

**For discussion  
on 24 May 2005**

## **LEGCO PANEL ON WELFARE SERVICES**

### **Subcommittee on review of the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme**

#### **The review of arrangements for Single Parent Recipients under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme**

#### **PURPOSE**

This paper aims to brief members on the Administration's review on existing arrangements under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme for single-parent families, and outlines options to help single parents on CSSA move towards self-reliance and reduce the risk of social exclusion, by building up their capacity for self-help and encouraging them to integrate with the community through engagement in work as early as possible.

#### **OBJECTIVE OF REVIEW**

2. The objective of the present review is to build up the capacity of single parents to achieve self-reliance, and strengthen their motivation to reach out into the community and be gainfully engaged. International experience and local feedback indicate that working life and the extended social network that comes with it can help single parents attain better self-esteem and lead more fulfilling family lives. This is also in line with our general policy on adopting a "welfare-to-work" approach in helping able-bodied CSSA recipients to be self-reliant.

**INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE**

3. Overseas experience suggests that there is an increasing recognition among countries providing state-funded social assistance that passive benefits will not provide a long-term solution to the problems faced by jobless welfare-dependent families, and that economic participation in society is the best safeguard against social exclusion and poverty for these families. In this regard, early intervention to assist single parents (or lone parents) to engage in employment is considered an important measure to better their social and economic conditions and enable them to become self-reliant on a lasting basis. Countries are placing greater emphasis on encouraging and facilitating single parents’ access to employment, and ensuring that the benefits structure of social assistance schemes should not discourage participation in paid work.

4. Some overseas examples<sup>1</sup> of working requirement for singles parents are set out in the table below:

<b>Country</b>	<b>Requirement</b>
<b>The United States</b>	Individual states to determine at which age of the children single parents are required to work. In the most extreme case (for example, in Wisconsin), single parents are required to work full-time six weeks after the birth of their child.  States cannot use federal funds to assist families with working age adults for more than 5 years.
<b>European Union</b>	
Germany and Netherlands	Single parents with primary school-aged children are expected to work.
France	Labour participation is expected once the youngest child reaches 3.
Denmark, Sweden	Single parents are expected to actively seek work

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<sup>1</sup> Main source of information: Lone parents and employment: International comparisons of what works, edited by Jane Millar and Martin Evans, Centre for the Analysis of Social Policy.

<b>Country</b>	<b>Requirement</b>
and Norway	when youngest child reaches 3. In Norway, the eligibility for allowance is limited to 3 years, with possible extension of 2 years.
Britain	Single parent can receive income support with voluntary work participation until youngest child reaches 16 but need to attend mandatory meetings with personal advisors on job search. The government has made it a target to increase employment rate for lone parents from 54% to 70% .
<b>New Zealand</b>	Adopt ‘enhanced case management’ to support ‘early identification’ of welfare recipients who require more intensive help to overcome their barriers to work.

## **EXISTING ASSISTANCE FOR CSSA SINGLE PARENTS IN HONG KONG**

5. The CSSA Scheme serves as a safety net of last resort and provides means-tested financial assistance to those members of our community who are unable to support themselves financially because of old age, ill health, disability, unemployment, low earnings or other reasons of vulnerability. Single parents with financial difficulty are also assisted under the CSSA Scheme.

6. There is currently a comprehensive package of financial assistance for single parents receiving CSSA :

- (a) **CSSA payments** : CSSA payments for single parents include monthly standard rates (ranging from \$1,395 to \$1,745 which are higher than those for other able-bodied recipients), special grants (such as rent allowance and grants on schooling expenses, including a yearly grant of up to \$3,810) and a single parent supplement (SPS) (\$2,700 a year). The average monthly payments in 2003-04 according to family size were as follows :

Number of eligible members	Average monthly payment (\$)
2	5,886
3	7,963
4	9,623
5	11,509
6 or above	14,132

An example of single parent family receiving CSSA is at below :

**Single Parent Family comprising a mother and 2 children  
in junior secondary school**

Supplement	Single Parent Supplement	\$2,700/year/12=\$225
Special Grants	Rent	\$3,200
	Water/Sewage charges	\$28
	Meal allowance for students	\$390
	Transport (to & from school)	\$450
	Grant for school-related expenses	\$3,810/year x 2/12 = \$635
Standard Rates	\$1,575 + \$1,435 x 2 = \$4,445	
Free Medical Services		
	<b>Total:</b>	\$9,373/month

- (b) **Work requirement** : CSSA single parents with the youngest child under 15 are not required to seek work. On the other hand, if they have work, they could enjoy monthly disregarded earnings up to \$2,500, and the total disregard of first month's income from a new job, like other CSSA recipients. In 2003-04, about 9% of single parents on CSSA were in some form of paid work, with the majority of them being parents whose youngest child was aged between 15 to 21.

7. CSSA single parents can also access a wide range of support services set out in paragraph 8 below.

## SUPPORT SERVICES

8. Government and Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) have all along been providing a wide range of welfare services, such as after school care programmes, Ending Exclusion programme, family services and school-based activities, which can be made use of by single parent families on CSSA to help them build up capacity and be self reliant. The main services are highlighted below.

