

SINGAPORE



Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong with senior citizens at the launch of the 'MediWheels' programme. PHOTO BY OOI BOON KEONG.

'Wheels' for elderly in 6-month trial

They can rent motorised scooters and enjoy subsidies for two-way ambulance trips

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SINGAPORE — Dialysis patient Yasin Mohamad Ali, 56, has weak legs and has difficulty walking.

But thanks to the Central Singapore Community Development Council's (CDC) new "MediWheels" programme, which was launched yesterday, Mr Yasin will now be able to rent a motorised scooter for S\$10 a month to move around his Hougang neighbourhood with ease.

"It's good for me, as I don't have to walk and sit ... and then walk again," the former security guard said.

Funded by Central Singapore CDC and sponsors, "MediWheels" will undergo a six-month trial in the Ang Mo Kio-Hougang ward.

After the trial, it will be rolled out to the Ang Mo Kio Group Representation Constituency and Sengkang West Single Member Constituency.

Falcon Mobility will be leasing out the mobility scooters — which cost between S\$1,800 and S\$2,400 — to Central Singapore CDC for two years. After which, they will be donated to the CDC.

The scooters, which have a top speed of less than 10 kmh "are very safe, easy to control and stable for use in HDB areas, even if it's very crowded", said Mr Eric Tan, manager of Access and Mobility Solutions, which is the dealer for Falcon Mobility.

The "MediWheels" programme was jointly launched by Prime Minister Lee Hsien

Loong, who is the adviser to Ang Mo Kio grassroots organisations, Mayor of Central Singapore District Sam Tan and Ang Mo Kio GRC Member of Parliament (MP) Yeo Guat Kwang.

Apart from rental of motorised scooters, the programme will also heavily subsidise needy elderly and residents with special needs for two-way ambulance trips for their medical appointments.

While such a service normally costs between S\$50 and S\$180, the participants will pay between S\$5 and S\$30 after means testing.

The programme also includes a medical concierge service, where grassroots leaders and volunteers from Ang Mo Kio-Hougang ward will accompany seniors for their medical appointments.

Mr Yeo said: "Many residents with elderly parents tell me that they find it difficult to transport their wheelchair-bound elderly parents for their medical check-ups. Apart from the financial cost of taking a taxi, they also have to take leave from work."

Going forward, such a programme could be rolled out to other constituencies, between Ang Mo Kio GRC and Sengkang West SMC.

Noting that the initiative is a way to reach out to people with disabilities and build an inclusive society, Mr Tan told TODAY that his CDC "will not rule out the possibility of supporting other constituencies with such needs to serve their residents".

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A resident with special needs being lifted into an ambulance while an elderly man tries out a mobility scooter at the launch of the 'MediWheels' programme. PHOTO BY OOI BOON KEONG.