

**For information  
on 5 March 2009**

## **LEGCO PANEL ON WELFARE SERVICES**

### **Subcommittee on Poverty Alleviation**

#### **Internet Access for School Attending Child Recipients of the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme**

#### **Purpose**

This paper aims to provide information on access to the Internet for school attending child recipients of the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme.

#### **Basic Needs of Children**

2. The CSSA Scheme, whilst seeking to meet the basic needs of those who cannot support themselves financially, takes special care of children through the provision of higher standard rates and various special grants. The existing standard rates for CSSA able-bodied children range from \$1,455 to \$2,200 per month, which are \$140 to \$370 higher than those for able-bodied adults. The standard rates for CSSA disabled children are even higher, ranging from \$2,550 to \$4,740 per month, which are \$560 to \$730 higher than those for disabled adults.

3. CSSA children attending schools are entitled to a full range of special grants to meet their educational expenses. These grants cover –

- (a) school fees (actual fees, or a maximum of full-day kindergarten fee of \$25,400 per year or half-day kindergarten fee of \$16,000 per year);
- (b) meal allowance of \$220 per month for full-time students who have to take lunch away from home;

- (c) actual expenses of fares to and from school;
- (d) examination fees for the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination and Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination;
- (e) a flat-rate grant for each school year, which ranges from \$1,245 to \$3,810 and would be paid before the start of a school year to cover expenses of books, stationery, school uniforms, and miscellaneous and related expenses.

4. At present, the average CSSA monthly payment for a 4-person CSSA family without any income is \$9,920, which is higher than the average monthly income of a 4-person non-CSSA family in the lowest 20% income group. CSSA families can flexibly deploy their CSSA monthly payments to procure goods and services according to their own circumstances and needs.

### **Digital Inclusion Task Force**

5. The Digital Inclusion Task Force was set up in July 2008 to advise the Government on the formulation of relevant strategies and initiatives for addressing digital inclusion issues in Hong Kong in a holistic manner with an aim to enabling all members of the community to have equal opportunities to benefit from Information and Community Technology (ICT) development. The Task Force agreed that priority should be given to three needy groups, namely the elderly, low-income families with children and people with disabilities and/or chronic illness. In each group, the Task Force has reviewed existing initiatives and suggested various measures to ensure that the needy groups have access to hardware and software, affordable Internet connections skills and training, and content and applications that can enhance the quality of their lives.

6. On promoting access to ICT facilities for students in low-income families, efforts have been made on the following fronts –

**(a) *Internet access in the community***

The Education Bureau (EDB) has granted recurrent subsidy to all primary and secondary schools since the 1999/2000 school year to encourage them to open computer rooms and facilities for the use of needy students after school. Free computers and Internet facilities are also available to students at various locations across the territory.

For examples 136 Integrated Children and Youth Services Centres and 66 public libraries currently provide more than 1 700 workstations with Internet access. Students can have access to many of these facilities even in evenings or during weekends. Moreover, as announced in the 2009-10 Budget, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department will standardise the opening days of their 33 major and district libraries to seven days a week from 1 April, with opening hours increased by about 10 hours to 71 hours a week.

**(b) *Computer Recycling Programme***

To help needy students gain access to computer facilities, EDB has partnered with the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) to launch a "Computer Recycling Programme" for primary and secondary school students. Under the programme, EPD will provide recycled computers to needy students while EDB will arrange for one-year free Internet access service for successful applicants. The designated Internet service provider will also continue to offer a favourable Internet access service plan to beneficiaries for two years after the initial year of free service. EDB has started the call for applications in early February 2009.

**(c) *Partnerships in the Community***

The Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO) will continue to explore and facilitate partnerships in the community to benefit more low-income families with children as well as other need groups. For example, the Hong Kong Council of Social Service has recently partnered with a local Internet Service Provider to provide a two-year free Internet broadband access service to 1 000 students from low-income families, in particular to those receiving CSSA.

**(d) *District Cyber Centres***

OGCIO is spearheading the District Cyber Centres (DCCs) pilot scheme in partnership with private sectors, professional associations and community organizations. The initial phase of the scheme was officially launched on 22 February 2009. Through providing computing facilities, internet connectivity and technical support, DCCs will help narrow the digital divide by enabling young people from poor families and other needy members of the community to

access and use ICT and online services and helping them integrate into the information society.

### **Education Programme for Internet users**

7. Apart from providing access to ICT facilities, the Financial Secretary proposed in the 2009-10 Budget to earmark \$63 million to conduct a one-year education programme to teach Internet users, especially young students, how to use the Internet appropriately and safely.

8. Members are invited to note the contents of the paper.

**Labour and Welfare Bureau  
Education Bureau  
Social Welfare Department  
Office of the Government Chief Information Officer  
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