

**Community Care Fund
Medical Assistance Programmes
(First and Second Phases) Evaluation Report and Proposal on Regularisation**

BACKGROUND

The Steering Committee on the Community Care Fund (CCF), at its meeting on 20 April 2011, granted approval for the Hospital Authority (HA) to administer the First and Second Phases of the CCF Medical Assistance Programmes under the supervision of the Food and Health Bureau. The First Phase Programme provides subsidy for needy HA patients to use specified self-financed (SFI) cancer drugs which have not yet been brought into the Samaritan Fund (SF) safety net. It adopts the mode of operation of the SF. The Second Phase Programme provides subsidy to needy HA patients who marginally fall outside the SF safety net for the use of SFI drugs subsidised by the SF or the First Phase Programme. It also adopts the mode of operation of SF, except that the contribution ratio of all patients is reduced from the maximum of 30% to 20% of their household annual disposable financial resources (ADFR). Applications for the First Phase and Second Phase Programmes commenced on 1 August 2011 and 16 January 2012 respectively.

PREDETERMINED EVALUATION ARRANGEMENT

2. The HA had, at the 3rd meeting of the CCF Medical Sub-committee held on 23 June 2011, reported progress on the preparation for the implementation of the Medical Assistance Programmes and elaborated on the programme evaluation arrangement and the specific evaluation indicators to be adopted in future evaluation. It was proposed that evaluation work would be conducted one year after programme implementation.

PROPOSED INCORPORATION OF THE CCF ASSISTANCE PROGRAMMES INTO THE GOVERNMENT'S REGULAR ASSISTANCE

3. Government departments and organizations entrusted to implement the CCF assistance programmes were exploring the feasibility of incorporating individual programmes into the government's regular assistance having regard to the progress of implementation. For HA, consideration had been given to exploring the feasibility of incorporating the Medical Assistance Programmes First and Second Phases into the SF. In order to explore the feasibility and prepare for the transition, the HA had advanced the evaluation of these two Programmes based on statistics as at 31 March 2012. Besides, both Programmes had adopted the same evaluation arrangement because they have adopted the SF financial assessment mechanism on SFI drug subsidy and resembled to the SF operation. The evaluation result serves as an important reference for the HA and CCF to determine the feasibility of regularizing the two Programmes.

EVALUATION INDICATORS

4. This section mainly analyses the evaluation indicators, for example, number of patients benefited. Information was sourced from the information management system of the SF which handles both SF and CCF applications. The evaluation would analyse the following evaluation indicators :

(a) The First Phase Programme

Types of patients benefited

Patients using specified SFI cancer drugs which have not yet been brought into the SF safety net

Evaluation indicators

- ◆ Number of patients benefited
- ◆ Average amount of subsidy granted for individual patients
- ◆ Average amount of subsidy granted for different groups of patients with reference to their financial conditions

Please refer to **Appendix 1** for details.

(b) The Second Phase Programme

(i) Patients outside the SF safety net ^{Note}

Evaluation indicators

- ◆ Number of patients benefited
- ◆ Average amount of subsidy granted for individual patients
- ◆ Average amount of subsidy granted for different groups of patients with reference to their financial conditions

Group	ADFR (\$)	Patients' annual maximum contribution (\$) / Patient contribution ratio (%) based on the SF mechanism
1	Patients who originally fell outside the SF safety net	

Note : Including patients who marginally failed the SF means test, or those whose initial patient contribution exceeded the drug cost and hence, were ineligible for subsidy.

(ii) Patients in the SF safety net

Evaluation indicators

- ◆ Number of patients benefited
- ◆ Average amount of subsidy granted for individual patients
- ◆ Average amount of subsidy granted for different groups of patients with reference to their financial conditions

Group	ADFR (\$)	Patients' annual maximum contribution (\$) / Patient contribution ratio (%) based on the SF mechanism
1	200,001 – 220,000	22.5%
2	220,001 – 240,000	25%
3	240,001 – 260,000	27.5%
4	260,001 or above	30%

Please refer to **Appendix 2** for details.

EVALUATION REPORT

5. The HA had collected, analysed and reviewed the beneficiaries' information and relevant data with reference to the evaluation indicators of the two Programmes.

(a) The First Phase Programme

6. Applications for the First Phase Programme commenced on 1 August 2011. Up to 31 March 2012 (8 months), 202 applications were received and all of them were approved. Based on the funding commitment for approved cases in the next 12 months, the amount of subsidy granted was \$15.9 million. Average amount of subsidy per application is around \$79,000.

7. To facilitate statistical analysis of the applications, patients are classified into ten groups according to their financial conditions. Among these groups, the average amount of subsidy granted per application ranged from around \$45,000 to \$93,000. The top three groups, i.e. household ADFR above \$140,000, received relatively less subsidies on average, which ranged from around \$45,000 to \$65,000.

8. Among the applications, the proportion of Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) to non-CSSA recipients is 32.7% and 67.3%. CSSA recipients or patients with household ADFR equal to or below \$20,000 can receive full assistance without paying for patient contribution. The average amount of subsidy for this patient group is around \$84,000. Patients receiving full assistance accounted for 59.4% of applications. Details of the applications are at **Appendix 1**.

(b) The Second Phase Programme

9. Applications for the Second Phase Programme commenced on 16 January 2012. It supports HA patients whose contribution ratio on drug costs exceeds 20% of household ADFR to use the SFI drugs covered by the SF or the CCF First Phase Programme. The drug cost contribution ratio of all patients is reduced from the maximum ratio of 30% to 20%.

10. The Second Phase Programme is inapplicable to CSSA recipients because they can receive full assistance without paying for patient contribution if they met the eligibility criteria of SF or the CCF First Phase Programme.

11. Up to 31 March 2012 (about 2 months), there were 162 applications and all of them were approved. Average amount of subsidy per application is around \$23,000. The cases concerned are divided into two categories:

(i) Patients who originally fell outside the SF safety net

12. Patients under this group include those who have marginally failed the SF means test, or whose patient contribution has exceeded the drug cost and hence are unable to benefit from the SF. Five applications had been approved under this group, with an average subsidy of around \$2,000.

(ii) Patients originally in the SF safety net

13. The maximum patient contribution ratio for all these patients are reduced from 30% to 20%. Patients benefited are those whose household ADFR are above \$200,000. Average amount of subsidy received by these patients is around \$23,000. Under this evaluation, patients who were in the SF safety net were divided into 4 groups based on their financial condition. Average amount of subsidies for patients in the 4 groups ranged from around \$4,000 to \$30,000.

14. Among the 157 applications, the original drug cost contribution ratio of 110 cases (around 70%) reached the maximum rate of 30%. The subsidies provided by the Second Phase Programme were equivalent to a reduction of 10% points of patients' drug cost contribution ratio. The average amount of subsidy is around \$30,000.

15. Details of the applications are at **Appendix 2**.

(c) Applications not approved

16. Under this evaluation, all applications of the two Programmes were approved. In the event that applications were not approved in future, the HA would report on such cases, or explain the statistical information and reasons of not approving applications in evaluation reviews.

(d) 2011-2012 Income and Expenditure Statement and 2012-13 cashflow requirement forecast

17. Please refer to **Appendix 3** for the Income and Expenditure Statement of the two Programmes for 2011-12 and **Appendix 4** for the 2012-13 cashflow requirement forecast.

CONCLUSION OF THE EVALUATION

(a) The First Phase Programme

18. The First Phase Programme provides financial assistance to needy HA patients to use six types of specified SFI cancer drugs for treatment of seven types of cancer. These

drugs have not yet been brought into the SF safety net but have been rapidly accumulating medical scientific evidence and with relatively higher efficacy. Notwithstanding that the HA has been providing alternative drugs and treatment to these patients at standard fees and charges, many of them still wish to use the SFI cancer drugs. The CCF provides financial assistance to them so that they can use those drugs as early as possible.

19. All 202 applications were approved and nearly 60% of which received full assistance. The average amount of full subsidy is around \$84,000. For patients under the group with the highest household ADFR, they were still able to receive an average subsidy of around \$45,000. The HA considered that the objectives of the First Phase Programme had been achieved in view that all patients meeting the eligibility criteria had received financial assistance. Yet, the number of approved cases was lower than the target of some 660 (the projected target number as at 31.3.2012). This is because the actual number of beneficiaries hinges on whether patients fulfill the designated clinical criteria as well as whether they are able to pass the means test with regard to their financial conditions.

(b) The Second Phase Programme

20. The Second Phase Programme provides subsidy to needy HA patients who could not benefit from the SF to use the SFI drugs covered by the SF or the CCF First Phase Programme. There were five cases and the Programme had successfully brought the patients back to the safety net.

21. The Second Phase Programme also adopted the mode of operation of the SF. It had provided further financial assistance to patients who were already in the safety net by reducing their drug cost contribution from the maximum ratio of 30% to 20%. Around 70% of patients received the highest level of subsidy which was equivalent to a reduction of 10% points of patients' drug cost contribution ratio.

22. Findings of the statistical analysis indicated that the objectives of the Second Phase Programme had also been successfully achieved. As the evaluation had only covered a two-month period since the commencement of the Programme on 16 January 2012 and up to 31 March 2012, the HA might conduct the statistical analysis based on a longer implementation period in future.

23. Despite the short implementation period of the Second Phase Programme, the amount of subsidy granted under the Programme had reached 40% of the budget, and double the year-to-date target. These figures revealed that the subsidies received by patients were higher than the budgeted amount.

