

Panel on Welfare Services

Special meeting on Saturday, 11 July 2009

General public's perception of Comprehensive Social Security Assistance recipients

Summary of views of deputations

No.	Name of deputation	Major views and concerns
1.	Oxfam Hong Kong (Oxfam) [LC Paper No. CB(2)1268/08-09(01)]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the findings of the survey report conducted by Oxfam revealed that there was a general misconception among the public that most recipients of the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme were unemployed and new arrivals and they were perceived to be lack of motivation to work. 30% of respondents expressed that they would not apply for CSSA even if they were eligible because they did not want to be perceived as relying on the Government and being looked down upon by others • urged the Administration to disseminate positive messages and comprehensive information about CSSA recipients to the general public through broadcasting that it was the right of low-income persons who satisfied the eligibility criteria to apply for CSSA
2.	Office of Wong Tai Sin District Councillor, Chui Pak Tai	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • expressed concern that many CSSA recipients felt being discriminated and were stereotyped as parasites in the society • many CSSA recipients wanted to work towards self-reliance but could not do so due to various reasons • the Administration should convey a positive message on CSSA and take care of the developmental needs of children on CSSA
3.	Social Services Committee under Kwun Tong District Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • supported the concept of the CSSA Scheme under which a safety net was provided to the needy. To address the concern about abuse cases, the Administration should consider reimbursing certain recurrent expenses directly to the debtors

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • suggested that more support services could be provided for children coming from CSSA households such that their able-bodied adult carers could not be excused from finding jobs • the alleviation measures for the needy including additional CSSA standard rates to CSSA recipients amidst of financial tsunami might have aroused discontent among the public who were also suffered from the financial crisis
4.	Justice and Peace Commission of the Hong Kong Catholic Diocese	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • expressed concern that the two television announcements of public interests (APIs) on CSSA and fraud cases had indirectly given rise to discrimination against CSSA recipients • urged the Administration to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) convey a message via the media that it was the welfare rights of people who had genuine financial hardship to apply for CSSA, and include such message in the school curriculum; and (b) announce the number of CSSA cases concurrently with the unemployment rate in view of the direct correlation between the two figures
5.	Hong Kong Association for the Survivors of Women Abuse (Kwan Fook) [LC Paper No. CB(2)2185/08-09(01)]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • opined that the Administration had never encouraged those people who were in need to apply for CSSA. On the contrary, it promoted the message of encouraging people to work toward self-reliance, which gave rise to a misconception that CSSA recipients were lazy and did not want to work toward self-reliance • expressed particular concern about the difficulties faced by newly arrived women who were not eligible for CSSA due to not satisfying the seven-year residence requirement. Although the Director of Social Welfare (DSW) could exercise discretion to waive the residence requirement to those with genuine hardship, having regard to the individual circumstances, the unhelpful attitude of the frontline staff of Social Security Field Units (SSFUs) deterred the potential CSSA applicants from seeking appropriate help

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6.	Kwai Tsing District Councillor Mr Andrew WAN Siu-kin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● although the Administration claimed that CSSA was a safety net for those who were in genuine financial difficulties, it conveyed a negative message to the public that people who relied on CSSA were inertia to work ● citing an experience of an applicant who suffered from liver cancer as an example, he expressed dissatisfaction at the attitude of SSFUs' staff who did not demonstrate a helpful manner to those who were in genuine hardship
7.	風雨同路	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● expressed concern that the Administration was taking the lead to discriminate against CSSA recipients ● told the meeting about her personal experience and difficulties faced as a victim of domestic violence. However, the frontline social worker of an integrated family service centre advised that she was not eligible for CSSA due to not satisfying the seven-year residence requirement and persuaded her to return to the Mainland with her daughter and did not render proper assistance to them
8.	爭取基層生活保障聯盟	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● opined that the Administration had taken the lead to discriminate against people who received CSSA as its APIs on fraud cases had given rise to misconception among the public that CSSA recipients were lazy ● expressed concern that while many CSSA recipients had low self-esteem, some people who were in genuine need would not apply for CSSA
9.	The Democratic Party [LC Paper No. CB(2)2185/08-09(02)]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● pointed out that many CSSA recipients were needy elders and unemployed, i.e. those in financial hardship ● noted with concern that 70% of respondents of the survey conducted by Oxfam had the perception that CSSA recipients were inertia to work. To provide more incentive for able-bodied adult CSSA recipients to work, it urged the Administration to review the disregarded earning (DE) arrangements under the CSSA Scheme. For instance, the maximum level of DE at \$2,500 should be raised. It also suggested that consideration be given to opening a savings account for each CSSA recipient who

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		<p>was eligible for DE to save up the portion of savings exceeded the maximum level of DE. The savings would be given to the CSSA recipient concerned for pursuing specific purposes when the savings were accumulated to a specified level</p>
10.	Civic Party	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • expressed concern about the misconception of the public that CSSA recipients were unwilling to work and the attitude of frontline staff of SSFUs who always attached more importance to preventing fraud cases in vetting and approving applications than rendering assistance to the applicants. Some needy who were in genuine hardship simply chose not to apply for CSSA for the fear that they would be stereotyped
11.	Hong Kong Catholic Commission for Labour Affairs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • opined that the APIs about encouraging CSSA recipients to work towards reliance had further amplified the misconception of the public that CSSA recipients were inertia to work • considered that the Government lacked of concrete measures to assist the low-income group and the unemployed • suggested that the Administration - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) should convey a positive message that it was a welfare right for those who were in need to apply for CSSA; (b) should not require CSSA recipients to present working proof from employers for the provision of DE; and (c) should provide more assistance to the low-income group and unemployed
12.	The Boys' and Girls' Clubs Association of Hong Kong [LC Paper No. CB(2)2185/08-09(03)]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • expressed concern that the negative perception of the public on CSSA recipients had affected the self-image and social integration of children on CSSA who felt inferior and being socially excluded • urged the Administration to convey a positive message that it was the welfare right to receive CSSA and streamline the application procedures

