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## **Legislative Council Subcommittee on Poverty**

### **Support for Persons with Disabilities, Ethnic Minorities, New-arrivals and Single-parent Families**

#### **Introduction**

This paper briefs members of the Administration's support for the disadvantaged groups of persons with disabilities, ethnic minorities, new-arrivals and single-parent families.

#### **(I) Persons with disabilities**

2. A number of employment assistance services and financial assistance schemes are available to assist persons with disabilities.

#### **Employment assistance**

3. The Administration's policy objective in assisting persons with disabilities in attaining employment is to ensure that they have equal access to participation in productive and gainful employment in the open market. In this regard, we strive to provide a wide range of vocational training and employment support services for persons with disabilities and introduce suitable measures to enhance the job opportunities for persons with disabilities.

#### Vocational rehabilitation services

4. The Social Welfare Department (SWD) provides a range of vocational rehabilitation services to meet the diversified needs of persons with disabilities. These services include Sheltered Workshops, Supported Employment, Integrated Vocational Rehabilitation Services Centres, Integrated Vocational Training Centres, On the Job Training Programme for People with Disabilities (OJT) and Sunnyway (On the Job Training Programme for Young People with Disabilities).

5. In tandem, the Vocational Training Council and the Employees Retraining Board provide vocational training courses and job placement

support services for persons with disabilities to enhance their employability.

#### Employment support service

6. The Labour Department (LD) provides personalised employment services to job seekers with disabilities who are fit for open employment. Its placement officers provide these job seekers with employment counselling and latest labour market information, conduct job matching for them and refer them to apply for suitable jobs. They also conduct workshops and talks for these job seekers for enhancing their job-search skills and interview techniques, and provide follow-up service after placing the job seekers into employment.

#### Creation of job opportunities for persons with disabilities

7. Through granting seed money to non-governmental organisations (NGOs) for setting up small enterprises or businesses, the “Enhancing Employment of People with Disabilities through Small Enterprise” Project (3E’s Project) administered by SWD creates job opportunities for persons with disabilities. A funded business needs to fulfill the requirement that the number of employees with disabilities should not be less than 50% of the total number of persons on the payroll of the business. This helps persons with disabilities take up genuine employment in a friendly and open working environment.

#### Incentives for employers in offering more job opportunities for persons with disabilities

8. Under the OJT Programme and Sunnyway administered by SWD, job attachment allowance and job trial wage subsidy are granted to encourage employers to offer job opportunities for persons with disabilities. In 2013-14, SWD will raise the job attachment allowance from \$1,250 to \$2,000 per month for a maximum period of three months; and the job trial wage subsidy from the cap of \$3,000 to \$4,000 per month with the maximum subsidy period extended from three months to six months.

9. In tandem, the Work Orientation and Placement Scheme (WOPS) administered by LD encourages employers to employ persons with disabilities through the provision of a monthly allowance. The amount of allowance is equivalent to two-thirds of the monthly salary of the employee with disabilities (subject to a maximum of \$4,000). The payment period is up to six months. LD will further enhance WOPS by introducing a two-month work adaptation period. An employer who

employs a person with disabilities having employment difficulties will be paid an additional allowance up to a maximum of \$5,500 per month for two months. After the two-month adaptation period, the employer will be eligible for the allowance at existing level.

10. Apart from the above, SWD will also launch a scheme providing employers of persons with disabilities with a one-off subsidy up to \$20,000 for procurement of assistive rehabilitation devices and carrying out workplace modifications to enable the employees with disabilities to enhance their work efficiency.

## **Financial assistance**

### Waiver of Medical Fee

11. It has always been the Administration's fundamental principle that no one will be denied adequate medical care owing to lack of means. Recipients of the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) are entitled to free medical treatment at public hospitals or clinics in Hong Kong. Non-CSSA recipients who cannot afford medical expenses in the public sector may apply for a medical fee waiver at the Medical Social Services Units of public hospitals and clinics or Integrated Family Service Centres (IFSCs) and Family and Child Protective Services Units (FCPSUs) of SWD. Medical social workers or social workers of IFSCs / FCPSUs of SWD will assess the applications with due consideration given to the applicants' financial, social and medical conditions on a household basis.