24. Overall speaking, both Programmes had been able to achieve the objective of the CCF in providing assistance to people facing economic difficulties, in particular those who fall outside the social safety net.

ANALYSIS AND PROPOSAL ON REGULARISATION

PROPOSED INCORPORATION OF THE SECOND PHASE PROGRAMME INTO THE SF

25. Based on the analysis below, the HA recommended that the CCF Medical Second Phase Programme be incorporated into the SF :

(a) Affinity with the operation of SF

26. The HA had made reference to the mode of operation of the SF when designing the Medical Assistance Programmes, the aspects of which are as follows :

- (i) Clinical referral procedure
- (ii) Application procedures and relevant documentation
- (iii) Assessment and approving procedures
- (iv) Mechanism for evaluating the drug coverage
- (v) Channels for patients to express opinions

Given that the mode of operation of the CCF Medical Assistance Programmes is similar to that of the SF, the incorporation of the Second Phase Programme into the SF could be implemented by making administrative adjustments. For instance, since the application documents have already been standardized, only minor textual changes of the documents are required to tie in with the regularisation.

(b) Financial assessment criteria

27. Both phases of the Medical Assistance Programmes are modeled on the SF financial assessment mechanism. There are two aspects of financial assessment criteria for drug subsidy, namely the calculation of household ADFR and the sliding scale for contribution ratio on drug cost. As the Second Phase Programme aims to subsidise patients on drug cost contribution ratio, i.e. a uniform reduction from the maximum ratio of 30% to 20%, it would be complementary to and compatible with the SF. Therefore, if the Second Phase Programme is to be incorporated into the SF, it would meet the SF's objectives and be compatible with SF's operation.

(c) Application statistics

28. Furthermore, since applications for the First and Second Phases Programmes are managed by the information system of the SF, only minimal enhancement of the system would be required. In capturing data from the system for projecting service demand, the HA might select suitable cases for analysis based on the identified needs e.g. number of applications and approved cases, drugs or items involved, amount of subsidies, etc. The analysis can be based on different groups to facilitate projection on future demand.

(d) Cashflow and budget arrangement

29. The Government had proposed in the 2012-13 Budget to provide a \$10 billion grant to sustain the operation of the SF, as well as to meet the increased expenditure due to the addition of more new drugs, increased subsidy provided to patients and increase in the number of eligible patients. The HA anticipated that the government grant is able to sustain the operation of SF for about 10 years. The first year budget for the Second Phase Programme was \$9 million. The SF will be able to absorb the financial implications arising from the regularisation of the CCF Medical Second Phase Programme.

Proposed implementation details for regularisation

30. Since under the Second Phase Programme, patients' contribution ratio on drug costs would be reduced from 30% to 20%, and that its financial assessment criteria are the same as SF, only a short period of time would be required to prepare for the regularisation of the Programme. If the proposed regularisation of the Medical Second Phase Programme was approved, the HA recommends that the Second Phase Programme be incorporated into the SF in the second half of 2012 the earliest.

HA's recommendation on the First Phase Programme

31. The HA does not recommend incorporating the First Phase Programme into the SF because the drug selection criteria of the First Phase Programme are different from those of the SF. Drugs supported by the SF are those which had accumulated sufficient medical scientific evidence and with proven efficacy, whereas those supported by the First Phase Programme are SFI cancer drugs which have not yet been brought into the SF safety net but have been rapidly accumulating medical scientific evidence and with relatively higher efficacy. Therefore, it is considered that the First Phase Programme is unsuitable for regularisation. Under the existing mechanism, drugs will automatically be covered by the SF safety net when they have accumulated sufficient scientific and clinical evidence.

32. If necessary, the First Phase Programme could interface with the SF. For example, if there was a need for the gradual cessation of the First Phase Programme, the HA could take the following measures to facilitate the interface with SF:

- (a) stop introducing new cancer drugs into the First Phase Programme; and
- (b) review the drug coverage of the First Phase Programme. With time, drugs currently supported by the First Phase programme might be repositioned and incorporated into the safety net after accumulating sufficient scientific and clinical evidences in future.

Hospital Authority
April 2012

Community Care Fund Medical Assistance Programmes – First Phase Programme

Number and proportion of applications approved, and application statistics on different groups of patients (as at 31 March 2012)

Group	Annual Disposable Financial Resources (\$)	Maximum annual contribution from patient (\$) / Patient contribution ratio (%)	No. of applications approved	Total amount of subsidy granted (\$'000)	Average amount of subsidy granted per patient (\$'000)
1	0 – 20,000 or CSSA recipients (exempted from financial assessment)	–	120	10,075	84
2	20,001 – 40,000	1000	9	695	77
3	40,001 – 60,000	2000	9	778	86
4	60,001 – 80,000	5%	15	1,379	92
5	80,001 – 100,000	7.5%	5	414	83
6	100,001 – 120,000	10%	6	389	65
7	120,001 – 140,000	12.5%	6	560	93
8	140,001 – 160,000	15%	4	260	65
9	160,001 – 180,000	17.5%	7	411	59
10	180,001 or above	20%	21	944	45
Total			202	15,905	79

CSSA ¹ / non-CSSA recipients	No. of applications approved	Total amount of subsidy granted (\$'000)
CSSA	66	5,677
Non-CSSA	136	10,228
Total	202	15,905

No. of applications received	No. of applications approved	Proportion of applications approved (%)
202	202	100.0%

¹ Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme

Community Care Fund Medical Assistance Programmes – Second Phase Programme

Number and proportion of applications approved, and application statistics on different groups of patients (as at 31 March 2012)

Group	Annual Disposable Financial Resources (\$)	Patient contribution ratio (%)	No. of applications approved	Total amount of subsidy granted (\$'000)	Average amount of subsidy granted per patient (\$'000)
1	(A) Patients originally outside the Samaritan Fund (SF) safety net ¹		5	8	2
	(B) Patients originally in the SF safety net :				
1	200,001 – 220,000	22.5%	18	76	4
2	220,001 – 240,000	25%	12	107	9
3	240,001 – 260,000	27.5%	17	222	13
4	260,001 or above	30%	110	3,309	30
Sub-total			157	3,714	24
Total			162	3,722	23

CSSA ² / non-CSSA recipients	No. of applications approved	Total amount of subsidy granted (\$'000)
CSSA	–	–
Non-CSSA	162	3,722
Total	162	3,722

No. of applications received	No. of applications approved	Proportion of applications approved (%)
162	162	100.0%

¹ Include patients who marginally failed the SF means test, or patients whose patient contribution amount exceeded the drug cost and hence ineligible for subsidy.

² Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme

Community Care Fund Medical Assistance Programmes
Income & Expenditure Statement
2011-12

	Actual
	August 2011 - March 2012
	HK\$'000
Income	
Amount received from the Community Care Fund (CCF) (Note)	21,364
Expenditure	
Drug Costs for the CCF First Phase Programme	
Cetuximab	1,487
Pegylated Liposomal Doxorubicin	900
Lapatinib	1,314
Pemetrexed	5,983
Rituximab	850
Sunitinib (for renal cell carcinoma)	3,072
Sunitinib (for gastrointestinal tumour)	2,299
Drug Costs for the CCF Second Phase Programme	3,722
Total subsidy of drug costs approved for beneficiaries	19,627
<u>Administrative fees</u>	
Staff costs	1,726
Other administrative fees	11
Total administrative fees	1,737
Total Expenditure	21,364
Excess of income over expenditure	-

Statement of Fund Utilisation

	August 2011 - March 2012
	HK\$'000
Amount received from Community Care Fund	27,195
Fund utilised	(10,558)
Outstanding commitment for approved subsidy	16,637
Closing fund balance (Deferred Income) (Note)	(10,806)
	5,831

Note : Funds from the CCF are deferred and recognised in the income and expenditure account to match with the costs they are intended to compensate. Deferred income as at 31 March 2012 is HK\$5,831,000, based on total funds received from the CCF (HK\$27,195,000) from August 2011 to March 2012.

2012-13 cashflow requirements forecast

	Cashflow requirements forecast (Note 1)				Total
	April - June 2012	July - September 2012	October - December 2012	January - March 2013	
	HK\$	HK\$	HK\$	HK\$	HK\$
CCF Medical Assistance Programmes (First Phase)					
Subsidy of drug costs to beneficiaries	6,156,192	6,156,192	6,156,192	6,156,192	24,624,768
CCF Medical Assistance Programmes (Second Phase)					
Subsidy of drug costs to beneficiaries	1,687,908	1,687,908	1,687,908	1,687,908	6,751,632
Administrative fees (Note 2)					
Staff costs	870,000	870,000	870,000	870,000	3,480,000
Other administrative fees	18,300	18,300	800	800	38,200
Total administrative fees	888,300	888,300	870,800	870,800	3,518,200
Total	8,732,400	8,732,400	8,714,900	8,714,900	34,894,600

Notes :

1. Basis of 2012-13 cashflow requirements forecast :

- (i) Estimated subsidies of drug costs to beneficiaries for the First and Second Phase Programmes with reference to the average monthly subsidy of 2011-12
- (ii) Estimated administrative fees for the First and Second Phase Programmes are determined based on the approved budget of HK\$3.75 million

2. Administrative fees are combined for the First and Second Phase Programmes.

**Assistance Programme under the Community Care Fund
Evaluation Report on Subsidy for Elders who are on the Waiting List
of
Integrated Home Care Services (Ordinary Cases) for
Household Cleaning and Escorting Services for Medical Consultations**

Background

The Community Care Fund (CCF) has been established since early 2011 to provide assistance to people facing economic difficulties; in particular those who fall outside the social safety net or those within the safety net but have special circumstances that are not covered. In addition, the CCF can take forward measures on a pilot basis to help the Government identify those that can be considered for incorporation into the Government's regular assistance and service programmes.

