

Paper for Legislative Council Panel on Welfare Services

**Exploratory Study on Withdrawn CSSA Recipients and
Potential CSSA Applicants**

Purpose

At the meeting of the LegCo Panel on Welfare Services on 11 June 2001, in discussing the Final Evaluation Report on the Support for Self-reliance Scheme under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme, the Social Welfare Department (SWD) undertook to conduct an exploratory study to find out as far as possible the underlying reasons why some potential CSSA applicants did not pursue their application after making initial enquiries at the Social Security Field Units (SSFUs), and why some existing recipients withdrew from CSSA.

The Exploratory Study

2. In agreeing to undertake the exploratory study, the Director of Social Welfare (DSW) has expressed the view that there are bound to be limitations in any such study as the targeted clients may not be forthcoming in telling us their exact circumstances. Nonetheless, the Department's Statistics Section has carried out an exploratory study on withdrawn CSSA recipients and potential CSSA applicants to try to understand the major reasons why CSSA recipients withdrew from the CSSA and why potential CSSA applicants did not apply for CSSA after making enquiries at SSFUs respectively. The sample size adopted in this study is designed to be sufficient for a broad-brush overall assessment. The estimates so arrived in this study are therefore subject to relatively larger sampling errors, especially for certain sub-group analyses where the number of relevant subjects is even smaller.

Findings

Withdrawn CSSA cases

3. A random sample of 648 cases had been drawn among CSSA cases

closed due to withdrawal during the period from October 2000 to April 2001. Altogether 366 of these cases were successfully enumerated which included 268 cases with clear reasons and other information retrieved from the Computerised Social Security System plus 98 cases with reasons and other information gauged in the telephone survey.

4. Among these 366 withdrawn cases, the most common reason of withdrawal was that “they can support their living by themselves or their family members” (64%)¹. Ineligibility to receive CSSA due to “resources exceed recognised needs” and “assets exceed limit” each took up 8% of the reasons. “Convert to apply for DA and OAA” accounted for another 7% and 5% respectively of the reasons. “Do not want to enroll in Active Employment Assistance (AEA)” accounted for 3% of the reasons of withdrawals² whereas no one claimed “do not want to enroll in Community Work (CW)” as the reason of withdrawals. As far as the study has revealed, none of the ex-recipients alleged discontent with the attitude of SWD’s staff as their reason of withdrawals.

Potential CSSA Applicants

5. A total of five SSFUs with more potential applicants were selected. They were those who had enquired about CSSA but had not applied. These interviewees were identified with the assistance from the SSFU officers and then face-to-face interviewed by dedicated survey interviewers. 134 potential applicants were successfully enumerated out of a total of 146 identified for interview.

6. The most popular reason of not applying for CSSA was that they were ineligible (50%), followed by “pending discussion with family” (25%) and that they “cannot produce supporting documents” (13%). Other reasons were: “not clear about the application procedures” (7%), “would convert to apply for Disability Allowance” (6%), “application procedures are too

¹ A further analysis was carried on the 268 cases from the CSSS system to find out what the respondents meant by “they can support their living”. After going through the detailed textual descriptions recorded therein, it is found that there are 107 cases (or 40%) registering “the applicant found a job” as the major reason of withdrawal from CSSA.

² Of those 3% (ten in number) who did not want to enroll in AEA, six were from unemployment cases, two from low earnings, one from single parent case with the youngest child aged above 15 and another one from “others” case nature (the exact case nature of “others” cannot be identified from the CSSS from which this case was retrieved).

complicated” (4%) and “want to seek other means instead of relying on CSSA” (4%). Only three (2%) out of the 134 potential applicants indicated that they did not want to enroll in AEA. Among these three who indicated they did not want to enroll in AEA, two (i.e. 1% of the 134 respondents) of them indicated they did not want to enroll in CW either. Lastly, none of the respondent alleged discontent with the attitude of SWD’s staff as their reason of not filing an application.

Observations

7. According to the study, the most common reason for withdrawals was that they were able to support their living. As for the potential applicants, the most common reason of not filing an application after making enquiries was that they were not eligible. Amongst both groups of clients, there is no evidence to suggest that people are discouraged from applying or receiving CSSA because of practical concerns or stigmatization associated with the AEA or CW programmes. Indeed, in the longitudinal study conducted as part of the formal evaluation of the Support For Self-reliance Scheme, participants’ response to AEA and CW was generally positive.

8. The study was also prompted by some Members’ concern that some people in genuine need might be discouraged or deterred from receiving CSSA by poor attitude of SSFU staff. As far as this study has revealed, no respondent withdrew from CSSA or gave up filing an application because of discontent with the attitude of SWD staff.

9. Although this exploratory study has not revealed any particular cause for concern in the administration of CSSA and in the Department’s interface with members of the public, we wish to assure Members that SWD is committed to improving the transparency, efficiency and customer service in our SSFUs, despite significant increases in workload.