### Samaritan Fund

12. The Samaritan Fund administered by the Hospital Authority aims to provide financial assistance for needy patients who meet the specified clinical criteria and passed the means test to meet expenses on self-financed drugs or privately purchased medical items needed in the course of medical treatment but are not covered by the standard fees and charges in public hospitals and clinics. The patient is required to pass a household-based financial assessment conducted by medical social workers.

### Disability Allowance

13. The Disability Allowance (DA) under the Social Security Allowance Scheme, which is non-means-tested, helps persons with severe disabilities to meet their special needs. Recipients of Normal DA receive a monthly allowance of \$1,450, and persons meeting the

eligibility criteria for Normal DA and certified to be in need of constant attendance from others and not receiving care in a government or subvented residential institution can receive Higher DA at a rate of \$2,900 a month.

### Community Care Fund and other charitable funds

14. The Community Care Fund (CCF) provides assistance for persons facing economic difficulties, in particular those who fall outside the social safety net or those within the net but have special circumstances that are not covered. The CCF programmes providing support to persons with disabilities are at Annex 1. Other charitable funds available for non-CSSA persons with disabilities are at Annex 2.

## **(II) Ethnic minorities**

15. The Administration has been providing a range of services to meet the needs of ethnic minorities.

### **Education**

16. On education, the Administration is committed to supporting the integration of non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students<sup>1</sup>, notably ethnic minority students, into the community, including facilitating their early adaptation to the local education system and mastery of the Chinese Language. A series of measures to support the learning and teaching (L&T) of the Chinese Language of NCS students has been put in place since the 2006/07 school year. The support measures cover the following major areas:

- (a) providing schools with the “Supplementary Guide to the Chinese Language Curriculum for Non-Chinese Speaking (NCS) Students” (Supplementary Guide) which is complemented by diversified learning and teaching materials and teacher professional development programmes so that schools admitting NCS students can cater for the different needs and aptitudes of their NCS students;
- (b) providing a recurrent grant and on-site professional support for schools to offer school-based support programmes specifically for their NCS students<sup>2</sup>;

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<sup>1</sup> For the planning of education support measures, students whose spoken language at home is not Chinese are broadly categorised as NCS students.

<sup>2</sup> In the 2012/13 school year, there are 31 schools (21 primary and 10 secondary) receiving the

- (c) organising after-school extended Chinese learning activities for NCS students through the Chinese Language Learning Support Centre commissioned to the University of Hong Kong and other support programmes so as to reinforce what students have learnt during lessons; and
- (d) promoting early integration among NCS parents by providing relevant information in major ethnic minority languages, parent briefings on kindergarten education and school admission dedicated for NCS parents, etc.

17. The Education Bureau (EDB) is reviewing the support measures, taking into account the views of stakeholders<sup>3</sup> so as to further enhance the learning effectiveness of NCS students. For instance, there are concerns over the adequacy of provision of a recurrent grant and school-based professional support to some schools mentioned in paragraph 16(b) above. These schools have been serving as the anchor point for sharing experiences with other schools, which have also admitted NCS students, through a support network formed with a view to benefitting all NCS students studying the local curriculum. Notwithstanding this, it is worth to note the concentration of NCS students in these schools and their lack of an immersed Chinese language environment conducive to L&T of the Chinese Language.

18. NCS students can choose to enrol in public-sector schools. That a school becomes a school providing school-based support programmes specifically arranged for NCS students with EDB's funding and professional support, and enrolls more NCS students is not by design of EDB. Rather, it is a result of parental choice. Nonetheless, there is a need for review with a view to achieving a more desirable mix of local and NCS students within a school so as to facilitate better integration of NCS students.

19. As for the L&T of the Chinese Language, the Supplementary Guide, which includes four curriculum modes<sup>4</sup>, caters for the diverse needs as well as aspirations of NCS students and supports their learning of the Chinese Language at different stages of development. The multiple curriculum modes under the Supplementary Guide may lead to different exits such as the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education and other non-local Chinese qualifications<sup>5</sup>. Recently, EDB has

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recurrent grant and professional support. They are generally known as “designated schools”.

<sup>3</sup> Including the Equal Opportunities Commission's Report on the Working Group on Education and Ethnic Minorities published in July 2011.