2. Ex-Steering Committee on CCF at its meeting on 20 April 2011 to launch this assistance programme in 2011-12 for subsidizing elders from low income families who, as at 31 July 2011, had applied for and were waiting for the "Integrated Home Care Services (Ordinary Cases)" to receive household cleaning and escorting services for medical consultations during the waiting period for the subvented services, so as to enable the elderly beneficiaries to maintain household hygiene and attend medical consultations as scheduled. Eligible elder can receive \$480 at maximum per month with hourly subsidy capped at \$60 for the subsidized services, for not more than 12 months.

3. The programme, with budget of \$24.19 million (including administrative costs of \$1.15 million), is administered by the Social Welfare Department (SWD) and estimated to benefit not more than 4 000 elders.

Implementation of Assistance Programme

4. In August 2011, SWD organised a briefing session for agencies interested in providing services for this programme and invited them to apply for joining this programme as authorised service providers (SPs). SPs approved for providing services in this programme must be an organization or a body exempted from tax under Inland Revenue Ordinance, Cap. 112, Section 88, with at least one-year experience in providing subvented or self-financing household cleaning and/or escorting services for medical consultations (depending on the type of service to be provided

by the organisation under this programme). Upon vetting, SWD approved 26 SPs with a total of 45 service units in October 2011 and the service boundaries covered all over Hong Kong.

5. SWD announced the details of this assistance programme and arranged publicity¹ in October 2011, and subsequently issued letters to 1 669 elders based on the lists of potentially eligible elders provided by Integrated Home Care Service (IHCS) teams². Each letter was enclosed with a programme brief, a list of SPs and an application form. Eligible elders were invited to submit applications by 31 January 2012 (for the first round of application), and SWD would assess their eligibilities according to the information provided in their application forms. To benefit more eligible elders, SWD announced in May 2012 that the application period would be extended until 31 July 2012, and that the specified date for the elders applying for the “Integrated Home Care Services (Ordinary Cases)” was changed to 31 March 2012 accordingly. In the new round of application (the second round of application), SWD issued letters to 1 321 elders based on the lists of elders newly referred by IHCS teams³, and invited eligible elders to submit applications.

6. The CCF Team of SWD was responsible for vetting the applications and arranging for eligible applicants to receive services provided by SPs according to their preferences. The subsidy would not be released to the elders directly and the SPs had to apply for release of subsidy from SWD according to the actual service hours they had provided to each beneficiary. So far, SWD had received 1 111 applications among which 1 076 applications fulfilled the eligibility criteria. The subsidy claimed by the SPs was about \$1.23 million.

Results of Analysis

7. SWD has analysed the collected information and data for the evaluation as follows:

¹ Besides distributing programme briefs at its District Social Welfare Offices, Integrated Family Service Centres, the Home Affairs Department, IHCS teams, etc, SWD also uploaded relevant information on the SWD homepage.

² As information on household income of elders on the waiting list for the “Integrated Home Care Services (Ordinary Cases)” was not available, SWD issued letters to all the elders preliminarily identified by IHCS teams as potentially eligible for the programme and referred to SWD, in which they were invited to submit applications.

³ Including eligible elders who did not submit applications in the first round but were reviewed by IHCS teams that they might still be eligible, and those who applied for the “Integrated Home Care Services (Ordinary Cases)” during the period after 31 July 2011 until 31 March 2012 and were preliminarily identified by IHCS that they might meet the eligibility criteria.

(a) Statistical Data on Applications and Service Arrangement

8. SWD received 681 and 430 applications in the first and second rounds of application respectively (1 111 applications in total). Out of the number of invitation letters issued in the two rounds (i.e. 1 669 and 1 321 correspondingly), the response rates were 40.8% and 32.6% respectively. Among the 1 111 applications, except the 20 applications withdrawn by the applicants, 98.6% (1 076 applications) met the eligibility criteria, whereas 1.4% (15 applications) were not eligible. Among the applications found ineligible, 7 had household income exceeding the required limit, and the remaining applications were rejected due to reasons such as the applicant did not reach the age of 65, the applicant had not applied for and was not waiting for the “Integrated Home Care Services (Ordinary Cases)” as at the specified date, the applicant was no longer living at home or had already been receiving community care services for the elderly, etc. Please see Appendix I(a) for the statistical figures.

9. Most of the eligible applicants fell within the age group of 80-84, taking up 28.0% (301 persons) of the total number of eligible applicants. The second largest age group was 75-79, taking up about 25.7% (276 persons) of the total number of eligible applicants. Most of them (62.9%, 677 persons) needed household cleaning service only, whereas less than 1% (8 persons) needed escorting service for medical consultations only and 36.3% (391 persons) needed both. Please see Appendices I(b) and I(c) for the statistical figures.

(b) Information from the Approved Service Providers

10. Among the 45 service units under all approved SPs, 77.8% (35 service units) could provide both the household cleaning service and the escorting service for medical consultations, 17.8% (8 service units) provided the escorting service only, and only 4.4% (2 service units) provided just the household cleaning service. For details, please see Appendix I(d).

11. Among the 1 074 beneficiaries assigned to SPs under this programme as of today, most of them (1 023 persons, 95.2%) have been allocated to SPs of their first three choices. A high percentage of beneficiaries (841 persons, 78.3%) have been allocated first choices. For details, please see Appendix I(e).

12. A majority of beneficiaries could be referred to SPs for service within 30 days (745 persons, taking up 69.4% of the total number of cases

assigned to SPs)⁴. However, some cases took a longer time to process because of special circumstances, such as incomplete information submitted for the application, failure to contact the applicant to follow up on the application for the applicant was out of town, etc. For details, please see Appendix I (f).

(c) Survey on beneficiaries

13. SWD has conducted an opinion survey on 56 randomly selected beneficiaries (5.2% of the total) to know more about their family circumstances, daily care, status of waiting for the “Integrated Home Care Services (Ordinary Cases)” and their opinions on the programme.

(i) Family condition and daily care

14. A larger share of the surveyed beneficiaries was singletons, taking up 62.5% (35 persons) of the total number of interviewees. The remaining 37.5% (21 persons) were living with family member(s), among which 95.2% (20 persons) were living with one family member. Among these surveyed beneficiaries, 19 were living with their spouse, taking up 90.5% of the interviewees living with family member(s). There were 52 interviewees being non Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) recipients. Most of them had a monthly household income (including earnings from all the family members) below \$5,000 (29 persons, taking up 55.8% of all the interviewees who were non-CSSA beneficiaries), whereas the remaining interviewees had a monthly household income not exceeding \$10,000 (23 persons, taking up 44.2% of all the interviewees who were non-CSSA recipients). For details, please see Appendix II(a).

15. Most of the interviewees could handle household cleaning (74.6%) and attend medical consultations (87.5%) on their own or with the assistance of their friends and relatives. For details, please see Appendix II(b).

(ii) Status of waiting for “Integrated Home Care Services (Ordinary Cases)”

16. While a majority of the interviewees (73.2%, 41 persons) stated that they were waiting for the household cleaning service under the “Integrated Home Care Services (Ordinary Cases)”, only 7.14% (4 persons)

⁴ The time required for assigning service refers to the number of days it takes from the day on which an application is received until an eligible elder confirms with the service unit allocated, including Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays.

were waiting for the escorting service for medical consultation and 5.4% (3 persons) were waiting for other care services. The remaining interviewees (10 persons, about 17.9%) were not sure what service they were waiting for. Many interviewees stated that they were not sure how long they had been waiting for the “Integrated Home Care Services (Ordinary Cases)” before receiving the subsidised service under this programme (21 persons, 37.5%). Some of them stated that they had been waiting for 2 years or above (18 persons, 32.1%) or less than 1 year (13 persons, 23.2%). For details, please see Appendix II(c).

(iii) Opinions on this programme

17. All the interviewees agreed that this programme could help them maintain household cleanliness and attend medical appointments as scheduled. They were satisfied with the overall arrangement of the programme. Most of them were also satisfied with the services provided by the service units (52 persons, 92.9%). For details, please see Appendix II(d).

(d) Survey on Invitees who have not submitted Applications

18. SWD also conducted a phone survey to 36 randomly selected elders who were invited but had not submitted applications (about 2.8% of the total number of invitees who had not submitted applications⁵) to understand the reasons for not submitting applications and their opinions on this programme.

19. Most of the interviewees stated that they did not submit application because they did not have such a need (20 persons, 55.6%). The second largest reason was that they did not meet the eligibility criteria (11 persons, 30.6%) due to reasons such as having received subvented services, not living in a household, having withdrawn from the waiting list for the “Integrated Home Care Services (Ordinary Cases)”, etc. Some interviewees said that they did not know how to complete the application form (5 persons, 13.9%)⁶. Moreover, most of the interviewees stated that they had no comment on this programme. For others who expressed their

⁵ A total of 2 365 elders were referred to SWD by IHCS teams in the two rounds of application. With 1 111 applications received, the total number of the referred elders who had not submitted applications was 1 254.

⁶ For elders who indicated that they did not know how to complete the application form, interviewers suggested immediately that they could approach their friends and relatives or any nearby service centre for the elderly for assistance in completing the application form if necessary or call the CCF Team for enquiry in case of doubt. Meanwhile, SWD had also informed the relevant IHCS teams of the situation of such elders and asked them for provision of follow-up assistance.

opinions, they (2 persons, 5.6%) agreed that the programme was useful to the beneficiaries. For details, please see Appendices III(a) and III(b).

