

**For information
on 31 October 2005**

LEGCO PANEL ON WELFARE SERVICES

**Subcommittee on Review of the
Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme**

**New Dawn Project
Revised Proposal for Single Parent Recipients
under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme**

PURPOSE

This paper briefs Members on the implementation details of the revised proposal for empowering single parents / family carers under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme to achieve self-reliance and social integration through the launching of a trial Employment Assistance Project, the 'New Dawn' Project (欣曉計劃) (the ND Project), for 18 months commencing from April 2006.

BACKGROUND

2. Having considered views expressed by Members, concerned groups and the community at large, we have revised the original proposals, a summary of which is recapitulated is as follows -

- (a) single parents and family carers on CSSA with the youngest child aged between 12 to 14 (the recipients) will be required to seek employment, including part-time employment (defined as a paid job entailing not less than 32 hours a month);
- (b) a package of arrangements consisting of a mandatory employment assistance programme specifically for single parent recipients, and basic skills and skills upgrading training for those single parents and family carers with no or limited work experience will be launched by Social Welfare Department (SWD); and

- (c) there will be no change to the existing arrangements for the single parent supplement at this stage.

3. We have put in place the implementation details of the revised proposal and secured funding support of \$30 million for the Project from the Lotteries Fund.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROPOSAL

4. In April 2006, the SWD Social Security Field Units will begin inviting the recipients to meeting sessions for conducting advice – focused interviews modeled after the practice of the Active Employment Assistance (AEA) programme under the Support for Self-reliance Scheme for the unemployed and low-income CSSA recipients without a full time job. Staff of SWD will help participants overcome barriers to employment through various means including -

- (a) assisting them to get access to up-to-date labour market information and other support services;
- (b) helping them develop personalized action plans to actively find work;
- (c) arranging direct job matching;
- (d) referring them to join specialized employment assistance programme, as appropriate; and
- (e) providing post-employment support.

Staff of SWD will continue to provide the above assistance to the recipients until they have secured employment or changed to a different case category.

New Dawn Intensive Employment Assistance Projects (ND IEAPs)

5. SWD will commission NGOs to provide intensive employment assistance and basic skills and skills upgrading training for the recipients. We intend to partner with NGOs who are already running the Intensive Employment Assistance Projects (IEAPs)¹ for other able-bodied CSSA recipients to capitalize on their experience. Priority for participation will be given to single parents / family carers with no or limited work experience.

¹ Intensive Employment Assistance Projects (IEAPs) are the intensified measures to strengthen the promotion of 'welfare-to-work' and 'self-reliance' in 2003. Social Welfare Department (SWD) secured \$200 million from the Lotteries Fund and the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust to commission non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to launch IEAPs for employable CSSA recipients and other near-CSSA recipients to assist them to remove work barriers, enhance their employability and get back to work through a range of activities such as job matching, job skills training, employment counselling and post-employment support.

6. Drawing reference from the model of the IEAPs, a total of 20 ND IEAPs would be launched. To ensure even distribution of service, these projects will, similar to the practice with the IEAPs, be allocated on a district basis taking into account of the number of target single parent recipients and family carers in individual districts. The proposed distribution of the 20 ND projects is at Annex.

7. The range of services to be provided by the ND IEAPs will include -
- (a) training and upgrading of basic skills (including social skills);
 - (b) job seeking skills training e.g. mock interviews;
 - (c) advice and counselling, including counselling on child care and after-school care arrangements;
 - (d) job matching according to assessments of participants' conditions;
 - (e) post-employment support services; and
 - (f) other supportive services (e.g. mutual help group).

8. In view of the probable skills of the recipients and a perceived gap in the provision of services for the needy elderly, we will encourage potential IEAP providers in the districts mentioned in Annex to put forward proposals that include provision of simple domestic help for the elderly.