<sup>4</sup> The four curriculum modes are “immersion in Chinese Language lessons”, “bridging / transition”, “specific learning purposes” and “integration”.

<sup>5</sup> Including General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE), International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE), General Certificate of Education (GCE) AS-Level as well as A-Level, etc.

expanded the “examination subsidy” coverage for NCS students sitting other non-local Chinese Language examinations to help NCS students obtain different internationally recognised Chinese Language qualifications that better suit their Chinese standards and needs for academic advancement and future development.

20. All schools are in practice adapting the Chinese Language curriculum with reference to the Supplementary Guide. Research findings suggest that given the support and empowerment, the learning pace of some NCS students can be on a par with that of local students. An alternative curriculum and assessment with pre-set simpler contents and lower standards would limit the range of learning opportunities for NCS students with different needs and aspirations and also undermine their opportunities for further studies. Besides, the credibility of such qualifications in the eyes of employers remains to be ascertained.

21. While EDB is actively reviewing the support measures, the 2013 Policy Address has initiated further measures to enhance the support for NCS students. Based on teaching experience and the “Chinese Language Assessment Tools” tailored for NCS students and a longitudinal study, EDB will further evaluate the effectiveness of measures to support NCS students’ learning of Chinese with a view to setting appropriate targets for their acquisition of the Chinese Language as well as improving L&T and teachers’ professional development. Besides, EDB will explore launching an incentive grant scheme to enhance the professional competencies of Chinese Language teachers in teaching NCS students will be launched.

22. Moreover, EDB will step up collaboration with ethnic minority communities and NGOs to encourage NCS parents to participate in diversified Chinese activities together with their children with a view to enhancing their exposure to, and use of, Chinese. Specifically, EDB will refine the Summer Bridging Programme for NCS students progressing to Primary 1 to Primary 4 to allow NCS parents to accompany their children in the Programme.

### **Integration into the community**

23. The Home Affairs Department (HAD) commissions NGOs to run five support service centres for ethnic minorities and two sub-centres to provide various tailor-made learning classes, counselling and referral, integration programmes and interpretation services for ethnic minorities. HAD also sponsors two community support teams (i.e. the Pakistani and Nepalese teams) to provide special services for the ethnic minorities

groups through their own communities.

24. Under the District-based Integration Programmes, HAD commissions NGOs to organise various activities for ethnic minorities, including adaption courses, mutual help networks, employees' training, volunteer service, community visits, etc. in districts. The Ambassador Scheme recruits persons of background and experience similar to ethnic minorities as ambassadors, who will reach out to the disadvantaged ethnic minorities and make referrals to government departments to follow up where necessary

25. HAD has been making use of media partnership to support ethnic minorities. Funding has been provided for five radio programmes broadcast in ethnic minority languages (Nepali, Urdu, Hindi, Thai and Bahasa Indonesian) to keep ethnic minorities abreast of updated information and government services. HAD also engages local radio networks to promote public understanding of ethnic minorities and social harmony.

26. Business enterprises are encouraged to employ ethnic minorities who are provided with assistance through support service centres to apply for vacancies in business enterprises. HAD also subsidises social enterprises, with some projects, such as the Hong Kong Translingual Services and the Bread Bunch Bakery, offering dedicated employment opportunities and training for ethnic minorities.

27. HAD has been providing language learning support to ethnic minorities who are not attending schools. Two CCF programmes have been implemented to provide subsidy for ethnic minorities and new arrivals in taking language examinations and dedicated language courses. Funding has also been provided to NGOs to organise language classes for ethnic minority adults and cross-cultural learning youth programmes for ethnic minority children. Scholarships have been granted to students with outstanding performance in school and community services promoting racial harmony

28. HAD provides a designated website (<http://www.had.gov.hk/rru/>) available in six ethnic minority languages to introduce services for ethnic minorities offered by HAD and other government departments. Funding has also been provided to a NGO to distribute information kits to newly arrived ethnic minorities at the airport and answer their enquiries. Service guidebooks in English and six ethnic minority languages (i.e. Bahasa Indonesia, Tagalog, Thai, Hindi, Nepali and Urdu) have been published to introduce services of government departments and major public institutions available to them.

