very much like to encourage anyone who is keen to serve this vulnerable group to step forward. Your services will mean a great deal for these individuals and it will go a long way to making their lives more comfortable in the last years.