Retention of Single-parent Supplement

9. We have noted views expressed during the consultation that withholding the supplement to single parents failing to meet the prescribed work hours may bring hardship to the children and parents concerned. While we believe the proposed use of the supplement as a work incentive is along the right direction, we agree that the need for change should be reviewed after the new work requirement has been implemented. We will therefore keep this proposal under review, and make no change to the single parent supplement at this stage.

Exemption from Mandatory Work Requirement

10. Exemptions from the mandatory work requirement will be allowed where justified, for example, the recently bereaved, those who have recently been victims of domestic violence and those who have to care for disabled family members from participating in the programme.

Exemption from Community Work

11. Single parents and family carers will not be required to undertake Community Work, which is required of other able-bodied recipients under the AEA programme.

Enforcement of Work Requirement

12. Under the current AEA programme for able-bodied CSSA recipients, those who fail to meet obligations such as attending Work Plan Interviews or participating in an IEAP without good reasons will face a sanction of deduction of two weeks' CSSA payment for the entire family. We intend to introduce a sanction for single parents by deducting \$200 from the CSSA payable to any individual CSSA single parent or family carers who fails to meet similar obligations. This is in line with established practice under the AEA programme for other able-bodied CSSA recipients², but the deduction of \$200 from the single parent's CSSA payment is much less. For reference, the average monthly CSSA payment of single parent cases is \$7,214.

Other Support Services

13. The Government provides a wide range of services to support single parent families. They include:

- (a) single parents / family carers together with other low income parents can make use of the after school-care places provided by NGOs with SWD's subsidy. Starting from 2005-06, full fee-waiving places have been increased from 830 to 1 250;
- (b) the Education and Manpower Bureau has launched the school-based after-school learning and support programme in 2005-06 with an amount of \$75 million for junior primary to senior secondary students to increase the students' learning effectiveness, broaden their learning experiences outside the classroom, and raise their understanding of the community and sense of belonging;
- (c) for children aged 0-6, single parents / family carers can make use of about 29 000 full-day kindergarten cum child care centre places and 950 day crèche places to meet their childcare needs. They can also make use of the regular and extended hours child care service; and
- (d) single parents / family carers can also obtain counselling support from an extensive network of 61 Integrated Family Service Centres and two Integrated Services Centres to help them build up self-confidence, enhance their parenting skills, problem-solving skills and stress management skills.

² Including single parents with the youngest child aged above 15.

Financial Implication

14. A preliminary estimate indicates that the total cost of running the package for eighteen months from 1 April 2006 to September 2007 would be \$30 million. This will be met by an allocation from the Lotteries Fund Advisory Committee. It is not possible to make an informed estimate of the net financial implications at this stage as it would be difficult to forecast the change in single parent CSSA expenditure with the implementation of the new package.

**Health, Welfare and Food Bureau
October 2005**

District	Number of target participants			Current IEAPs	Number of ND IEAPs for single parents / family carers
	Single parent recipients with youngest child aged 12-14	Family carers with youngest child aged 12 –14	Total		
Central, Western & Island	95	55	150	0	1
Eastern & Wan Chai	472	353	825	3	
Southern	223	148	371	0	
Kowloon City	331	239	570	2	1
Yau Tsim Mong	274	144	418	4	
Kwun Tong	1 015	1 160	2 175	8	2
Sham Shui Po	638	505	1 143	6	1
Wong Tai Sin & Sai Kung	1 209	1 312	2 521	8	3
Sha Tin	710	733	1 443	4	2
Tai Po & North	989	844	1 833	6	2
Tsuen Wan & Kwai Tsing	1 157	1 441	2 598	9	3
Yuen Long	1 214	1 319	2 533	9	3
Tuen Mun	806	614	1 420	6	2
Total	9 133	8 867	18 000	65	20¹

¹ Taking into consideration that the present IEAP recipients-projects ration (i.e. 105 projects to serve about 7 350 CSSA participants per year among 45 300 unemployed CSSA recipients), it is appropriate to select around 20 projects ($14400 \times 7350/45300=2336$ round down to serve about 2 000 participants per year).