(e) Survey on Service Providers

20. SWD also conducted a survey on the 26 approved SPs by questionnaire and all the invited SPs have completed the questionnaires. Some SPs expressed opinions such as relaxing the eligibility criteria, raising the subsidy amount, allowing their fee adjustment according to the market situation, strengthening publicity of the programme, etc. Some SPs pointed out that the administrative work required by this programme was comparatively more and had increased the operating cost. Most of the SPs opined that this programme could help beneficiaries maintain household hygiene and attend medical consultations as scheduled, and were satisfied with SWD's preparations and arrangements for SPs participating in this programme, including the arrangement for disbursing the subsidy. Generally speaking, SPs were satisfied with the operational arrangement of this programme and expressed willingness to continue participating in similar programmes. For details, please see Appendix IV.

(f) Survey on IHCS teams

21. SWD has also conducted a survey on the 60 IHCS teams which have assisted in identifying potential eligible elders by questionnaire. There were 28 IHCS teams (surveyed teams) returned the completed questionnaires. Some surveyed teams expressed opinions on this programme such as relaxing the eligibility criteria, extending the subsidised services types, strengthening publicity of this programme, etc. Some surveyed teams stated that it took a considerable time to identify potential eligible elders and consolidate a list for submission to SWD. It was also mentioned by some surveyed teams that more support should be provided to elders in completing application forms. In general, most of the surveyed teams were satisfied with the arrangement of this programme and indicated that they would be willing to continue to assist in similar programmes.

22. To ensure that the application materials of this programme could reach all the target beneficiaries, SWD invited IHCS teams to refer the potential eligible elders on their waiting lists for the "Integrated Home Care Services (Ordinary Cases)" to SWD. The number of elders referred in the two rounds of application was only 1 669 and 1 321 respectively, showing a significant discrepancy with the number of cases waiting for the "Integrated Home Care Services (Ordinary Cases)" (about 4 200 applicants)

as reported by non-governmental organizations rendering integrated home care services. In this regard, IHCS teams' views were collected through this questionnaire. Surveyed teams pointed out that the main reason for this was due to the ineligibility of many applicants on the waiting lists of the "Integrated Home Care Services (Ordinary Cases)", such as not reaching the age of 65, not waiting for the "Integrated Home Care Services (Ordinary Cases)" as at the specified date, household income exceeding the specified ceiling, etc. The second reason was that some applicants had already received subvented community care service or services provided by other agencies, while the third reason went to the change in the waiting status of applicants, such as having withdrawn from the waiting lists for the services or switched to waiting for other services, etc. For details, please see Appendices V(a) and V(b).

(g) Public enquiries

23. In the course of implementing this programme, SWD has set up an enquiry hotline to provide support and information regarding the programme to the public. From November 2011 till present, SWD received about 1 013 enquiries on this programme, the majority of which were concerned about the eligibility criteria, completion of forms and service arrangement, etc. For details, please see Appendix VI.

Conclusion

24. SWD issued letters for inviting applications according to the information provided by IHCS teams in order to ensure that all the potential eligible elders were aware of this programme. The number of applications received in the first and second rounds of application of this programme was 681 and 430 respectively, while the number of eligible applications was 660 (about 96.9% of the number of applicants) and 416 (about 96.7% of the number of applicants) respectively. The total number of applicants for this programme (1 111 persons) was about 37.2% of the number of invited elders (2 990 persons), and most of the beneficiaries needed household cleaning service only.

25. Moreover, this programme has a very high approval rate of applications that 98.6% of the applications processed had been approved. It proves that the publicity work (such as issuing invitation letters to potential eligible elders, introduction by IHCS teams to elders, etc) could help the applicants to understand the contents and details of the programme. Furthermore, experience shows that the assigned SPs of this programme could offer speedy services for eligible elders who did not have to be put on

the waiting list during the course of application. As stated in paragraph 17 above, all the surveyed elders agreed that the programme could help them maintain household cleanliness and attend medical consultations as scheduled, and were satisfied with the overall arrangement of this programme. A vast majority of them were satisfied with the performance of the SPs. Given the above, the subsidised services under this programme have served the intended purpose, and the selection criteria set by SWD were effective in selecting suitable SPs.

26. However, as shown in Appendix I(f), the second round of application took a longer time to assign SPs than in the first round. In the first round, about 26.2% of the beneficiaries could be matched with SPs within 14 days⁷, whereas the percentage dropped to 18% in the second round⁸. This is because five of the service units were not able to accept new cases in the second round due to problems in administrative cost, manpower resources, etc, leading to a drop in the number of SPs available. Although the overall service arrangement has not been affected significantly, the situation should be of concern.

27. On the other hand, some SPs reflected in the opinion survey that the programme involved heavy administrative work and very high costs, and that the original maximum hourly subsidy (\$60) was lower than the fee for similar services in the private market. If SPs set their service fees according to the market price, the charges would be higher than the maximum subsidy and would discourage elders from using the service. If SPs follow the existing maximum hourly subsidy in setting service fees, it might be difficult to employ sufficient manpower to maintain the service. Some surveyed SPs and IHCS teams even indicated that they might not participate in other similar programmes because of insufficient resources. However, the administrative procedures laid down by SWD for this programme, including referring potential eligible elders to SWD by IHCS teams, requiring the beneficiaries to sign for confirmation of service hours received each time, requiring SPs to submit reports to SWD for verification of the amount of subsidies claimed, requiring SPs to conduct service users satisfaction surveys, etc, were deemed pragmatically necessary to ensure the smooth and effective operation of the programme. SWD has already minimised the administrative procedures as far as practicable, such as requiring the applicants to provide only the most basic information for

⁷ The percentage is calculated as follows: $173 \div 660$ (the number of beneficiaries arranged with SPs in the first round) = 26.2%

⁸ The percentage is calculated as follows: $75 \div 416$ (the number of beneficiaries arranged with SPs in the second round) = 18.0%

vetting. Therefore, there is not much room left for further streamlining of the administrative procedures under this programme.

28. Since the programme has proved to be useful to the elderly beneficiaries, SWD had proposed to extend the programme, and the proposal was endorsed by the ex-Steering Committee on CCF. To benefit more elders, the specified date for the elders applying for the “Integrated Home Care Services (Ordinary Cases)” had been changed from 31 March 2012 to 31 October 2012, and the eligible elders could receive subsidised service until 31 March 2014 the latest. Meanwhile, given the significant increase in wages and price accumulated previously, in order to enable this programme to continue with smooth implementation, the maximum hourly subsidy under this programme has been adjusted upward from \$60 to \$70 (that is, the maximum monthly subsidy is increased from \$480 to \$560)⁹.

29. Opinions have been expressed in the opinion surveys of SPs and IHCS teams that the age restriction on the elders should be relaxed for the programme. However, it is shown in the age distribution of beneficiaries provided in Appendix I(b) that most of the beneficiaries were aged 70 to 89 (87.6%) and only a small percentage of beneficiaries (7.2%) were aged 65 to 69. Besides, people who are relatively younger generally have better health and self-care ability, thus a lower service need.

30. There are also suggestions that elders who are not waiting for the “Integrated Home Care Services (Ordinary Cases)” and those who are using such services but have not yet been given the household cleaning service and escorting service for medical consultations should be allowed to apply for the subsidised services under this programme. However, this programme should not replace the existing services. Elders in need of services should apply for the “Integrated Home Care Services (Ordinary Cases)” or discuss with relevant IHCS teams for appropriate service arrangement.

31. It was raised in the opinion survey that consideration could be given to extend the subsidised services type. However, it would result in overlapping with the existing “Integrated Home Care Services (Ordinary Cases)” and other community care services if subsidies were provided to cover too many care services under this programme. This would go against the objectives of CCF.

⁹ The proposal for the adjustment was made taking into account a basket of factors, including the existing operation of the SPs, fees for similar services provided by the market, upward adjustment of wages and inflation.

32. Eligible elders living in the community at present can apply for a series of services under the “Integrated Home Care Services (Ordinary Cases)”, including home care, cleaning and escorting services (including escorting service for medical consultations). Compared with personal care and meal services, home care and escorting services are items of lower priorities. Besides, it was found in the survey that a vast majority of the beneficiaries used the subsidies on home cleaning service (95.6% of the total subsidies claimed¹⁰), whereas only a small percentage was on the escorting service for medical consultations (4.4% of the total subsidies claimed¹¹).

33. The low utilisation of the subsidies under this programme is also a matter of concern. From the data listed in Appendix VII, the monthly subsidy used for each elder was about \$292, which was about 61% of the maximum monthly subsidy of \$480. Although publicity was strengthened through SPs and IHCS teams when the programme was launched, only about 37.2% of the elders invited to apply did join the programme, which was a comparatively low percentage. Most of the invited elders who did not submit applications stated that the reason for not submitting applications was that they did not have such a need. This could possibly be attributed to their self-care ability and family support. Apart from this, the operating and administrative costs of this programme are comparatively high and may cause overlapping in resources with the existing “Integrated Home Care Services (Ordinary Cases)”. Based on the above analysis, this programme needs not be incorporated into a regular service of the Government.

