

Parliament

Homes for destitute seniors and abused kids to be licensed under new Act

It is aimed at strengthening safeguards, raising the quality of care

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Senior Social Affairs Correspondent

Sixty-one social residential homes housing nearly 4,000 vulnerable residents will have to follow a new licensing regime aimed at strengthening safeguards and raising the quality of care.

The residents include abused children, adults with disabilities and destitute seniors.

Under the Social Residential Homes Bill that was passed in Parliament on April 8, such homes have to abide by a licensing framework that provides clear and common standards of care for the different types of homes.

The new Act is expected to take effect in 2026.

For a start, the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) will license homes in six categories that provide long-term residential care to "highly vulnerable" residents.

These are children's homes, children's disability homes, sheltered homes, welfare homes, adult disability homes and adult disability hostels.

Children's homes, such as the Chen Su Lan Methodist Home and Melrose Home, house children in need of care and protection, such as those who are abused, and youth offenders.

Sheltered homes house low-income seniors who are independent and have no accommodation, while welfare homes house destitute seniors who cannot live independently due to physical or mental illness.

To help the homes, MSF and the National Council of Social Service will provide a \$33 million Transition Support Package. About 2,000 staff work in these homes now.

The homes can use funds to train their staff in areas such as the management of violent behaviours. The package will also help to defray the costs of meeting other requirements under the Act, such as the installation of CCTV cameras.

For example, it would be mandatory to install CCTV cameras in specified areas in the home to ensure the safety and security of staff and residents. This is currently not mandatory.

MSF said it engaged the home operators and their board members, as well as held a public consultation, in drafting the new Act.

In Parliament on April 8, Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Social and Family Development Eric Chua said: "The Social Residential Homes Bill is a proactive step taken by MSF to codify the good progress that has been made in raising the quality of care provided by the sector over the years."

"To be clear, we are not coming from a position of deficit." He added that incidents of a serious nature, such as abuse, are rare, and that the homes here have good standards.

Currently only children's homes, children's disability homes and sheltered homes are licensed. So only slightly more than half, or 25, of the 61 homes in all categories are licensed now.

For homes that are not licensed but funded by MSF, the ministry manages them through funding agreements under which the home has to meet key performance indicators and a prescribed set of requirements.

Under the new Act, clear standards are spelled out for these homes and a code of practice will detail the regulatory requirements relating to the home's governance and management of residents, among other areas.

A breach of the code of practice may lead to regulatory action such as revocation or suspension of the



The THK Home for Disabled @ Sembawang. Sixty-one social residential homes housing nearly 4,000 vulnerable residents will have to follow a new licensing regime, expected to take effect in 2026. LIANNE ZACOBIO FILE PHOTO

home's licence. For example, those who operate a home without a licence under the new Act will face a fine of up to \$100,000 or up to two years in jail, or both.

There will also be stronger safeguards to ensure residents' safety and well-being.

For example, the use of reasonable force or mechanical restraints, such as cloth bands and leg braces, are not allowed unless under specified circumstances, Mr Chua said. This is to deter any potential abuse.

For example, a few adult disability homes use cloth bands and similar restraints to ensure the residents' safety, such as preventing them from falling from wheelchairs, an MSF spokesman told The Straits Times.

Staff who use excessive force or unauthorised restraints may face regulatory action under the new Act, including losing approval to work in the home.

In response to Mr Melvin Yong (Hudon Mas), who asked about the number of staff in such homes who were investigated for the excessive use of force, Mr Chua said the MSF received an average of six reports a year between 2020 and 2024 about the abuse of residents, some involving excessive use of force.

He said some of these complaints were not substantiated, but for those that were, staff were taken to task.

The new Act also contains an enforcement framework to deter errant operators.

For example, the Act will give

MSF powers, through a step-in order, to temporarily take over a failing operator's home to ensure the continuity of care for residents. Currently, MSF has no legislative power to do so.

However, MSF said such step-in orders would only be a measure of the last resort if the issues cannot be resolved through regulatory and other actions.

Ms Ang Chiew Geok, group head of the Touch Special Needs Group at Touch Community Services (TCS), said that operators of adult disability homes and hostels have to follow standards of care for such homes set by MSF and meet key performance indicators - even though they are currently not licensed until the new Act kicks in.