### *(a) After-school care programme for children aged 6 to 12*

- The after-school-care programme (ASCP) run by NGOs provides half-day supportive care services for children aged from six to 12 whose parents are unable to provide care and supervision for them during after school hours owing to work or other reasons. The activities provided under the programme include homework guidance, meal service, parent guidance and education, skill training and other social activities.
- ASCP fees are fully waived for children from CSSA families where the parent is taking up paid employment, attending training programmes or seeking open employment and the child would otherwise be left unattended at home after school. As at the end of March 2005, the total number of ASCP places was 6 600. There were about 800 full-fee waiving places under Social Welfare Department's (SWD) subsidy which amounts to \$10 million, with a utilization rate of 99%. Free ASCP service through a coupon system has also been introduced since March 2002 for single parents on CSSA who participate in the Ending Exclusion Project (see (d) below) to enable them to seek open employment.
- Improvement measures: for the year 2005-06, SWD will provide additional funding of \$5 million to increase provision of places for full waiving cases from 830 to 1250 (or 2 500 half fee cases), which equals an increase of 50%. Annual total subsidy for free ASCP service will amount to \$15 million.
- If there is to be an increase in demand for ASCP due to the requirement of single parents to secure open employment, SWD

will work closely with NGOs concerned to increase the ASCP places to cope with the demand. The operating agencies are also ready to extend their service hours on weekdays' evenings and Saturdays to meet the needs of the working parents.

**(b) *School-based After-school Learning and Support Programmes***

- Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) has also earmarked additional recurrent resources of \$75 million from 2005-06 to strengthen cooperation with youth organizations at district level to provide school-based after-school learning support and extra-curricular activities to children in need. It is expected that these activities will increase the children's learning effectiveness, broaden their learning experiences outside classroom and raise their understanding of the community and sense of belonging. Invitations have been sent to schools in late April 2005 to invite applications for grants to conduct the relevant programmes.

**(c) *Integrated Family Services Centres (IFSCs)***

- In addition, there is an extensive network of 61 IFSCs providing comprehensive and user-friendly services to families in need, including single parent families. Services include counseling service, supportive groups and programmes, aiming at assisting individuals and families build up self-confidence and develop proper values, enhance parents' parenting skills and strengthen their skills in problem solving and stress management.

**(d) *Ending Exclusion Project (EEP)***

- SWD has also introduced the EEP in March 2002 to specifically help CSSA single parent recipients become more self-reliant and reduce the risk of social exclusion. It is a **voluntary** programme comprising an employment assistance programme, as well as childcare and enhanced support services. As at the end of March 2005, on a cumulative basis, a total of 3 217 CSSA single-parent recipients had joined the Project since its introduction.

9. On the other hand, there is also a wide range of childcares services for needy families with young children aged 0-6. The main services are highlighted below.

### *Childcare Services for children aged 0 to 6*

- Day care services are provided by child care centres operated by NGOs in the form of day crèches (for children aged below two), and day nurseries (for children aged between two and six) for families with child care needs, including single parent families. As at the end of December 2004, there were about 29 000 aided nurseries places and 950 aided crèche places. The average utilization rates for the two services in 2004-05 (up to December 2004) were 82% and 87% respectively. Low-income families who are not on CSSA can apply for fee assistance under the Child Care Centres Fee Assistance Scheme. Under the CSSA Scheme, single parents are entitled to a special grant to cover child care centres fees.
- Apart from regular day care services, occasional child care service and extended hours child care service are provided in some of the aided child care centres to prevent children from being left unattended at home, and to meet the needs of working parents who require longer hours of child care services. As at the end of September 2004, there were about 700 occasional child care service places and 1 500 extended hours child care service places. The average utilization rates for the two services in 2004-05 (up to September 2004) were 73% and 66% respectively. Where the need arises, special grants are payable to single parents on CSSA to cover fees for these services.
- In addition, parents can make use of the flexible child care service provided by mutual help child care centres, which are run by social welfare agencies, religious and other local bodies on a self-financing and non-profit-making basis. The service is delivered by parents and volunteers on a mutual help basis at the neighbourhood level, with each centre providing care for up to a maximum of 14 children aged below six at any one point of time.

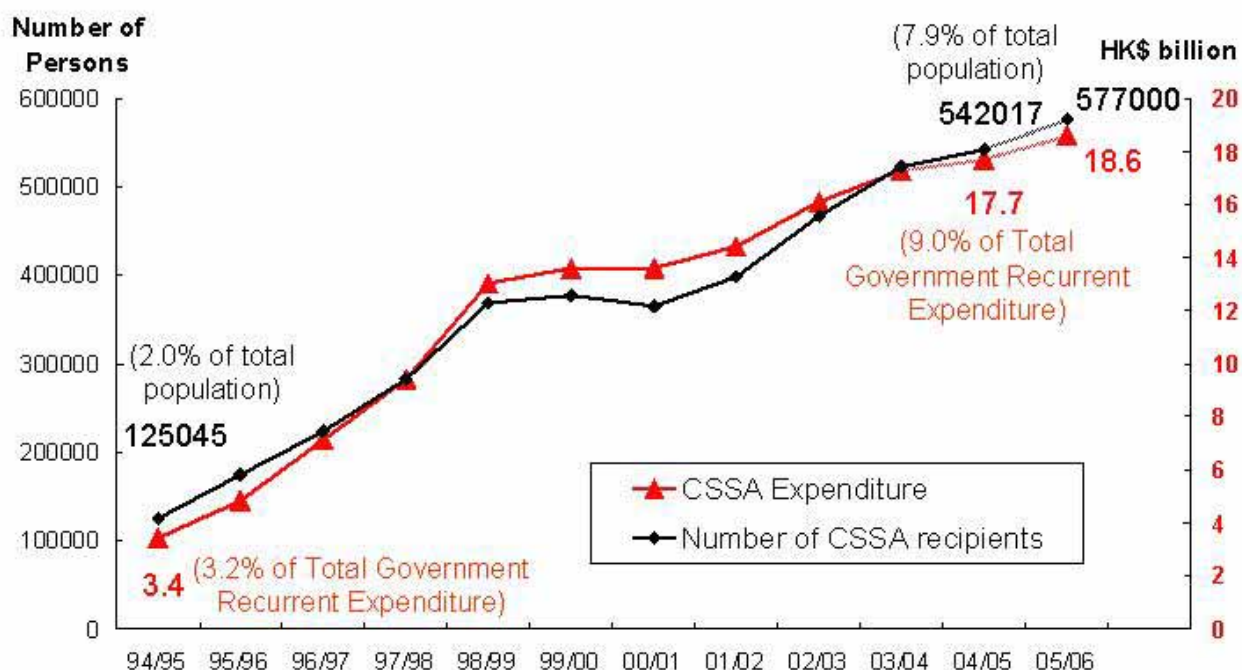
As at the end of March 2004, 18 mutual help child care centres were operated by NGOs and 13 by SWD.