Social Welfare Department
February 2013

¹⁰ The percentage is calculated as follows: \$1,173,418 (subsidies for home cleaning service) ÷ \$1,227,737 (total subsidies claimed) = 95.6%

¹¹ The percentage is calculated as follows: \$54,319 (subsidies for escorting service for medical consultations) ÷ \$1,227,737 (total subsidies claimed) = 4.4%

**Statistical Data on Application and Service Arrangement and
Profile of Approved Service Providers (SPs)**

(a) Reasons for Not Eligible

Reasons	No. of Persons	%
Household income exceeded the respective limit	7	46.67%
Not reaching the age of 65	3	26.67%
Had not applied for and was not waiting for the “Integrated Home Care Services (Ordinary Cases)” on or before the specified date	2	13.33%
Not living at home	1	6.67%
Has been receiving government-subsidized community care services for the elderly	1	6.67%
Total	15	100.00%

(b) Age Distribution of Beneficiaries (Note 1)

Age Group	No. of Persons	%
65 to 69	77	7.15%
70 to 74	210	19.52%
75 to 79	276	25.65%
80 to 84	301	27.97%
85 to 89	156	14.50%
90 to 94	43	4.00%
95 or above	13	1.21%
Total	1 076	100.00%

Note 1: The age of an elder is calculated as at the date of receiving his/her application documents.

(c) Services Chosen by Beneficiaries

Type of Service	No. of Persons	%
Household cleaning service only	677	62.92%
Escorting service for medical consultations only	8	0.74%
Both household cleaning service and escorting service for medical consultations	391	36.34%
Total	1 076	100.00%

(d) **Types of Services Provided by Units under SPs (for First Round of Application)**

Type of Service	No. of Units	%
Household cleaning service only	2	4.44%
Escorting service for medical consultations only	8	17.78%
Both household cleaning service and escorting service for medical consultations	35	77.78%
Total	45	100.00%

(e) **Assignment of Service Units for Beneficiaries**

	No. of Persons	%
Service unit of first choice	841	78.16%
Service unit of second choice	154	14.31%
Service unit of third choice	28	2.60%
Service units out of the first three choices	51	4.74%
Pending for assignment of service unit	2	0.19%
Total	1 076	100.00%

(f) **Time for Assigning Service Units for Beneficiaries**

Time	No. of persons (First round)	No. of persons (Second round)	% (in total)
Within 14 days	173	75	23.05%
From 15 to within 30 days	313	184	46.19%
More than 30 days	174	155	30.57%
Matching in progress	0	2	0.19%
Total	660	416	100.00%

Survey on Beneficiaries**(a) Family Condition of Beneficiaries**

Questions and Comments	No.	%
1. All the family member(s) living with the recipient include: (<u>more than one option can be chosen</u> , Note 1)		
- Parents	1	4.76%
- Siblings	1	4.76%
- Spouse	19	90.48%
- Daughter-in-law and/or son-in-law	1	4.76%
- Household size of beneficiaries (including the beneficiaries)		
- Living alone	35	62.50%
- 2 persons	20	35.71%
- 3 persons	1	1.79%
2. Total income of all the family members living with the beneficiaries:		
- < \$5,000	29	51.79%
- \$5,000 - < \$10,000	23	41.07%
- Receiving Comprehensive Social Security Assistance	4	7.14%

Note 1: The percentage of each option takes the number of elders living with family members, that is, 21, as the base in calculation. As more than one option could be chosen, the total percentage may not be equal to 100%.

(b) Household Cleaning/Attending Medical Consultations before Receiving Subsidy

Questions and Comments	No.	%
1. Which subsidised service(s) under the Community Care Fund (CCF) is/are being received by the beneficiaries?		
- Household cleaning service	48	85.71%
- Escorting service for medical consultations	1	1.79%
- Both of the above	7	12.50%
2. (Only applicable to elders receiving household cleaning service) Before receiving the subsidised service under CCF, how did the beneficiaries clean his/her home? (More than one option can be chosen , Note 1)		
- Cleaned on his/her own	38	69.09%
- Assisted by family members/friends and relatives	14	25.45%
- Cleaned by the domestic helper (including part-time maid)	0	0.00%
- Service provided by other agencies	13	23.64%
- free-of-charge (5)		
- average monthly fee of \$50 or below (7)		
- Unable to provide information on monthly fee (1)		
- Others	1	1.82%
- No household cleaning (1)		

Note 1: The percentage of each option takes the number of elderly persons receiving household cleaning subsidised service under CCF in this survey, that is, 55, as the base in calculation. As more than one option could be chosen, the total percentage may not be equal to 100%.

(b) Household Cleaning/Attending Medical Consultations before Receiving Subsidy (Cont'd)

Questions and Comments	No.	%
3. (Only applicable to elders receiving escorting service for medical consultations) Before receiving the subsidised service under CCF, how did the beneficiaries attend medical consultations? (more than one option can be chosen , Note 2)		
- Attended on his/her own	5	62.50%
- Accompanied by family members/friends and relatives	3	37.50%
- Accompanied by the domestic helper (including part-time maid)	0	0.00%
- Service provided by other agencies	1	12.50%
- Paid only the transportation fees for the escort worker		
- Others	0	0.00%

Note 2: The percentage of each option takes the number of elders receiving escorting service for medical consultations under CCF in this survey, that is, 8, as the base in calculation.

(c) **The Situation of Beneficiaries Waiting for the “Integrated Home Care Services (Ordinary Cases)”**

Questions and Comments	No.	%
1. Service that the beneficiaries are waiting under the “Integrated Home Care Services (Ordinary Cases)”: <u>more than one option can be chosen</u> , Note 1)		
- Household cleaning	41	73.21%
- Escorting service for medical consultations	4	7.14%
- Others	3	5.36%
- Not known/not sure	10	17.86%
2. Waiting time for the “Integrated Home Care Services (Ordinary Cases)” as at the date when the beneficiaries started to receive the subsidised service under CCF:		
- Less than 1 year	13	23.22%
- 1 year or above	4	7.14%
- 2 years or above	18	32.14%
- Not known/not sure	21	37.50%

The percentage of each option takes the total number of respondents, that is, 56, as the base in calculation. As more than one option could be chosen, total percentage may not be equal to 100%.

(d) Satisfaction and Comments of Beneficiaries on the Programme

Questions and Comments	No.	%
1. Do you agree that this assistance programme can help beneficiaries to maintain household hygiene and/or to attend medical consultations as scheduled?		
- Yes	56	100.00%
- No	0	0.00%
2. Are you satisfied with the service provided by the service provider?		
- Very satisfactory	5	8.93%
- Satisfactory	47	83.93%
- No comment	3	5.36%
- Unsatisfactory	1	1.78%
- Very unsatisfactory	0	0.00%
3. In general, are you satisfied with the arrangements under this assistance programme?		
- Yes	56	100.00%
- No	0	0.00%
4. Do you have any comment on this assistance programme?		
- No comment	54	96.43%
- Period of subsidy	2	3.57%
- Extending the subsidising period (2)		

Survey on Invitees who have not submitted Applications**(a) Reasons for not Applying for Subsidy**

Reason	No.	%
No subsidy need	20	55.56%
Not meeting the criteria for eligibility - Has been receiving/will receive subvented services (9) - Not living at home (1) - Has withdrawn from the waiting list for the “Integrated Home Care Services (Ordinary Cases)” (1)	11	30.56%
Others - Does not know how to complete the application form (5) (Note 1)	5	13.88%

Note 1: Interviewers have suggested to the elders that they can approach their friends and relatives or any nearby service centre for the elderly for assistance in completing the application form if necessary or call the CCF Team for enquiry in case of doubt.

(b) Views of Invitees

Views	No. of Persons	%
No comment	34	94.44%
Helpful to beneficiaries	2	5.56%

Survey on Service ProvidersSatisfaction and Comments of Service Providers on the Programme

Questions and Comments	No.	%
1. Do you agree that this assistance programme can help beneficiaries to maintain household hygiene and/or to attend medical consultations as scheduled?		
- Yes	25	96.15%
- Elders can obtain appropriate services as soon as possible without having to wait. (9)		
- The financial burden of beneficiaries can be reduced. They can obtain regular service. (4)		
- Improvement on elders' household hygiene is shown. Escorting service can also ease the burden on the carers. (2)		
- No	1	3.85%
- The subsidy is not sufficient to meet the necessary service need. (1)		
- No comment	0	
2. Is the arrangements and preparations of this programme (including briefing sessions, guideline of service requirement, application form, notification etc.) appropriate for the service providers interested in joining this programme?		
- Yes	23	88.46%
- Clear arrangement, sufficient support and information (8)		
- No	1	3.85%
- Regular consultations should be conducted in reviewing the Programme (1)		
- No comment	2	7.69%

Satisfaction and Comments of Service Providers on the Programme
(Cont'd)

Questions and Comments	No.	%
<p>5. In general, are you satisfied with the arrangements of this assistance programme?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Yes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sufficient support is provided by the Social Welfare Department (3) - Useful to elders in need (1) - The operation is smooth. (1) - No <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Insufficient subsidy. Should be adjusted according to market price. (1) - No comment 	<p style="text-align: center;">24</p> <p style="text-align: center;">1</p> <p style="text-align: center;">1</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">92.30%</p> <p style="text-align: center;">3.85%</p> <p style="text-align: center;">3.85%</p>
<p>6. Are you willing to join similar programmes in the future?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Yes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It helps elders in need. (10) - Will consider the details before making a decision. (2) - Will consider the manpower resource condition at the time before making a decision. (1) - Hope that administrative procedures can be streamlined. (1) - No <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Insufficient human resources to dovetail with the demand. (1) 	<p style="text-align: center;">25</p> <p style="text-align: center;">1</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">96.15%</p> <p style="text-align: center;">3.85%</p>