TCS runs Touch Ubi Hostel, where adults with intellectual and other disabilities live in a communal setting and learn to live independently, among other skills.

The new Act is similar to MSF's standards of care, but is more detailed and covers more areas such as the use of CCTV cameras and mechanical restraints, Ms Ang added.

Touch Ubi Hostel and the four homes for adults with disabilities run by Thyee Hwa Kwan Moral Charities (THKMC) say they do not use any form of physical restraint on their residents. One of the THKMC homes, THK Home@Eunos, also houses children with intellectual disabilities.

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Summary of news coverage

Homes for destitute seniors and abused kids to be licensed under new Act

Sixty-one social residential homes, housing nearly 4,000 vulnerable residents, will be required to follow a new licensing regime aimed at enhancing safeguards and improving the quality of care. These residents include abused children, adults with disabilities, and destitute seniors. The Social Residential Homes Bill, passed in Parliament on 8 April, mandates that these homes adhere to a licensing framework with clear and common standards of care for various types of homes. The new Act is expected to come into effect in 2026.

The Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) will license homes in six categories that provide long-term residential care to "highly vulnerable" residents. These categories are children's homes, children's disability homes, sheltered homes, welfare homes, adult disability homes, and adult disability hostels. This framework aims to ensure consistent and high-quality care across all social residential homes.

To help the homes, MSF and the National Council of Social Service will provide a \$33 million Transition Support Package. About 2,000 staff work in these homes now. The new Act mandates that social residential homes use funds to train staff in managing violent behaviours and to meet other requirements, such as installing CCTV cameras in specified areas to ensure safety and security. Clear standards and a code of practice will govern the homes' operations, with breaches potentially leading to licence revocation or suspension. Operating without a licence could result in fines up to \$100,000 or imprisonment. The Act aims to enhance safeguards and ensure the well-being of residents.

Thye Hua Kwan Moral Charities (**THKMC**) shared that it does not use any form of physical restraint on their residents. One of the **THKMC** homes, **THK Home @ Eunos**, also houses children with intellectual disabilities. **THKMC** chief executive officer Jason Lee said the new licensing regime will set clear and consistent standards for homes, and boosts care standards by introducing clearer regulatory guidelines on residents' safety, staff training and other operational requirements. He added: "This structured oversight will ensure that our homes uphold best practices in areas such as medical care, rehabilitation and social integration. It also strengthens protection for our residents, ensuring they receive care with dignity and respect."

政府立法制定新营业执照框架 3300万元援助配套支持 社会福利院提升服务设施

许翔宇 报道
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社会及家庭发展部和全国福利理事会将拨款3300万元，支持本地61家社会福利院提升能力与设施，并且加强培训，以符合新营业执照框架的要求，更好地保障弱势住户的安全与福祉。

国会星期二（4月8日）三读通过《社会福利院法案》（Social Residential Homes Bill）。政府推动这项立法，制定新的营业执照框架，是为了进一步提升和规范社会福利院的服务质量。新法令预计明年生效。

社会及家庭发展部高级政务次长蔡瑞隆在法案二读时说，本地的社会福利院向来维持良好服务水平，极少发生严重事件。政府立法并非因为这个领域的素质有缺失，而是希望采取主动，将行业多年来行之有效的作业方式纳入法规。

社会福利院指的是为弱势群体提供住宿与护理、日常生活照料或心理治疗等介入服务的院舍。

新推出的“过渡时期援助配套”资助六个类型社会福利院，即儿童之家、残障儿童福利院（Children Disability Homes）、主要面向低收入长者的庇护所（Sheltered Homes）、主要照顾贫困者的福利院（Welfare Homes）、残障人士之家以及残

障人士训练宿舍（Adult Disability Hostels）。

目前，分属这六类的社会福利院共有61所，为近4000名高度弱势住户提供长期住宿及24小时照料，当中35所受到不同执照框架监管。新法令除了整合现行法规，也将把其余不持执照，但接受政府拨款协议管制的院舍，纳入管辖范围。