### Trends and Developments on CSSA Single Parent Cases

10. Some key trends and developments observed of CSSA single parents are set out below for members' reference :

- (a) **Caseload** : Single-parent cases increased by more than 500% over the past ten years, from 6 130 at the end of 1993-94 to 37 950 at the end of 2003-04. The share of total CSSA cases increased from 6.4% to 13.1%. Over the same period, the overall CSSA caseload increased by 200%, with an average annual growth rate of 12%, compared to 20% for single-parent cases.

### CSSA Expenditure and Recipients in the Past Decade



- (b) **Take-up Rate** : In March 1996, 12% of single parents in Hong Kong were on CSSA. The take-up rate rose to 26% in March 2001. For comparison, the overall CSSA take-up rate amongst the total population increased from 2% in 1994/95 to 8% in 2004/05.



- (c) **CSSA expenditure** : CSSA expenditure on single-parent cases increased by nearly 700% from \$384 million (11.2% of total CSSA expenditure) in 1994-95 to \$3,022 million (17.5% of total CSSA expenditure) in 2003-04, registering an average annual growth rate of 26%. Over the same period, total CSSA expenditure increased by about 400% at an average annual growth rate of 20%.
- (d) **Characteristics of single-parent cases (as at the end of 2003-04) :**
- (i) **Sex and age of single parents** : 81% of the cases were single mothers. The majority were in their thirties (36%) and forties (44%). Of the single parents who were male, 45% were in their forties, 22% were in their fifties and 10% were in their sixties or above.
  - (ii) **Causes of single parenthood** : ‘divorce’ was the main cause (35%), followed by ‘separation’ (26%), ‘spouse living apart for reasons other than marital break-up’ (18%) and ‘death of spouse’ (18%). Almost half of the single fathers (48%) were those whose spouse was living apart for reasons other than marital break-up, with the majority of them with wife living in Mainland China.
  - (iii) **Number and age of children** : There were a total of about 60 200 children in the single parent cases, representing 37% of all children on CSSA. 67% of the youngest child (or the only child) in the family was below 12 years of age, 20% between 12 and 14 years of age, and the rest (12%) 15 years of age or above.
  - (iv) **Duration of receipt of CSSA** : The majority (65%) had been receiving CSSA for two or more years, including 35% for five or more years and 5% for ten or more years. The median length was 3.2 years, the highest among CSSA cases involving able-bodied adults.
  - (v) **Housing** : 64% lived in public rental housing. 6% (about 2 300 cases) of those living in private housing lived in purchased property.

- (vi) **Work status** : 9% of CSSA single parents have some form of employment (as compared to 57%<sup>2</sup> of non-CSSA single parents).

Annexes 1 to 16 give the relevant statistics.

### **Issues of concerns**

11. We see a number of issues of concerns from the trends and developments in paragraph 10 that merit a review of the existing arrangements. They include :

- (a) **Social exclusion of single parents** : Single parents under CSSA have the option to remain at home until their youngest child reaches 15. If a single mother at her 30s starts to receive CSSA when her youngest child is born, she would stay on benefit without the need to seek work until she is over 40. By that time, she would be severely disadvantaged in job search by the lengthy period being out of the workforce. The prolonged exclusion of single parents, in particular the young ones, from the working world and society at large would seriously disadvantage single-parent families in reaching out to the community, and deprive single parents from acquiring job and social skills, thus aggravating the problem of social exclusion.
- (b) **A sharp increase in single parents on CSSA** : The divorce rate in Hong Kong in 1996 was 1.8 per 1 000 persons aged 15 or above. It increased to a level of around 2.3 to 2.4 during 2000 to 2003 and then further surged to 2.7 in 2004. According to the 2001 Population Census, the number of single parents (defined as fathers or mothers who are widowed, divorced or separated with at least one child aged under 18 living with them in the same household ) in Hong Kong increased from 34 538 in March 1991 to 58 460 in March 2001, up 69%. “Single parents” of “split” families on CSSA with Mainland parents also recorded an increase during the period.

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<sup>2</sup> Figure based on result of the 2001 Population Census which only includes those who are separated, divorced or widowed with child(ren) aged under 18 living in the same household.

These increases alone did not seem to be able to explain the 500% increase in CSSA caseload over the ten-year period of 1993-94 to 2003-04.

- (c) **Economic push and pull factors** : More single parents turned to CSSA for reasons of unemployment or underemployment as a result of the downturn in the economy. At the same time, with the various improvements to welfare benefits for single parents and children in the 1990s, including the introduction of the SPS (see paragraph 6(a) above) in 1995, reliance on CSSA for support has become a real option for single parents while the incentive to work could be impacted. In addition, as noted above, CSSA recipients are entitled to other benefits, notably free medical treatment in public hospitals and in some cases, compassionate re-housing.

In her Investigation Report on Prevention of Abuse of CSSA issued in December 2003, the Ombudsman has questioned the rationale behind the SPS payable to single parents, and in particular raised concern about the payment of the supplement to those whose youngest child has reached 18 (see also paragraph 26 below).