Survey of Integrated Home Care Service (IHCS) Teams**(a) Satisfaction and Comments of IHCS Teams on the Programme**

Questions and Comments	No.	%
1. In general, are you satisfied with the arrangements of this assistance programme?		
- Yes	18	64.29%
- Staff of the Social Welfare Department are helpful. (1)		
- The programme can help more individuals in need. (3)		
- Simple and convenient. (1)		
- No	8	28.57%
- Insufficient planning and wrongly anticipated the response of the sector. (1)		
- The administrative work is time-consuming, while only a limited number of elders can benefit. (2)		
- A number of elders did not know how to handle their applications. (3)		
- No comment	2	7.14%
2. Are you willing to join and/or continue to provide assistance in implementing similar programmes in the future?		
- Yes	26	92.86%
- It can help elders in need. (12)		
- Subject to the situation. (2)		
- Subject to the availability of sufficient administrative resources support (3)		
- No	1	3.57%
- No comment	1	3.57%

reasons, in order to reflect more accurately the importance of each reason they gave, the first listed reason would be awarded 3 marks, the second 2 marks and the third 1 mark, whereas the others would not be awarded any mark. With a total of 28 IHCS teams taking part in this survey, the highest mark was 84. The marks listed in this table are the total marks obtained by each reason, and the percentage reflects the ratio of the total marks of the items to the highest mark.

Summary of Public Enquiries

**Numbers and Nature of Enquiries for this Assistance Programme
(Note 1)**

Item of Enquiry	Number of Enquiry
Criteria for Eligibility	250
Application Procedure	43
Completion of Application Form	180
Supporting Documents for Application	81
Submission of Application Form	105
Progress of Application	46
Arrangement of Services	228
Others	80
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enquiries from the service providers about the operation of this programme (20) - Update of Information (10) - Content of notification letters for application result (30) - Enquiries on whether the subsidised service will be extended (20) 	

Note 1: If an enquiry involved more than one subject nature, each subject would be categorised and summarised in this table.

found. SWD, however, mailed the relevant documents to them again to facilitate their submission of applications. Among the 36 interviewees, 25 of them offered no comments on the programme. Other interviewees suggested relaxing the income limit and expressed that this programme had a positive impact to the beneficiaries. The relevant data is at Appendix III.

(d) Public Enquiries

13. In the course of implementing this programme, SWD has set up an enquiry hotline to provide support and information regarding the programme to the concerned public. From November 2011 till present, SWD received about 1 200 enquiries on the programme, the majority of which are concerned about eligibility criteria, completion of application forms, application progress and arrangement for release of subsidy. The details are at Appendix IV

Conclusion

14. From the result of the survey, all the beneficiaries agreed that they could be benefited from this programme. The survey also revealed that most of the beneficiaries were living with their family members. As the main carers of some beneficiaries were their family members / relatives / friends, these carers might not be able to earn a living and this programme could provide certain financial support to them. Besides, the beneficiaries mainly used the subsidy for medical consultation, drugs and family daily expenses which showed that the special care subsidy of this programme had achieved its purpose.

15. SWD issued invitation letters to all HDA recipients through the CSSS for ensuring that all the eligible persons could be informed of this programme and be invited for submitting applications. As mentioned in paragraph 7 and 12 above, about 42.1% of HDA recipients submitted applications, among which 12.1% were ineligible and majority was due to failing the income test. The other invitees did not submit the applications because they did not fulfill the eligibility criteria nor had need for subsidy.

16. The set up of enquiry hotline had effectively provided immediate and necessary support to the applicants in the course of application process. Given that a significant number of enquiries were concerned about the application progress and arrangement for release of subsidy, certain arrangements such as to inform the applicants through the programme briefs and CCF website about the

expected processing time for the applications and release of subsidy may be considered in order to better address their concerns.

17. The beneficiaries mainly used the subsidy for medical consultation, drugs and daily household expenses, which showed that these aspects were their common needs. At present, severely disabled persons can apply for medical fee waiver through existing mechanism if they cannot afford the charge for public medical services due to financial difficulty. They can also apply for financial assistance from Samaritan Fund for medical items or drugs which have to be purchased by their own resources. Furthermore, the severely disabled persons who are not from low income family⁴ could apply for HDA under the SSA Scheme and receive the monthly allowance without means-tested to meet their special need due to the disability. The amount of HDA will adjust annually with reference to the inflation rate reflected by the Social Security Assistance Index of Prices (SSAIP). These measures provide a long-term protection to the severely disabled persons on their basic needs for medical consultation, drugs and family daily expenses.

18. The income limit set for the first round of applications for this programme was based on 75% of the Median Monthly Domestic Household Income (MMDHI) from the Report on General Household Survey published by Census and Statistics Department. The family members living with the applicant, however, shall mean father, mother, son, daughter, husband and wife who are living together with the applicant in Hong Kong (including legally recognised adoptive parents / children and illegitimate children with proof of parentage). These criteria are basically in line with several other CCF assistance programmes, but considering the heavier financial burden for the severely disabled persons than the others, the eligibility criteria may have room to relax.

19. Taking into account the result of the above surveys and the views from various stakeholders, SWD had proposed extending this programme till the end of 2013 and the proposal was endorsed by ex-Steering Committee on the CCF. To allow more severely disabled persons to be benefited, the income limit set for the extended programme was based on 100% of MMDHI from the Report on General Household Survey published by Census and Statistics Department, and the definition of “family members living with the applicant” was also relaxed to cover siblings aged below 18, or aged 18 – 25 receiving

⁴ Severely disabled with financial difficulties could apply for Comprehensive Social Security Allowance to meet their basic needs.

full-time education or disabled adult siblings, who were living with the applicant.

20. Furthermore, SWD has continuously enhanced and improved the subvented services for the severely disabled persons, such as providing training services to enhance living and caring skills through the District Support Centres, day care services through the service providers concerned and home care services through the Integrated Home Care Services Teams. Moreover, considering that persons with severe physical disabilities and their family members / carers may have stronger need for support, SWD and Hospital Authority are devising a pilot scheme operated in case management model to provide integrated support services to the persons with severe physical disabilities living in the community who are not recipients of Comprehensive Social Security Allowance (CSSA) and need constant attendance, so as to relieve their burden arisen from medical equipment, e.g. respiratory support medical equipment and related rehabilitation equipment etc., consumables and routine care, and allow them to stay in the community. While the feasibility and details of the pilot scheme are still under study, SWD proposed to launch a new assistance programme to provide subsidy for the persons with severe physical disabilities from families with financial difficulties, who are not receiving CSSA and living in the community. Eligible persons with annual household disposable financial resources⁵ of \$100,000 or below will be granted a monthly payment of \$2,500, while a monthly payment of \$2,000 will be granted to those with annual household disposable financial resources of over \$100,000 but not more than \$180,000, so as to meet their need for renting necessary respiratory support medical equipment. Each eligible applicant can receive subsidy for a maximum of 12 months. The proposal was endorsed by ex-Steering Committee on the CCF and was launched at the end of January 2013.

21. The above-mentioned services have already covered the needs of the severely disabled persons in various aspects. If the pilot scheme for integrated support services is launched, the need of persons with severe physical disabilities shall also be fully addressed. Considering all these factors, this programme therefore needs not be incorporated into the regular assistance and service of the Government. Though the subsidy released by this programme was time-limited, it brought extra support to the beneficiaries and their families

⁵ The annual household disposable financial resources, with reference to the assessment criteria of Samaritan Fund for drug cost assistance, is calculated by summing up the annual household disposal income (i.e. annual household gross income less household allowable deductions) and household disposable capital (i.e. household disposable capital less deductible allowance); the amount of deductible allowance is set with reference to the asset limit for applying public housing.

and allowed them more flexibility to use their resources.

22. As the beneficiaries were generally satisfied with the operation of this programme and taking into consideration the relatively small changes and impact for its extension, CCF decided to extend implementation of the programme under the existing operational arrangement.

Social Welfare Department
February 2013

Statistical Data on Application**(a) Reasons for Not Eligible**

Reasons (Note 1)	Number of Cases	%
Household income exceeded the respective limit (Note 2)	185	93.4%
Applicant was not HDA recipient	1	0.5%
Applicant was not living in the community	2	1.0%
Applicant was aged 60 or above	1	0.5%
Others	9	4.6%
- Application withdrawn by the applicant (8)		
- Applicant could not provide the necessary document (1)		
Total	198	100.0%

Note 1: If an applicant has submitted applications in the two application periods and both of the applications were vetted not eligible, the applications are counted two times in the above table.

Note 2: The income limit was set and adjusted according to 75% of the latest MMDHI from the Report on General Household Survey published by Census and Statistics Department.