### **(III) New-arrivals**

#### **Integration into the community**

29. HAD provides support services for new arrivals to facilitate their early integration into the community. These include commissioning two NGOs to implement the Expectation Management Programmes in Shenzhen and Guangdong Province separately to organise activities for prospective settlers from the Mainland to help them better understand the circumstances in Hong Kong before deciding to reside here. Funding has been provided through the Enhancing Self-Reliance Through District Partnership Programme to support the development of social enterprises, with some projects, such as Health & Beauty by Lok Kwan Social Service and Health-link by Hong Kong Employment Development Service, to offer dedicated employment opportunities and training to new arrivals.

30. HAD has fostered media partnership to produce dynamic and interactive programmes so as to enhance public understanding of new arrivals and promote social harmony. HAD has also launched the District-based Integration Programmes, the Ambassador Scheme, and produced service handbooks for new arrivals to facilitate their integration into the community.

### **(IV) Single-parent families**

31. Various initiatives are available to help needy parents to take care of their children. This is particularly important for single-parents so as to make them more available to work.

32. To support parents who are unable to take care of their children temporarily because of work or other reasons, SWD has all along been providing subvention to NGOs to run a variety of child care services and after-school care services. SWD also strives to increase the flexibility of such services.

#### Child Care Centres

33. On day-time child care services, Child Care Centres (CCCs) provide such services to children below the age of three. Many CCCs are attached to kindergartens, providing education and care services to children aged six or below. They offer a total of about 23,000 places. Some of them also provide occasional child care services to children aged under six to support parents who need to deal with urgent or important



matters. Such centres also provide extended hour services to assist parents who are in need of longer hours of child care services.

#### Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project

34. In October 2011, SWD launched the Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project (NSCCP) through NGOs. NSCCP offers at least 720 places to children aged under six on a territory-wide basis to enhance the flexibility and accessibility of the services, and at the same time promote community participation and mutual assistance in the neighbourhood. NSCCP consists of two service components: home-based child care services which operate from 7am to 11pm, and centre-based care groups which usually operate till at least 9pm on weekdays, and cover some Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays. Under special circumstances, children aged six or above may also use the service.

#### After School Care Programme

35. For needy children aged 6 to 12, there are at present 142 After School Care Programme (ASCP) centres operated by NGOs, providing 5 500 service places in total. In general, ASCP centres provide services in various sessions from Monday to Friday till 7 or 8pm. Individual centres may also consider extending the service hours and providing services on Saturday in response to the actual demand in individual districts to accommodate the working hours of parents. As at December 2012, the overall utilisation rate of the ASCP places across the territory was about 87%. To ensure efficient use of resources, SWD will conduct regular review of the service demand and the demand for subsidies in various districts, and will also liaise with NGOs concerned to increase their ASCP places to cope with additional demand as and when required.

36. To ensure that low-income families can afford the aforementioned services, SWD has all along provided needy families with different forms of fees waiving subsidies. The Administration will continue to keep in view the operation of various service schemes in order to address demands arising from the community.

#### After-school Care Pilot Scheme under CCF

37. In response to community demand for enhancing after-school child care services to assist working parents, EDB has implemented a one-year After-school Care Pilot Scheme (the Scheme) with funding from CCF. The Scheme aims to co-ordinate and integrate existing after-school learning and support activities organised by schools and NGOs for needy students. New elements are being injected into the

existing programmes so that students can make better use of their time after school and before they return home for dinner to participate in more meaningful activities and learning, thereby alleviating the pressure of working parents at the same time. EDB has disbursed 50% of the subsidy to 73 schools/NGOs granted with the funding, and the remaining 50% will be disbursed in the first half of 2013. Having regard to the good progress of the pilot scheme, and the scope for enhancement for further trial, the CCF Task Force of the Commission on Poverty (CoP) agreed to extend the programme to 2013-14<sup>6</sup>.

**(V) Financial assistance for persons who cannot support themselves financially**

38. Apart from the various support for the disadvantaged as outlined above, the CSSA Scheme, as a means-tested safety net, provides financial support for families in need to meet their basic needs.