## **OPTIONS FOR CHANGE**

12. In the light of the international development and the characteristics of single parent caseloads observed in Hong Kong, we have reviewed the current arrangements for single parents under CSSA, with the objective of building up the capacity of single parents for self-reliance by finding a balance between emphasizing the importance of work through mandatory work requirements, tackling the issue of work incentives through restructuring the welfare system, and providing complementary assistance to facilitate single parents to rejoin the work force. The following paragraphs set out some possible options for change. These options are undergoing consultation, and the Administration will take into account views of the community in deciding the final approach.

## **(a) Work Requirement**

13. Having a parent in work provides children with an active, valuable role model. There is a strong case for single parents to start work as soon as their family circumstances permit.

14. While we recognize the difficulty of combining paid work with family life for the single parent with young children, we believe that with adequate access to support services like after school-care support services, it would be possible for the single parent to at least take up part-time employment when the youngest child starts primary school. At present, some 70% of government, aided and direct subsidy scheme primary school places operate on a whole-day basis. By the time the youngest child attends full day secondary school, single parents should have no major difficulty taking up full-time employment. This would not only provide their family with additional income through the provision of disregarded earnings, but also enable them to gain labour market experience that may eventually help them become more employable and engaged.

### *Options*

15. Participation in paid employment is an effective route to financial independence. It also helps build up a healthy self-image and establish a larger social network. To this end, we can consider the following options :

- (i) to require single parents (and family carers<sup>3</sup>) with the youngest child aged 6 to 11 to seek part-time employment, and those with the youngest child aged 12 or above to seek full-time employment;
- (ii) to require single parents (and family carers) with the youngest child aged 6 to 14 to seek part-time employment;
- (iii) to require single parents (and family carers) with the youngest child aged 12 or above to seek full-time employment; and
- (iv) to require single parents (and family carers) with the youngest child aged 12 to 14 to seek part-time employment.

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<sup>3</sup> For example, the mother in a two-parent family

## *Considerations*

16. In line with our objective of building up the self-help capacity of single parents early, options (iii) and (iv) would not contribute much towards early self-reliance, whilst option (i) might be difficult to attain for some single parents. As a start, we consider it reasonable to require single parents (as well as family carers) with the youngest child aged 6-14 to find part-time work. As at end of 2003-04, it is estimated that there are about 21 850 single parents, and 24 190 family carers aged below 60 with children in this age group. We recognize that in terms of job vacancies and the provision of support services, it may not be feasible to require all single parents and family carers with children in this age group to work all at once. We therefore propose that the scheme should be implemented in phases with a pilot to be conducted in selected districts. This approach would enable a more focused effort to encourage single parents to work, and at the same time provide support to meet their needs, without any unacceptable impact on the employment market. Experience gained in the pilot would also help us to refine the scheme before it is extended across the board.

17. To pursue this option, we propose the following implementation aspects :

### Definition of part-time work

- We consider that a part-time job should entail not less than 32 work hours a month (i.e. about eight work hours a week). The definition of part-time employment would be reviewed in the light of operational experience.
- We note that there has been some suggestion that part-time work could include voluntary work. While voluntary work could indeed re-engage single parents in meaningful work for the community, undertaking voluntary work alone does not provide single parents with the exposure to employment skills necessary to compete in the open market. Hence, voluntary work cannot be a substitute for part-time or full time employment.

## Employment Assistance Programme

- We would develop an employment assistance programme, broadly similar to the existing Active Employment Assistance programme for the able-bodied unemployed and low-income CSSA recipients, for single parents and other child carers on CSSA with the youngest child aged 6 to 14. Under this programme, participants would be helped to get access to up-to-date market information and be assisted to overcome barriers to employment and get advice on their job search.
  
- To ensure the effectiveness of this approach, and taking into account the quite substantial resources involved in providing the programmes across-the-board, we propose that a pilot scheme in selected districts be run first, with a grant from the Lotteries Fund be sought to commission NGOs to run the pilot, and decide on the best way forward in the light of the results. The pilot approach could allow, for example, the mode of services in the selected districts to be tested to suit single parents' needs. It could also allow for exemption policy to be tested (for example exemptions may be needed for the recently bereaved and those who have recently been victims of domestic violence).

### **(b) Ending Exclusion Project (EEP)**

18. A longitudinal study of the EEP conducted from April 2002 to March 2003 showed that EEP was effective in enhancing the participants' awareness of the importance of participation in employment and social activities as well as the need to achieve self-reliance, and improved their job-seeking behaviour. The participants and their children have also become less socially isolated over time.

19. However, the project's turnover rate is relatively low. It has served on a cumulative basis only about 3 200 CSSA single parent recipients during the 37-month period from March 2002 to March 2005 (compared to the total number of single parent cases of 39 670 as at February 2005). Findings of the study showed that participants would become less positive towards the project if they remained jobless for a long time. Moreover, since participation in the EEP is voluntary, it does not alter the fact that many single parents do not need to participate and find work if they choose not to.

## *Options*

20. With the proposed employment assistance programme to provide employment and other support services for single parents and other child carers on CSSA with young children, it would not be worthwhile to continue the EEP. We propose phasing out this voluntary Project, and commissioning NGOs to run basic skills and skills-upgrading training programmes/courses (for example, courses on basic IT skills, job search skills, 'soft' skills, confidence building, Putonghua) in the form of Intensive Employment Assistance Projects, or with grants from the Lotteries Fund tailored to the needs of single parents on CSSA with young children who are not yet job-ready so as to improve their employability and prepare them for work.

### **(c) CSSA Payments**

#### **Standard rates for single parents**

21. Before 1996, all able-bodied adults living in a family, including single parents and those whose primary activity is the care of their family members, were given the same standard rate regardless of their family status. As a result of the 1996 CSSA Review, new standard rates for single parents and family carers were introduced. They were considerably higher than that of the standard rate for other able-bodied adults living in a family, the rationale being that both single parents and family carers were 'unable and not expected to work full time'.