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13.	Concerning Group for Women Poverty [LC Paper No. CB(2)2185/08-09(04)]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● expressed concern that the development of children on CSSA was hampered due to lack of financial means and thereby had resulted in intergenerational poverty ● considered that the public had the misconception that CSSA recipients were unwilling to work. In fact, many of them were unable to enter the labour market simply because they were low-skilled and low-educated ● urged the Administration to lift the requirement of producing income statement certified by employers for applying for DE arrangements
14.	Lion Rock Institute [LC Paper No. CB(2)2097/08-09(01)]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● opined that CSSA could provide a safety net to those who were in need, especially the elders and persons with disabilities (PWDs) ● considered that the Administration had set undue high threshold for CSSA application because of the financial implications if the number of recipients were too many ● the Institute suggested that the Administration should improve the CSSA Scheme and consider imposing a time limit of 250 weeks or five years for CSSA payments for each able-bodied adult and at the same time relaxing the eligibility criteria. This would help remove the threat to CSSA becoming a dependency model, promote the notion and attitude of self-reliance, and change the general perception of CSSA recipients
15.	Concerning CSSA Review Alliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● expressed concern about some 20 tragedies relating to those needy families who had not applied for CSSA for various reasons. The Alliance was of the view that CSSA recipients were unable to become self-reliant because of the limited suitable job opportunities in the labour market. They felt humiliated because of the insulting words and discrimination from the community ● it urged the Administration to streamline the administration procedures for vetting the CSSA applications, waive the requirement of production of income proof certified by employers, and enhance public education by conveying a positive message on CSSA
16.	Rights for Basic Living Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● expressed concern about the public's misconception that the CSSA Scheme served as

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	Association	<p>a disincentive for able-bodied adult to work. In the light of the labelling effect, some needy chose not to apply for CSSA and therefore could not receive timely assistance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● the Association considered that CSSA payments were only adequate for survival, but not for a dignified living ● some able-bodied adult CSSA recipients, especially those of single-parent families, could not go to work because of the need to take care of their families. The Administration would enhance public education in this respect
17.	New Women Arrivals League	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● the Government was taking the lead to discriminate against new arrivals by imposing the seven-year residence requirement under the CSSA Scheme. The Government should abolish the seven-year residence requirement and stop discrimination against the new arrivals ● new arrivals had been misconceived from being inertia to work and relied on CSSA. They could not work due to various reasons, such as family problems or adjustment problems
18.	The Hong Kong Council of Social Service [LC Paper No. CB(2)2242/08-09(02)]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● the following suggestions as detailed in its submission were highlighted - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) reviewing the DE arrangements and introducing the concept of asset building by establishing a savings account for CSSA households to retain the earnings disregarded for special purposes, such as personal development of family members; (b) reviewing the definition of work under the New Dawn Project to include voluntary and community work; and (c) expanding the Intensive Employment Assistance Scheme in the light of the huge demand
19.	Hong Kong Women Worker Association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● expressed concern that many people had difficulties to find work amidst of the

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	[LC Paper No. CB(2)2242/08-09(03)]	<p>financial tsunami. However, they felt ashamed to apply for CSSA even though there were in genuine hardship due to the labelling of CSSA recipients</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● the publicity on the abuse and fraud cases had disseminated to the public that CSSA recipients were lazy. In fact, many of the CSSA recipients were elders and only a small portion of CSSA recipients were unemployed and low-income group ● urged the Administration to introduce a universal protection scheme or unemployment assistance to assist the needy, and rectify the incorrect perception of CSSA recipients through public education
20.	電影文化關注組	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● the theme of the two APIs on discouraging fraud and abuse cases had disseminated misleading messages that CSSA recipients were unwilling to work. It was unfair to CSSA recipients as most of them were in genuine hardship. The APIs concerned only emphasized that people should not rely on CSSA but they had not provided the full picture such as inadequate job opportunities in the market
21.	電影藝術關注組	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● the two APIs relating to CSSA cases produced by the Government had exaggerated the occurrence of fraud cases since the number of fraud cases only represented 1% of the total CSSA cases. Given that the two APIs had been broadcasted for nine months, the public was misconceived from the message disseminated that able-bodied adult CSSA recipients did not want to work. Taking into account that over 70% of CSSA recipients were elders and PWDs, it was unfair to them
22.	Hong Kong Christian Institute [LC Paper No. CB(2)2242/08-09(04)]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● expressed concern about the difficulties faced by CSSA recipients who were in genuine hardship and were discriminated by the community. They had low self-esteem as reflected in the study findings of Oxfam and the Polytechnic University of Hong Kong ● appealed to the public not to discriminate against the CSSA recipients