出入口和部分共用空间 日后须强制安装电眼

这些社会福利院可在福利院现有津贴的基础上，申请援助配套资助，安排员工接受培训，内容包括防止轻生、摔倒风险评估等，进一步提升他们的能力。

目前，当局并没有强制社会福利院装置电眼。为进一步保护住户安全，新框架要求社会福利院须在指定位置，如出入口和一些共用空间安装电眼；院舍可申请配套资助，抵消这方面的开销。

配套也会支持业者评估和提升院舍现有的标准操作程序。

新法令将从三方面规范社会福利院的服务质量，除了制定明确的服务守则，加强对住户安全和生活素质的保障，也设立更全面的执法框架，以便更有效地吓阻违例业者。

例如，针对严重违例业者的监管行动和刑罚将更新。未经许可

可经营社会福利院的业者，目前面对罚款不超过5000元，或坐牢不超过两年，或两者兼施。法令生效后，无照经营社会福利院可能受到的惩处在原有的基础上，最高罚款额增加到10万元。

社会福利院业者普遍对新法令表示支持。太和观善机构首席执行官李德生认为，法令提供明确的监管框架，支持机构有效管理属下院舍。有关安全措施进一步强化后，可为住户提供更好的保护。

“新框架对聘用和培训员工有系统化的要求，这将推动我们继续维持称职且时时做好充分准备的团队，最终提升服务质量……过渡时期援助配套有助业者顺利地适应新框架的要求。我们应该会申请资助，落实员工培训、运营调整，并提升硬件与安全设施等项目。”

新法令不涵盖面向街家和家暴幸存者的过渡庇护所（Transitional Shelters）和危机庇护所（Crisis Shelters）。社会及家庭发展部指出，这两类庇护所的住户相对自立，无须依靠庇护所提供24小时照料。

至于这两类庇护所未来是否也纳入新框架，政府会适时探讨。

**新法令三要点
重监管以保障弱势住户权益
刊第7页**



政府将制定新的营业执照框架，进一步提升和规范社会福利院的服务质量。太和观善机构（三巴旺）是其中一所纳入社会福利院法案的残障人士之家，图为院舍工作人员引导住户做运动。（李冠卫摄）

社会福利院新法令三要点 重监管保障弱势住户权益



社会福利院新法案旨在提升本地61家福利院的能力，加强监管以更好地保障弱势住户的安全与福祉。
(李冠工摄)

国会星期二（4月8日）三读通过社会福利院法案，新法案旨在提升本地61家福利院的能力，加强监管以更好地保障弱势住户的安全与福祉。社会福利院法令三大重点如下：

1、为社会福利院制定明确标准，确保院方提供有素质的护理服务

- 提供行为准则，涵盖对社会福利院监管、场所管理、住户管理，以及事件处理方面的要求。社会及家庭发展部与社会福利院咨询后，制定这几方面的要求，并会引导各福利院达

到要求。

2、加强对住户安全和身心健康的保障措施

- 所有执照持有者、要职人员、职员和与住户有直接接触的服务供应者，都须通过社会及家庭发展部的背景评估，确保他们没有不良记录，威胁住户的安全。

- 禁止院方职员在未经批准下以过度强硬或束缚的方式限制住户的举动。由于社会福利院的一些住户，可能因心理情况或其他因素有攻击性的行为，法令会制定明确范围，允许职员

在哪些情况可使用合理和适当的约束措施，以保障住户和职员的安全。

- 由社会及家庭发展部委任的探访团（Board of Visitors）将到社会福利院进行独立探访活动，确保住户的生活环境安全且卫生。探访团由专业人士和独立人士组成。部分院舍目前已有探访团上门监督，反馈良好。接下来，当局将委任探访团走访所有社会福利院。

3、全面执法框架，遏制违例业者

- 社会及家庭发展部可对违例或

不达标的业者采取监管和刑事行动。例如，无照经营社会福利院将构成刑事罪。各罪状的刑罚将根据行为严重程度。

- 社会及家庭发展部可发出介入指令（step-in order），暂时接管不达标业者经营的社会福利院，确保住户可继续获得服务。介入指令只作为最后手段，当问题无法通过提升能力的支援措施，或其他监管行动时才使用。当住户安全和身心健康受到威胁，而业者屡次未遵守规定，以致监管行动无效时，当局也可考虑使用介入指令。