22. It is arguable whether single parents should continue to be paid the higher standard rate for single parents when their youngest child reaches 15 years of age, as they are employable adults, and can be available for full-time work. There is also a discrepancy in treatment in that a family carer (e.g. the mother of a young child in a two-parent family) receiving the higher standard rate ceases to receive the higher standard rate once the child turns 15.

## *Options*

23. There is a case for tightening the eligibility criteria for the standard rate for single parents in that the higher rate should only be paid to single parents with at least one child aged below 15. The alternative is to retain the status quo while keeping the situation under review. We recommend to maintain the status quo at this stage in view of the recommended change to the SPS as detailed below.

## Single Parent Supplement (SPS)

24. The monthly single parent supplement (SPS) was introduced in April 1995 as part of an improvement package to the CSSA Scheme. This supplement is payable to single parents in recognition of ‘the special difficulties which single parents face in bringing up a family’. No monthly supplement is payable to any other category of able-bodied recipients.

25. International practice suggests that in terms of income support, single parents should not be treated differently from partnered parents and provided with additional benefits. For instance, the one-parent benefit in the United Kingdom<sup>4</sup> and the sole parent pension in Australia<sup>5</sup> were abolished some years ago.

26. In her Investigation Report on Prevention of Abuse of CSSA issued in December 2003, the Ombudsman has also questioned the rationale behind the SPS, and raised concern about the payment of the supplement to those whose youngest child has reached 18, and has asked for the eligibility requirement for the SPS to be reviewed. In paragraph 5.16 of the report, it was stated that ‘...we cannot understand the rationale of a monetary supplement (for single parents) since all the basic needs and outgoings have been catered for under the standard rates and special grants’, and in paragraph 5.17 that ‘... to qualify for single parent supplement, a CSSA recipient’s children must be below 18, or if the children are in full-time education, 21. Given that the voting age these day is 18, these age limits should be reviewed’.

### *Options*

27. Apart from maintaining the status quo, the following options can be considered :

- (i) abolishing the SPS;

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<sup>4</sup> It is stated in the Green Paper entitled ‘New ambitions for our country: A New Contract for Welfare’ published by the British Government in March 1998 that ‘...We believe that additional support should be provided for children in poorer families on the basis of identifiable needs of children, not on whether there happens to be one parent or two. So there is no case for a one-parent benefit, and the Government will not return to that approach’.

<sup>5</sup> At present single parents in need in Australia can receive Parenting Payment, which is the main type of income support payment for low-income parents taking care of children under 16 years of age.



- (ii) paying the SPS only to single parents with at least one child aged below 15;
- (iii) paying the SPS only to single parents with at least one child aged below 18;
- (iv) paying the SPS only to single parents earning at least \$1,430 a month and with at least one child aged below 15;
- (v) phasing out the SPS by stopping paying it to new and reactivated cases

### *Considerations*

28. In view of the questions raised on the rationale for the SPS, emerging international practice, and the fact that the higher standard rates for single parents already cater for their special needs, there would appear to be a case to abolish the single parent supplement altogether. We recognize however that the supplement has been paid to single parents since 1995. To pursue our objective of helping single parents to build up their self-reliance capacity early, there is a case for turning the SPS into some kind of work incentive. On balance, in order to encourage single parents to become more self-reliant, and reach out to the community early, we recommend option (iv).

### **(d) Disregarded earnings**

29. The provision of disregarded earnings aims to provide a financial incentive to work for CSSA recipients, including single parents.

### *Options*

30. Since SWD has undertaken to review the existing arrangements of disregarded earnings in 2005, it would be premature to propose any change across-the-board, or for a specific category of recipients for the time being. It is therefore recommended to retain the status quo pending the results of the review.

## Summary of initial recommendations

31. A summary of the recommended options is provided below. To recap, our recommendations are aimed at helping single parents on CSSA to build up their capacity for self-help, and to integrate with the community as early as possible.

### (a) Work requirement for single parents on CSSA and related issues

Single parents on CSSA with the youngest child aged 6 to 14 should be required to seek at least part-time employment. The same requirement should be applicable to family carers who claim CSSA on grounds of looking after young children. In this connection, we recommend that :

- (i) SWD should seek a Lotteries Fund grant to run a pilot scheme enforcing the part-time work requirement for single parents and other child carers on CSSA with the youngest child aged 6 to 14, and provide them with co-ordinated employment assistance and other child care support services to help them find work and overcome barriers to work;
- (ii) the Ending Exclusion Project should be phased out; and
- (iii) SWD should commission NGOs to run basic skills and skills-upgrading training programmes/courses in the form of Intensive Employment Assistance Projects or with grants from the Lotteries Fund for not-job-ready single parents with young children.

### (b) Other CSSA arrangements

- (i) make no change to the provision of disregarded earnings, pending the results of a separate review to be conducted during 2005;
- (ii) pay the single parent supplement only to single parents earning at least \$1,430 a month and with at least a child aged below 15; and

- (iii) make no change to the eligibility criteria for the standard rates for single parents.

### **Consultation**

32. The Administration has already consulted the Working Group on CSSA of the Social Welfare Advisory Committee (SWAC), SWAC and the Women's Commission. There has been general support from these committees on the broad direction of helping single parents to achieve self-reliance through early engagement in work. We have also met with relevant NGOs. We will take into account views from LegCo and the community before finalizing the proposals.

