

**For information
on 22 November 2005**

LEGCO PANEL ON WELFARE SERVICES

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

**New Dawn Project
for Single Parent/Family Carer Recipients
under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme**

PURPOSE

This paper aims to provide supplementary information on the New Dawn project for single parents/family carers under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme.

BACKGROUND

2. At the Subcommittee meeting on 31 October 2005, the Chairman, Hon Fernando Cheung requested the Administration to provide an analysis of job vacancies suitable for single parents/family carers under the New Dawn Project. He also asked the Administration to consider the provision of travel subsidy and case management support, and whether voluntary work and training could be regarded as reasons for exemption.

ADMINISTRATION'S RESPONSE

3. The Administration has carefully considered the views of the Chairman and our responses to the specific points are as follows:

(a) Analysis of job vacancies

- Provisional statistics show that the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate decreased from 5.5% in July – September

2005 to 5.3% in August - October 2005. The underemployment rate also fell, from 2.6% to 2.5% between the two periods. Both were at their lowest levels since July - September 2001. New jobs were found not only in the service sectors such as the import/export trades, transport and miscellaneous personal services, but also in the local manufacturing and construction sectors. For the first ten months of 2005, the overall full-time and part-time vacancies received by the Labour Department are 306 035 and 50 843 respectively. These vacancies could be found in occupation groups such as clerks, service workers, shop sales workers and elementary occupations which could be suitable for single parents/family carers.

- We expect that the single parents/family carers concerned will not enter the market in one go. Some of them will be exempted from participating into the programme due to justified reasons such as those who have recently been victims of domestic violence and those who have to take care of disabled family members. It would not be possible to assess the actual number of vacancies at the district level within a specific time frame at this stage. However, the New Dawn Employment Assistance Coordinators (EACOs) and NGOs engaged under the New Dawn IEAPs will identify job vacancies suitable for single parents once the project will be launched in April 2006. We believe that there would be vacancies suitable for single parents. For example, the latest breakdown of vacancies for local domestic helpers at the annex is an indication of the availability of job opportunities for single parents/family carers.

(b) Travel Subsidies

- In calculating the monthly CSSA standard payment, we have already taken into account of the transport needs of the recipients. Under the New Dawn Project, those single parents who successfully re-entered the job market can benefit from the disregarded earnings arrangement under the CSSA. Up to \$2,500 of their monthly income could be disregarded and the single parents/family carers concerned could use disregarded earnings for the transport purpose. Participants in the New Dawn IEAP Project can also apply for Temporary Financial Assistance to facilitate their job-seeking efforts.

We are therefore of the view that the provision of specific travel subsidies is not necessary.

(c) Case Management Support

- Under the New Dawn Project, the single parents/family carers will first be invited to attend interviews with SWD EACOs who will follow up on the cases. For those in need of further assistance and training, they will be referred to NGOs organizing the New Dawn IEAPs. If single parents/family carers have other welfare needs, suitable referrals will be made to Integrated Family Service Centres.

(d) Voluntary Work and training

- The whole purpose of the proposal is to encourage the single parents/family carers to re-enter the job market. While voluntary work and training are meaningful for the single parents/family carers, we believe that by taking an extra stride in seeking employment, including part-time employment in the labour market, it will be an useful experience for the single parents/family carers concerned to return to the job market and achieve self-reliance.

4. It should be noted that single parents/family carers who have made genuine effort in seeking employment including part-time employment in the job market would not be penalized. A sanction would only be imposed against those failing to attend work plan interviews or to participate in the New Dawn IEAP. Furthermore, we have noted the views of some single parents and would retain the single parent supplement of \$225 a month at this stage.

5. The single parents and child carers will not be required to undertake Community Work, which is required of other able-bodied recipients under the Active Employment Assistance Programme.

6. Members may wish to note the content of this paper.

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

Latest breakdown of vacancies for local domestic helpers from the Employees Retraining Board

Registered Vacancies 05/06 (1/4/05 - 30/9/05)

District	Registered Vacancies	
	No.	%
Central & Western	1 540	5.8%
Wanchai	1 143	4.3%
Eastern	2 975	11.1%
Southern	1 092	4.1%
Yau Tsim Mong	2 093	7.8%
Kowloon City	1 293	4.8%
Kwun Tong	3 575	13.4%
Wong Tai Sin	1 474	5.5%
Sham Shui Po	1 149	4.3%
Tsuen Wan & Kwai Tsing	2 627	9.8%
Sai Kung	456	1.7%
Shatin	2 377	8.9%
Tai Po	829	3.1%
NT North	592	2.2%
Yuen Long	1 559	5.8%
Tuen Mun	1 464	5.5%
Cheung Chau	8	0.0%
Lantau Island	423	1.6%
Other Island	10	0.0%
Total :	26 679	100.0%