福利院住户遭虐待案例 近四年来年均六起 蔡瑞隆：零容忍必彻查

2020年至2024年，社会及家庭发展部每年平均接获六起有关福利院住户遭虐待的案例；获证实的事件中，当局已对涉及不当行为的职员采取行动。

文化、社区及青年部高级政务次长蔡瑞隆星期二（4月8日）在国会辩论社会福利院法案，回应杨益财（拉丁马士区）有关社会福利院职员对住户粗暴的案例时，透露过去四年的案例数量。他指出，其中有数起案例未获证实，但在确认的案例中，当局已对有关职员采取行动。

他说：“社会及家庭发展部对粗暴对待福利院住户的行为采取零容忍态度，会彻底调查这类指控。”

根据社会福利院法案，只有在特定情况，工作人员才可以对住户使用合理的束缚方式，如布条或脚套来确保住户和员工的安全，并且规定只有受训人员才能

这么做。

杨益财指出，合理的力度因人而异，工作人员必须接受适当的培训，来确保他们可以执行这方面的工作。他也关注刑罚增加对业者责任的影响，尤其当福利院的许多董事成员是义务服务，担心这可能产生寒蝉效应，阻碍志愿者为董事会服务。

蔡瑞隆回应时说，法案的刑罚与处理类似罪行的其他法令是相近的，其中一个例子是监管疗养院的医疗服务法令。为了让社会福利院各利益相关者如董事会成员清楚自己的职责，当局会在附属法令和行为准则列明其工作和责任。

他说：“我们不会一开始就采取惩罚的行动，而是密切与福利院合作，确保机构有足够的支持来达到监管要求。”

蔡瑞隆针对黄玲玲（宏茂桥集选区）有关触犯行为准则的问

题时也强调，当局不会采取过度惩罚的策略，而是根据各因素，包括伤害程度以及是否是重犯行为来决定监管行动。在一些情况，当局可能暂停让相关人员在福利院工作，或缩短福利院的执照期，以引导院方解决问题。

叶汉荣（杨厝港区）、陈立峰（后港区）和杨益财也关注福利院的人力需求和人员薪资。蔡瑞隆对此指出，当局会定期检讨薪资指导原则。社会及家庭发展部也与其中几家福利院展开重新设计工作的试点计划，旨在改善工作环境并支持人员的职业发展。

当局可发出介入指令 暂接管不达标福利院

他回答黄国光（义顺集选区）有关当局对工作人员背景评估调查的询问时说，当局一般会在两周内通知业者结果，接下来

会检讨如何进一步缩短时间。

法案通过后，社会及家庭发展部将可发出介入指令（step-in order），暂时接管不达标业者经营的社会福利院，确保住户可继续获得服务。

蔡瑞隆说，若出现这样的情况，当局会与新旧业者合作确保交接过程顺利。至今只有一家福利院转换业者，这是由于业者在检讨战略方向后，决定不继续经营福利院。

为了拟定社会福利院法案，社会及家庭发展部去年11月21日起展开为期一个多月的公众咨询。多数参与者支持加强保障措施，包括要求福利院的相关人员须通过当局的评估。

但一部分人也担心，业者可能有较少自主权，这也可能拖慢招聘工作。对于束缚方式的使用，多数人也强调应有清楚的指导方针和培训。

Lianhe Zaobao

10 Apr 2025, Thursday

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业者：福利院援助配套 减轻培训负担提升员工素质

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对于政府制定新管理框架和拨款以支持本地社会福利院，受访业者普遍表示欢迎，尤其是当局将资助人员的培训。

为进一步提升和规范社会福利院的服务质量，更好地保障弱势住户的安全与福祉，国会4月8日三读通过《社会福利院法案》（Social Residential Homes Bill）。新法令预计明年生效。

按新法令，政府将制定新的营业执照框架，并提供3300万元的过渡时期援助配套（Transition Support Package），以支持本地社会福利院提升能力与设施，以及加强员工培训。