### **ADVICE SOUGHT**

33. Members are invited to advise on the recommendations set out in paragraph 31.

**Health, Welfare and Food Bureau / Social Welfare Department  
May 2005**

**The CSSA Scheme: Year-end figures of single parent cases and all cases for the years 1993-94 to 2003-04**

Financial year	Year-end number of single parent cases	Year-on-year change of single parent cases (%)	% share of all CSSA cases	Year-end number of all CSSA cases	Year-on-year change of all CSSA cases (%)
1993-94	6 134	+25.3	6.4	95 104	+16.0
1994-95	6 453	+5.2	5.9	109 461	+15.1
1995-96	8 982	+39.2	6.6	136 201	+24.4
1996-97	13 303	+48.1	8.0	166 720	+22.4
1997-98	17 161	+29.0	8.8	195 645	+17.3
1998-99	25 613	+49.3	11.0	232 819	+19.0
1999-2000	25 146	-1.8	11.0	228 015	-2.1
2000-01	26 078	+3.7	11.4	228 263	+0.1
2001-02	29 534	+13.3	11.9	247 192	+8.3
2002-03	34 249	+16.0	12.6	271 893	+10.0
2003-04	37 949	+10.8	13.1	290 705	+6.9
Average year-on-year change	-	+20.0	-	-	+11.8

**The CSSA Scheme: Estimated annual expenditure by nature of case**

Year	Old age	Permanent disability	Temporary disability/ill health	Single parent	Low earnings	Unemployment	Others	Total*
	(\$Mn)	(\$Mn)	(\$Mn)	(\$Mn)	(\$Mn)	(\$Mn)	(\$Mn)	(\$Mn)
1994-95	2,090	250	418	384	51	113	120	3,427
1995-96	2,705	348	604	609	97	237	232	4,831
1996-97	3,592	470	905	1,041	207	535	378	7,128
1997-98	4,570	585	1,199	1,482	340	784	482	9,441
1998-99	6,124	730	1,550	2,345	573	1,537	169	13,029
1999-2000	7,030	599	1,357	2,317	624	1,495	200	13,623
2000-01	7,209	641	1,334	2,275	650	1,251	201	13,560
2001-02	7,535	741	1,363	2,479	674	1,418	195	14,405
2002-03	7,872	821	1,466	2,838	755	2,173	205	16,131
2003-04	8,030	877	1,506	3,022	923	2,731	217	17,306
Average growth per annum	16.1%	15.0%	15.3%	25.8%	37.8%	42.2%	6.8%	19.7

\* Figures may not add up to total due to rounding.

**The CSSA Scheme**  
**Sex and age of single parents as at 31 March 2004**

Sex	Age	Number of single parents	%
Male	16-17	2	*
	18-19	4	0.1
	20-29	268	3.9
	30-39	1 282	18.6
	40-49	3 123	45.3
	50-59	1 485	21.6
	60 or over	704	10.2
	<u>Unknown</u>	19	0.3
	<u>Sub-total</u>	<b>6 887</b>	<b>100.0</b>
	<b>% of all single parents</b>	<b>19.0%</b>	-
Female	16-17	6	*
	18-19	55	0.2
	20-29	2 477	8.4
	30-39	11 624	39.5
	40-49	13 016	44.3
	50-59	2 077	7.1
	60 or over	140	0.5
	<u>Unknown</u>	7	*
	<u>Sub-total</u>	<b>29 402</b>	<b>100.0</b>
	<b>% of all single parents</b>	<b>81.0%</b>	-
Total	16-17	8	*
	18-19	59	0.2
	20-29	2 745	7.6
	30-39	12 906	35.6
	40-49	16 139	44.5
	50-59	3 562	9.8
	60 or over	844	2.3
	<u>Unknown</u>	26	0.1
	<u>Total</u>	<b>36 289</b>	<b>100.0</b>
	<b>% of all single parents</b>	<b>100%</b>	-

\* Less than 0.05%.

**The CSSA Scheme**  
**Sex and marital status of single parents as at 31 March 2004**

Sex	Marital status	No of single parents	%
Male	Never married	153 (82)	2.2 (1.6)
	Married <sup>#</sup>	3 312 (2 908)	48.1 (58.1)
	Cohabited <sup>#</sup>	22 (15)	0.3 (0.3)
	Separated	1 302 (786)	18.9 (15.7)
	Divorced	1 613 (826)	23.4 (16.5)
	Widowed	485 (384)	7.0 (7.7)
	<b><u>Unknown</u></b>	- (4)	- (0.1)
	<b><u>Sub-total</u></b>	<b>6 887 (5 005)</b>	<b>100.0 (100.0)</b>
	<b>% of all single parents</b>	<b>19.0% (20.8%)</b>	<b>- (-)</b>
Female	Never married	1 053 (575)	3.6 (3.0)
	Married <sup>#</sup>	3 113 (2 100)	10.6 (11.0)
	Cohabited <sup>#</sup>	182 (136)	0.6 (0.7)
	Separated	8 044 (5 354)	27.4 (28.1)
	Divorced	11 126 (6 446)	37.8 (33.9)
	Widowed	5 874 (4 375)	20.0 (23.0)
	<b><u>Unknown</u></b>	10 (40)	* (0.2)
	<b><u>Sub-total</u></b>	<b>29 402 (19 026)</b>	<b>100.0 (100.0)</b>
	<b>% of all single parents</b>	<b>81.0% (79.2%)</b>	<b>- (-)</b>
Total	Never married	1 206 (657)	3.3 (2.7)
	Married <sup>#</sup>	6 425 (5 008)	17.7 (20.8)
	Cohabited <sup>#</sup>	204 (151)	0.6 (0.6)
	Separated	9 346 (6 140)	25.8 (25.6)
	Divorced	12 739 (7 272)	35.1 (30.3)
	Widowed	6 359 (4 759)	17.5 (19.8)
	<b><u>Unknown</u></b>	10 (44)	* (0.2)
	<b><u>Total</u></b>	<b>36 289 (24 031)</b>	<b>100.0 (100.0)</b>
	<b>% of all single parents</b>	<b>100% (100%)</b>	<b>- (-)</b>

<sup>#</sup> Spouse living apart for reasons other than marital break-up.