39. The CSSA Scheme takes into account the special needs of persons with disabilities and thus provides higher standard rates, special grants and supplements to them. The current standard rates for disabled adult CSSA recipients range from \$2,765 to \$5,000 per month which is higher than those for able-bodied adults by \$1,280 to \$2,930 respectively. Special grants are provided for disabled CSSA recipients, including payments to cover expenditure on glasses, dentures, fares to hospitals / clinics, and expenditure on medically recommended special diets and medical or surgical appliances.

40. Furthermore, special assistance is provided to single parents and family carers under the CSSA Scheme. Higher standard rates are provided for the above groups (ranging from \$1,800 to \$2,250, which are respectively \$315 and \$405 higher than those for other able-bodied adults); and single parents are provided with a monthly supplement of \$290, recognising the difficulties they face in bringing up a family.

41. As a general rule, CSSA applicants must have been Hong Kong residents for at least seven years, except for Hong Kong residents aged below 18 who are exempted from this requirement. The requirement provides a rational basis for the allocation of public resources and helps sustain a non-contributory social security system. It encourages new arrivals who can work to be self-reliant rather than relying on welfare benefits. It also underlines the need for potential immigrants to plan ahead to ensure that they would have sufficient means to be self-supporting before moving to Hong Kong. The Director of Social

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<sup>6</sup> Pending approval by CoP.

Welfare may, however, exercise discretion to waive the residence requirement in cases involving applicants in genuine hardship. The discretion will normally be exercised where a new arrival works to support his/her family members, in recognition of his/her efforts to become self-supporting.

**Labour and Welfare Bureau**  
**Education Bureau**  
**Home Affairs Department**  
**Social Welfare Department**  
**Labour Department**

**March 2013**

**Programmes under the Community Care Fund (CCF) providing assistance to persons with disabilities**

Medical Assistance Programmes

Two CCF medical assistance programmes, which are administered by the Hospital Authority (HA), have been launched. The First Phase Programme, implemented from 1 August 2011, provides financial assistance for HA patients to purchase specified self-financed (SFI) cancer drugs which have not yet been brought into the Samaritan Fund safety net but have been rapidly accumulating medical scientific evidence and with relatively higher efficacy. The Second Phase Programme, implemented on 16 January 2012 and incorporated into the Samaritan Fund with effect from 1 September 2012 through regularisation, provides additional subsidy for HA patients by reducing their maximum contribution ratio in the use of specified SFI drugs.

Special Care Subsidy for Persons with Severe Disabilities

2. This programme provides persons with severe disabilities who live in the community and require constant attendance with a monthly special care subsidy of \$2,000 for a maximum period of 12 months, so as to render necessary support to them. In November 2012, the Steering Committee of CCF endorsed its extension to provide eligible persons with severe disabilities under the new round of application with a subsidy for a maximum period of another 12 months for purchasing caring goods / services or for other purposes related to their constant attendance. A beneficiary of the programme under the earlier round, if continuously eligible under the new round, may receive subsidy for a maximum period of 24 months.

Special Subsidy to Persons with Severe Physical Disabilities for Renting Respiratory Support Medical Equipment

3. This programme provides persons with severe physical disabilities who live in the community, come from families with financial difficulties and do not receive CSSA with a monthly special subsidy of \$2,000 or \$2,500 for a maximum period of 12 months for renting necessary respiratory support medical equipment. The programme has been rolled out since late January 2013.

**Other Charitable Funds Available for non-CSSA  
Persons with Disabilities**

For persons with disabilities with financial difficulties who are non-CSSA recipients, they may also apply for immediate and short-term financial assistance from charitable funds to purchase necessary rehabilitative and medical appliances. Examples of such charitable funds are Yan Chai Tetraplegic Fund administered by Yan Chai Hospital Board, Li Po Chun Charitable Trust Fund, Tang Shiu Kin and Ho Tim Charitable Fund, Brewin Trust Fund and Kwan Fong Trust Fund for the Needy administered by SWD.

2. Non-CSSA Persons with disabilities in financial difficulties may approach medical social workers, social workers of the Integrated Family Service Centres or non-governmental organisations to apply for the charitable funds. Social workers will assess the applicants' conditions including their financial resources in accordance with the relevant criteria and categories of charitable funds and provide them with appropriate assistance.