(b) Age Distribution of Beneficiaries

Age Group	Number of Beneficiaries	%
0 to 10	108	7.5%
11 to 20	214	14.9%
21 to 30	235	16.4%
31 to 40	172	12.0%
41 to 50	225	15.7%
51 to 59	482	33.5%
Total	1 436	100.0%

Survey on Beneficiaries(a) Family Condition of the Beneficiaries

Questions and Comments	No.	%
1. Number of family members living with the beneficiaries:		
- Living alone	9	12.3%
- Living with 1 to 3 family members	54	74.0%
- Living with 4 or more family members	10	13.7%
- Family members living with the beneficiaries who were not included in the definition of this programme ¹ (more than one option can be chosen , Note 1):		
- Grandparents	2	3.1%
- Adult siblings	15	23.4%
- Non-adult siblings	11	17.2%
- Nephew and/or niece	1	1.6%
2. Total monthly income of the beneficiaries and their family members living with them:		
- < \$5,000	28	38.3%
- \$5,000 - < \$10,000	21	28.8%
- \$10,000 - < \$15,000	17	23.3%
- \$15,000 - < \$20,000	4	5.5%
- \$20,000 - < \$25,000	3	4.1%

Note 1: The percentage in this part was calculated based on the 64 beneficiaries living with family members in this survey. As more than one option can be chosen and the options only include the family members living with the beneficiaries who are out of the definition in this programme, the percentage in total for all options may not be equal to 100%.

¹ Family members in this programme refer to father, mother, son, daughter, husband and wife who are living together with the applicant in Hong Kong (including legally recognised adoptive parents/children and illegitimate children with proof of parentage).

(b) Use of Subsidy and Daily Caring Needs of Beneficiaries

Questions and Comments	No.	%
1. How did the beneficiaries use the subsidy? (More than one option can be chosen, Note 1)		
- Family daily expenses	47	64.4%
- Medical consultation	52	71.2%
- Drugs	37	50.7%
- Nutrition food	25	34.2%
- Medical consumables	21	28.8%
- Medical equipment	19	26.0%
- Caring services	11	15.1%
- Hiring carer	10	13.7%
- Others (e.g. residential fee, training fee, transportation fee)	6	8.2%
2. Do the beneficiaries need others to take care of their daily life?		
- Yes	56	76.7%
- No	17	23.3%
3. If it is 'Yes' in Question 2, who is the main carer?		
- Family members / close friends living together	43	76.8%
- Family members / close friends not living together	1	1.8%
- Non-local domestic helper	11	19.6%
- Community Care Services not subsidised by the Government	1	1.8%

Note 1: The percentage of this part was calculated based on all the 73 interviewees. As more than one option could be chosen, the percentage in total for all options may not be equal to 100%.

(c) Comments of Beneficiaries on this Programme

Questions and Comments	No.	%
1. Do you agree that this programme could render necessary support to the beneficiaries?		
- Agree	73	100.0%
- Disagree	0	0.0%
2. Do you have any comments on this programme (More than one option can be chosen, Note 1)		
- No Comment	40	54.8%
- Targeted beneficiaries and Eligibility Criteria	2	2.7%
- Should include the carer (1)		
- Should include the elders aged 60 to 65 (1)		
- Amount of Subsidy	8	11.0%
- Very helpful (1)		
- Amount too low (7)		
- Application Procedures	2	2.7%
- Application was handled efficiently (1)		
- Procedures were quite complicated (1)		
- Arrangement for Release of Subsidy	1	1.4%
- Others	21	28.8%
- Should extend the subsidising period and continuing the programme(20)		
- Very helpful to the severely disabled persons (1)		
3. In general, are you satisfied with the arrangement of this programme?		
- Yes	73	100.0%
- No	0	0.0%

Note 1: The percentage of this part was calculated based on all the 73 interviewees. As more than one option could be chosen, the percentage in total for all options may not be equal to 100%.

Survey on Invitees who have not submitted Applications**(a) Reasons for Not Applying for the Subsidy**

Reasons	No.	%
Not meeting the eligibility criteria - Household income exceeded respective limit (19) - Not living in the community (1)	20	55.6%
No subsidy need	14	38.9%
Invitation letter not received or uncertain of receiving the invitation letter (Note 1)	2	5.5%
Total	36	100.0%

Note 1: For interviewees claimed that they had not received the invitation letters or could not ascertain whether they had received the invitation letters, their correspondence addresses were verified correct and there was no non-delivery mail found. However, for their benefits, invitation letters were sent to these invitees again.

(b) Views of Invitees on this Programme

Views	No.	%
No comment	25	69.5%
Relaxing the income limit	8	22.2%
Helpful to the severely disabled persons	3	8.3%

Number and Natures of Enquiries for this Programme (Note 1)

Nature of Enquiry	Number
Eligibility Criteria	240
Application Procedure	17
Completion of Application Form	210
Supporting Documents for Application	39
Submission and Receipt of Application	148
Progress of Application	304
Arrangement for Release of Subsidy	259
Confirmation of Receipt of Subsidy	51
Others	55
- Update of information	(45)
- About the content of notification letter for the application result	(6)
- Whether or not a new round of assistance will be provided	(4)

Note 1: If an enquiry involved more than one subject nature, each subject would be categorised and summarised in this table.

Assistance Programme under Community Care Fund Evaluation Report on Subsidy for Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Recipients Living in Rented Private Housing

Background

Community Care Fund (CCF) has been established since early 2011 to provide assistance to people facing economic difficulties, in particular those who fall outside the social safety net or those within the safety net but have special circumstances that are not covered. In addition, the CCF can take forward measures on a pilot basis to help the Government identify those that could be considered for incorporation into the Government's regular assistance and service programmes.

2. Ex-Steering Committee on the CCF endorsed at its meeting on 20 April 2011 to launch this assistance programme in 2011-12 with a view to providing a one-off subsidy to Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) households living in rented private housing and paying a monthly rent which exceeds the maximum rent allowance (MRA) under the CSSA Scheme as at 1 July 2011, so as to relieve their financial burden as a result of the periodic increase of rent.

3. The programme, with budget of \$36.12 million (including administrative cost of \$1.61 million), is administered by the Social Welfare Department (SWD) and estimated to benefit about 23 000 households¹.

Implementation of Assistance Programme

4. SWD announced the details of the programme and arranged publicity² in October 2011, and identified eligible CSSA households based on the information from the Computerised Social Security System (CSSS). Eligible one-person and two-or-more-person CSSA households were subsequently provided with a one-off subsidy of \$1,000 and \$2,000 respectively. A total subsidy of about \$32.08 million has been released so far.

¹ Including about 13 500 one-person households and about 9 500 two-or-more-person households.

² Besides distributing the programme leaflets via District Social Welfare Offices and the Home Affairs Department, SWD has uploaded all relevant information onto SWD website.

Result of Analysis

5. SWD has analysed the collected information and data for the evaluation as follows.

(a) Statistical Data on Beneficiaries

6. Based on the record from CSSS, SWD had primarily identified a total of 22 614 CSSA households meeting the eligibility criteria at the specified date of 1 July 2011³, among which 22 605 households whose eligibility were verified had been granted the subsidy, while 9 households had left the CSSA net after 1 July 2011. After further follow-up, two of the households declined the subsidy as they required no assistance, and the remaining seven households had not been provided with the subsidy as all of their contact information had been changed and thus could not be contacted for eligibility verification. The majority of beneficiaries were one-person households, which amounted to 13 125 households (at approximately 58.1%), followed by 4 822 two-person households (at approximately 21.3%). Eligible one-person CSSA households have been provided with a total of about \$13.12 million, and two-or-more-person CSSA households have been provided with a total of about \$18.96 million under the programme, totalling about \$32.08 million. Please refer to Appendix I for relevant statistics.

(b) Survey on Beneficiaries

7. SWD conducted an opinion survey on the programme among 200 randomly-selected CSSA household beneficiaries (about 1% of the overall household beneficiaries). 198 survey respondents agreed that the programme could relieve their burden on housing expenses, and 199 respondents were satisfied with the operational arrangements. Besides, the respondents mainly used the subsidy to meet their daily expenses (87%), followed by rental expenses (21%). Please refer to Appendix II(a) and II(b) for relevant information.

(c) Public Enquiries

8. Along with the implementation of the programme, SWD had set up a telephone hotline to provide support and information to individuals concerned. Since November 2011, SWD has received a total

³ CSSA household beneficiaries should be tenants of private housing and the monthly rent payable exceeds the MRA under the CSSA Scheme as at 1 July 2011.

of about 560 enquiries regarding the programme, most of which were about eligibility criteria and payment arrangements. Please refer to Appendix III for details.

Conclusion

9. Based on the data collected from the survey, the respondents in general agree that the programme is effective in relieving their burden on housing expenses to a certain extent. In fact, they mainly use the subsidy to meet their daily and rental expenses. The programme has thus met its objective, and is in line with one of the objectives of CCF, which is to provide assistance to those within the social safety net but who have special circumstances that are not covered.

10. The MRA under the CSSA Scheme is adjusted annually in accordance with the movement of rent index for private housing under the Consumer Price Index (A). Based on the index, compiled by the Census and Statistics Department on a monthly basis and used to measure the rental movements of private housing among non-CSSA households with relatively low expenditure, the MRA for CSSA households is adjusted for them to meet their rental expenses. The programme should be able to provide a buffer against the periodic increase of rent, relieving the financial pressure faced by the beneficiaries prior to the MRA adjustment.

11. Since the implementation of this programme in 2011, the MRA had been increased by 5.7% under the existing mechanism in February 2012, and further increased by 7.8% in February 2013, further relieving the rental pressure of CSSA recipients living in private housing.

12. In addition, individuals who have pressing housing needs due to financial hardships or various reasons may approach Integrated Family Service Centres of SWD or non-governmental organisations for assistance. Social workers would provide them with appropriate services in light of the circumstances of individual cases, including short-term financial assistance to meet rental and removal expenses, arrangement for admission to urban hostels for single persons, and recommendation for allocation of public rental housing flats under the Compassionate Rehousing (CR) Scheme. For CSSA households living in private housing and on the waiting list either for CR or admission to a subsidised residential care home for the elderly, the Director of Social Welfare may also exercise discretion to approve a rent allowance higher than the applicable MRA (up to two times of the MRA) to cover the actual rent paid. In 2010 and 2011, there were 200 and 283 CSSA cases

respectively having benefited under such an arrangement.