\* Less than 0.05%.

(Figures in brackets are those as at 31 March 2001.)

**The CSSA Scheme**  
**Educational attainment of single parents as at 31 March 2004**

Educational attainment	Number of single parents	%
No schooling/kindergarten	4 807	13.2
Primary	17 543	48.3
Junior secondary (S1-S3)	8 932	24.6
Senior secondary (S4-S5)	4 584	12.6
Matriculation (S6-S7)	222	0.6
Technical/vocational training/ commercial school	29	0.1
<b><u>Tertiary</u></b>	172	0.5
<b><u>Total</u></b>	<b>36 289</b>	<b>100.0</b>



**The CSSA Scheme**  
**Number of children in individual single parent paid cases as at 31 March 2004**

Number of children* in the family	Number of cases	%
1	17 715 (9 340)	48.8 (38.9)
2	13 707 (9 195)	37.8 (38.3)
3	3 653 (2 731)	10.1 (11.4)
4	691 (503)	1.9 (2.1)
5	134 (120)	0.4 (0.5)
Unknown	389 (2 142)	1.1 (8.9)
<b><u>Total</u></b>	<b>36 289 (24 031)</b>	<b>100.0 (100.0)</b>

\* Children refer to eligible members aged 0 to 21 in receipt of a standard rate for children.

(Figures in brackets are those as at 31 March 2001.)

**The CSSA Scheme**  
**Number and age of children**  
**in single parent paid cases as at 31 March 2004**

Age of children*	Number of children	%
0-1	2 426	4.0
2-5	8 202	13.6
6-9	13 681	22.7
10-11	8 721	14.5
12-14	13 921	23.1
15-17	9 813	16.3
18-21	3 420	5.7
<b><u>Total</u></b>	<b>60 184</b>	<b>100.0</b>

\* Children refer to eligible members aged 0 to 21 in receipt of a standard rate for children.

**The CSSA Scheme**  
**Single parents by age of youngest child as at 31 March 2004**

Age of youngest child*	Number of children	%
Below 10	19 096	52.6
10-11	5 311	14.6
12-14	7 162	19.7
15-21	4 211	11.6
Unknown	509	1.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>36 289</b>	<b>100.0</b>

\* Children refer to eligible members aged 0 to 21 in receipt of a standard rate for children.

**The CSSA Scheme**  
**Single parent paid cases with income resources other than CSSA payments as at 31 March 2004**

Source of income	Single parent paid cases with resources	% of all single parents paid cases	Average monthly resources per case (\$)
Employment earnings	4 228 (2 075)	11.7 (8.6)	3,481 (3,852)
Contributions from friends/relatives	912 (977)	2.5 (4.1)	896 (990)
Maintenance payment (excluding payment of a nominal amount)	1 261 (840)	3.5 (3.5)	1,827 (2,120)
Meals provided by other parties (e.g. child care centres)	725 (609)	2.0 (2.5)	290 (391)
Pension	55 (31)	0.2 (0.1)	2,024 (1,973)
Other income	198 (203)	0.5 (0.8)	1,397 (1,367)
<b>Overall*</b>	<b>6 933 (4 411)</b>	<b>19.1 (18.4)</b>	<b>2,659 (2,566)</b>
<b>All single parent paid cases</b>	<b>36 289 (24 031)</b>	<b>100.0 (100.0)</b>	<b>- (-)</b>

\* Figures may not add up to total as a case can have more than one source of income.

(Figures in brackets are those as at 31 March 2001.)

**The CSSA Scheme**  
**Single parents in paid work by sex and age as at 31 March 2004**

Sex/age of single parent		Single parent in paid work	All single parents	% of single parent in paid work
Male	16-17	0 (-)	2 (-)	0.0 (-)
	18-19	0 (1)	4 (8)	0.0 (12.5)
	20-29	15 (7)	268 (110)	5.6 (6.4)
	30-39	91 (39)	1 282 (1 042)	7.1 (3.7)
	40-49	176 (68)	3 123 (2 320)	5.6 (2.9)
	50-59	61 (30)	1 485 (1 042)	4.1 (2.9)
	60 or over	5 (6)	704 (469)	0.7 (1.3)
	Unknown	0 (0)	19 (14)	0.0 (0.0)
	<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>348 (151)</b>	<b>6 887 (5 005)</b>	<b>5.1 (3.0)</b>
Female	16-17	0 (0)	6 (6)	0.0 (0.0)
	18-19	3 (0)	55 (57)	5.5 (0.0)
	20-29	67 (32)	2 477 (1 611)	2.7 (2.0)
	30-39	790 (359)	11 624 (8 015)	6.8 (4.5)
	40-49	1 826 (645)	13 016 (8 163)	14.0 (7.9)
	50-59	313 (84)	2 077 (1 083)	15.1 (7.8)
	60 or over	2 (0)	140 (72)	1.4 (0.0)
	Unknown	0 (0)	7 (19)	0.0 (0.0)
	<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>3 001 (1 120)</b>	<b>29 402 (19 026)</b>	<b>10.2 (5.9)</b>
Total	16-17	0 (0)	8 (6)	0.0 (0.0)
	18-19	3 (1)	59 (65)	5.1 (1.5)
	20-29	82 (39)	2 745 (1 721)	3.0 (2.3)
	30-39	881 (398)	12 906 (9 057)	6.8 (4.4)
	40-49	2 002 (713)	16 139 (10 483)	12.4 (6.8)
	50-59	374 (114)	3 562 (2 125)	10.5 (5.4)
	60 or over	7 (6)	844 (541)	0.8 (1.1)
	Unknown	0 (0)	26 (33)	0.0 (0.0)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>3 349 (1 271)</b>	<b>36 289 (24 031)</b>	<b>9.2 (5.3)</b>

(Figures in brackets are those as at 31 March 2001.)