受访业者认为，这个过渡配套能够帮助减轻负担，尤其是在员工培训方面。由于这个行业的人员流动率高，经常须培训新人

手，政府的资助必能帮助各机构更好地应对这一挑战。

陈得南卫理公会儿童之家执行总裁刘启宏说，由于福利院工作压力大、员工容易倦怠等，这个行业的员工流动率一直很高。此外，每当有新员工入职，机构都必须为他们提供相关培训。政府的援助配套可以针对这一点提供帮助，确保员工掌握所需技能。

刘启宏说，他的机构中许多负责与儿童及家庭事务相关工作的员工介于22岁至35岁，他们虽然拥有理论知识，但缺乏实际经验，加上与受惠者家长的年纪和经验有一定落差，因此对他们而言，学习如何处理各种复杂情况、如何与家长建立良好关系等非常关键，针对这些情况而设的相关培训也就至关重要。

太和观慈善机构首席执行官李德生也说，政府的拨款能够帮

助业者减轻负担，包括在员工培训、运营调整和提升硬件与安全设施等各个方面。

他说，太和观慈善机构有内部培训，也会让员工接受由机构付费的外部培训；由于一些员工入职时已拥有一定经验，较不需外部培训。有了援助配套后，机构就可以扩大培训范围，让更多员工进一步接受培训，继续提升技能。

柏兰夷村Thuis Home是志愿福利团体4S管理的福利院。过去五年住在这里的碧翠丝（Beatrice，化名，59岁）受访时说，福利院的员工一直以来给予她非常多的支持和帮助，包括帮她找到工作，以及在建屋局的单身者联合住房计划下申请到住房。她前不久刚搬到在万国的租赁组屋。

对于政府推出一系列措施来

帮助社会福利院提升服务质量，碧翠丝说：“福利院有很多长者，但有些员工不懂得如何沟通，或者可能认为跟年长者有代沟而不愿跟他们讲话，所以，福利院可以加强培训员工，这样他们和住户之间沟通较容易，而且也会比较舒服，可以增进彼此的关系。”

新法令设探访团 独立监督福利院

除了过渡援助配套，新法令也规定，社会及家庭发展部委任的探访团（Board of Visitors）将到社会福利院进行独立探访，确保住户的生活环境安全且卫生；探访团由专业和独立人士组成。目前，一些福利院已有探访团上门监督，反馈良好。接下来，当局的探访团将走访所有福利院。

探访团（福利院）主席李幸祥指出，新法令落实后，探访团



政府将制定新的营业执照框架，进一步提升和规范社会福利院的服务质量。图中的太和观成人静养院（三巴旺）是社会福利院法案涵盖的残障疗养院之一。（李幸祥摄）

的工作内容不会有太大变化。他们会继续上门评估业者的措施和住户的生活环境等，以及收集住户和业者的反馈和意见，并向当局反映问题。

不过他认为，新法令赋予了更好的服务。

Summary translation of news coverages

New Bill Strengthens Regulation and Severely Punishes Violators

The new bill will regulate the service quality of social welfare homes by establishing clear service guidelines, enhancing resident safety and quality of life, and setting up a comprehensive enforcement framework to deter violators. Penalties for operating without a license will increase significantly, with fines rising from \$5,000 to \$100,000.

Operators of social welfare homes generally support the new bill. Jason Lee, CEO of Thye Hua Kwan Moral Charities, believes that the bill provides a clear regulatory

framework that supports institutions in effectively managing their homes. With further strengthened safety measures, better protection can be provided for residents.

"The new framework has systematic requirements for hiring and training employees, which will help us maintain a competent and well-prepared team, ultimately improving service quality. The transitional assistance package will help operators adapt more smoothly to the requirements of the new framework. We plan to apply for funding to implement employee training, operational adjustments, and upgrade hardware and safety facilities."

The new bill does not cover transitional shelters, and crisis shelters for homeless individuals and survivors of domestic violence. The Ministry of Social and Family Development pointed out that residents of these two types of shelters are relatively self-reliant and do not need 24-hour care provided by the shelters. The bill currently targets six types of homes that assist highly vulnerable individuals. As for whether these two types of shelters will be included in the new framework in the future, the government will explore this in due course.