**The CSSA Scheme**  
**Single parents in paid work by age of youngest child as at 31 March 2004**

Age of youngest child*	Single parents in paid work	All single parents	% of single parents in paid work
Below 10	881 (384)	19 096 (13 709)	4.6 (2.8)
10-11	386 (175)	5 311 (3 578)	7.3 (4.9)
12-14	794 (293)	7 162 (4 396)	11.1 (6.7)
15-21	1 260 (416)	4 211 (1 933)	29.9 (21.5)
Unknown	28 (3)	509 (415)	5.5 (0.7)
<b>Overall</b>	<b>3 349 (1 271)</b>	<b>36 289 (24 031)</b>	<b>9.2 (5.3)</b>

\* Children refer to eligible members aged 0 to 21 in receipt of a standard rate for children.

(Figures in brackets are those as at 31 March 2001.)

**The CSSA Scheme**  
**Type of housing and number of**  
**eligible members of single parent cases as at 31 March 2004**

Type of Housing	No. of Eligible Members	Number of cases	%
Public housing	2	9 033	39.0
	3	9 646	41.7
	4	3 375	14.6
	5	744	3.2
	6 or over	218	0.9
	Unknown	118	0.5
	<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>23 134</b>	<b>100.0</b>
	<b>% of all type of housing</b>	<b>63.7%</b>	<b>-</b>
Private housing (purchased)	2	889	39.4
	3	1 020	45.2
	4	256	11.3
	5	63	2.8
	6 or over	11	0.5
	Unknown	19	0.8
	<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>2 258</b>	<b>100.0</b>
	<b>% of all type of housing</b>	<b>6.2%</b>	<b>-</b>
Private housing (rented)	2	6 202	58.1
	3	3 475	32.6
	4	767	7.2
	5	141	1.3
	6 or over	31	0.3
	Unknown	53	0.5
	<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>10 669</b>	<b>100.0</b>
	<b>% of all type of housing</b>	<b>29.4%</b>	<b>-</b>
Others	2	106	46.5
	3	90	39.5
	4	19	8.3
	5	8	3.5
	6 or over	2	0.9
	Unknown	3	1.3
	<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>228</b>	<b>100.0</b>
	<b>% of all type of housing</b>	<b>0.6%</b>	<b>-</b>
Total	2	16 230	44.7
	3	14 231	39.2
	4	4 417	12.2
	5	956	2.6
	6 or over	262	0.7
	Unknown	193	0.5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>36 289</b>	<b>100.0</b>
	<b>% of all type of housing</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>-</b>

## The CSSA Scheme

Sex and whereabouts of spouse of pseudo-single parents as at 31 March 2004

Sex	Whereabouts	Number of cases.	%
Male	Living elsewhere in Hong Kong	404 (386)	12.1 (13.2)
	Living in Mainland China	2 818 (2 361)	84.5 (80.8)
	Living in places other than Hong Kong and Mainland China	112 (176)	3.4 (6.0)
	<u>Sub-total</u>	<b>3 334 (2 923)</b>	<b>100.0 (100.0)</b>
	<b>% of all married/cohabited single parents</b>	<b>50.3% (56.7%)</b>	<b>- (-)</b>
Female	Living elsewhere in Hong Kong	1 675 (1 281)	50.8 (57.3)
	Living in Mainland China	1 343 (573)	40.8 (25.6)
	Living in places other than Hong Kong and Mainland China	277 (382)	8.4 (17.1)
	<u>Sub-total</u>	<b>3 295 (2 236)</b>	<b>100.0 (100.0)</b>
	<b>% of all married/cohabited single parents</b>	<b>49.7% (43.3%)</b>	<b>- (-)</b>
Total	Living elsewhere in Hong Kong	2 079 (1 667)	31.4 (32.3)
	Living in China	4 161 (2 934)	62.8 (56.9)
	Living in places other than Hong Kong and Mainland China	389 (558)	5.9 (10.8)
	<u>Total</u>	<b>6 629 (5 159)</b>	<b>100.0 (100.0)</b>
	<b>% of all married/cohabited single parents</b>	<b>100% (100%)</b>	<b>- (-)</b>

(Figures in brackets are those as at 31 March 2001.)



**The CSSA Scheme**  
**Sex and age of single parents with less than**  
**seven years' residence in Hong Kong as at 31 March 2004**

Age	Male	Female	Total
Below 30	19	462	481
30 – 39	40	3 417	3 457
40 – 49	36	2 353	2 389
50 – 59	3	260	263
60 or above	1	9	10
Unknown	5	1	6
Total	104	6 502	6 606

**The CSSA Scheme**  
**Duration of stay on CSSA of single parent paid cases as at 31 March 2004**

Duration of Stay on CSSA (years)	Number of cases	%
<2	12 546	34.6
2-<5	10 915	30.1
5-<10	11 108	30.6
10 and over	1 720	4.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>36 289</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Median (years)</b>	<b>3.2</b>	

**Comparison of the average monthly recognized needs  
of single parent cases with those of unemployment and  
low earnings cases under the CSSA Scheme**

Number of eligible members	Average monthly recognized needs (\$)		
	2003-04		
	Single parent	Low earnings	Unemployment
2	5,886	5,653	5,091
3	7,963	7,532	6,945
4	9,623	8,869	8,284
5	11,509	10,615	10,175
6 or over	14,132	13,386	12,849