13. In conclusion, the above measures have achieved their objectives, being able to provide a buffer for relieving the rental pressure faced by the beneficiaries prior to the adjustment of CSSA rent allowance. The rent allowance has also been increased twice by a total of about 14% in accordance with the existing mechanism. SWD will continue to monitor the movement of rent index and adjust the MRA in accordance with the existing mechanism.

Social Welfare Department
February 2013

Number of Household Beneficiaries and Amount of Subsidy Granted

Number of household members	Number of households	Percentage of the total number	Amount of subsidy for each household	Total amount
1 person	13 125	58.06%	\$1,000	\$13,125,000
2 persons	4 822	21.33%	\$2,000	\$9,644,000
3 persons	2 830	12.52%	\$2,000	\$5,660,000
4 persons	1 211	5.36%	\$2,000	\$2,422,000
5 persons	418	1.85%	\$2,000	\$836,000
6 persons or above	199	0.88%	\$2,000	\$398,000
Total	22 605	100.00%	-	\$32,085,000

Survey of Beneficiaries**(a) Respondents' satisfaction and opinions on the programme**

Survey item and opinion	Number of respondents	Percentage
1. Do you agree that this programme has relieved the burden of housing expenses on you/the beneficiary(s)?		
- Agree	198	99.00%
- Disagree	2	1.00%
2. On the whole, are you satisfied with the arrangement of the programme?		
- Yes	199	99.50%
- No	1	0.50%
3. Do you have any views on the programme? (<u>may choose more than one item</u> ; Note 1)		
- No opinion	166	83.00%
- Amount of subsidy	15	7.50%
- increase the amount of subsidy (15)		
- Publicity and release of information	9	4.50%
- notification prior to the payment (9)		
- Others	14	7.00%
- hope that the subsidy may continue (12)		
- the subsidy is helpful to the beneficiaries (2)		

Note 1: The percentage of various choices shown in the above table has been calculated based on the overall number of respondents (i.e. 200). As some respondents have given more than one answer, the total of percentage does not add up to 100%.

(b) Beneficiaries' use of subsidy

Survey item and opinion	Number of respondents	Percentage
1. How is the subsidy being used? (<u>may choose more than one item</u> ; Note 1)		
- Daily expenses	174	87.00%
- Rental expenses	42	21.00%
- Others	0	0.00%

Note 1: The percentage of various choices shown in the above table has been calculated based on the overall number of respondents (i.e. 200). As some respondents have given more than one answer, the total of percentage does not add up to 100%.

Number and Nature of Enquiries on the Programme (Note 1)

Nature of enquiries	Number of cases
Eligibility criteria	272
Application procedures	50
Payment arrangement	222
Acknowledgement of subsidy received	50
Others	13
- information update (8)	
- whether there would be a new round of assistance (3)	
- enquiries on the programme operation from other departments (2)	

Note 1: For a single enquiry involving multiple questions, each question would be categorised and calculated.

Assistance Programme under Community Care Fund Evaluation Report on Training Subsidy for Children who are on the Waiting List of Subvented Pre-school Rehabilitation Services

Background

Community Care Fund (CCF) has been established since early 2011 to provide assistance to people facing economic difficulties, in particular those who fall outside the social safety net or those within the safety net but have special circumstances that are not covered. In addition, the CCF can take forward measures on a pilot basis to help the Government identify those that can be considered for incorporation into the Government's regular assistance and service programmes.

2. Steering Committee on the CCF endorsed at its meeting on 20 April 2011 to launch this assistance programme in 2011-12 for subsidising children from low-income families who have been on the waiting list of subvented pre-school rehabilitation services on or before 30 November 2011 to receive appropriate training / therapy services provided by special child care workers, psychologists or occupational therapists / physiotherapists / speech therapists, so as to facilitate their learning and development while they are waiting for subvented services. Each eligible child can receive subsidised services of not exceeding \$2,500 per month for a maximum period of 12 months.

3. This programme, with budget of \$128.82 million (including the administrative cost of \$2.82 million), is administered by the Social Welfare Department (SWD) and estimated to benefit 4 200 children.

Implementation of Assistance Programme

4. SWD organised a briefing session in October 2011 for the service providers (SPs) interested in providing training services for the programme, and to invite them to apply for joining this programme as authorised SPs. SP approved for providing training services in this programme must be an organisation or a body exempted from tax under Inland Revenue Ordinance Cap. 112 Section 88 with at least one-year experience in providing government subvented¹ or self-financing pre-school rehabilitation services. Upon vetting,

¹ Government subvented pre-school rehabilitation services shall mean Early Education and Training Centres, Integrated Programmes in Kindergarten-cum-Child Care Centres and Special Child Care Centres, which provide services for children with special needs from birth to six years old.

18 eligible SPs were approved by SWD in December and the service boundaries covered all over Hong Kong.

5. SWD announced the details of this programme and arranged publicity² in December 2011. At the same time, based on the information from Central Referral System for Rehabilitation Services - Subsystem for Disabled Pre-Schoolers (CRSRehab-PS), SWD also sent invitation letters³ to about 4 700 parents / guardians of the eligible children for inviting them to submit the application on or before 29 February 2012.

6. The CCF Team of SWD was responsible for vetting the applications and arranging the eligible children to receive training from the approved SPs, based on their choices in the applications. The subsidy will not be released to the parents / guardians directly and the approved SPs have to apply for release of subsidy from SWD according to the actual sessions of subsidised services provided for each child. As at the end of August 2012, SWD received 983 applications and 870 eligible children have been arranged to receive services. The subsidy claimed by the approved SPs was about \$7.94 million.⁴

Result of Analysis

7. Taking into account the recommendations of the independent consultant, SWD has analysed the collected information and data for the evaluation as follows.

(a) Statistical Data on Application and Service Arrangement

8. SWD received a total of 983 applications among 4 694 invitation letters issued (Please refer to paragraph 15 to 16 for the reason for the discrepancy between the number of invitees and the number applications). Excluding 17 withdrawn applications and 5 applications pending processing⁵, there were 90.6% eligible applications (871 cases, 20.5% of invitees) and 9.4% ineligible applications (90 cases) among the 961 applications vetted. All the ineligible applications were due to exceeding the required family income limit. Relevant statistics are at Appendix I(a).

² Besides distributing the programme leaflets via District Social Welfare Offices and the Home Affairs Department, SWD has also uploaded all relevant information onto SWD website.

³ Letters were sent to the parents / guardians of all children who are on the waiting list of subvented pre-school rehabilitation services as at 30 November 2011, as SWD had no available data on their household income.

⁴ This is the amount of subsidy claimed by the SPs for January to June of 2012.

⁵ Some applications were pending for the applicants to provide relevant supporting documents for verifying the eligibility of their children.

9. Among the eligible children, majority was aged 3, account for 36.8% (321 cases) and aged 4 which account for 25.3% (221 cases). For disability types, the beneficiaries mostly suffered from delayed development, account for 55.2% (481 cases) with the rest including speech impairment, autism and attention deficit / hyperactivity disorder. Relevant statistics are at Appendices I(b) and I(c).

(b) Information from the Approved Service Providers

10. All the SPs approved by SWD for providing training in this programme shall be the organisations or bodies exempted from tax under Inland Revenue Ordinance Cap. 112 Section 88 with at least one-year experience in providing government subvented or self-financing pre-school rehabilitation services. The subsidised services provided by these approved SPs include training / therapy rendered by special child care workers, psychologists or occupational therapists / physiotherapists / speech therapists. The types of services provided by the approved SPs varied, except family support services which are mandatory. In general, majority of the SPs could provide training / therapy rendered by special child care workers, occupational therapists and / or speech therapists. Please refer to Appendix I(d) for details.

11. Majority of the eligible children (about 87.3%) could be assigned with services provided by the first three SPs chosen in their application. Among them, 63.1% were assigned with their first choice. Relevant information is at Appendix I(e).

12. Majority of the eligible children (713 cases, about 83.1%) could be referred to the SPs for training services within 30 days.⁶ Some of the cases, needed longer processing time due to special circumstances such as incomplete or insufficient information / document provided by the applicants or parents / guardians preferred waiting for the SPs chosen which had no training places left and declined to receive training from other SPs or in other location. The relevant details are at Appendix I(f).

(c) Survey on Beneficiaries

13. SWD has conducted an opinion survey on the parents / guardians of the 50 randomly selected beneficiaries (5.8% of the total). Except one

⁶ This means the number of days, including Saturday, Sunday and Public Holiday, counting from the date of receipt of application to the date of confirming the assignment of SPs by the parent / guardians.

interviewee who had no comment, all the other interviewees agreed that this assistance programme was beneficial to the learning and development of the beneficiaries and all the interviewees were satisfied with the arrangement of the programme. Most of the interviewees also satisfied with the services arranged by the SPs. The views given by some interviewees include relaxing the eligibility requirements, increasing the number of training sessions, and regularising the programme. Details are at [Appendix II\(a\)](#).

14. This survey also studied the training services received by the beneficiaries from other organisations before and after the grant of subsidy. Details are listed at [Appendix II\(b\)](#). There were about 46% of the beneficiaries (23 cases) received training services from other organizations before the grant of subsidy, majority of them spent less than \$500 per month. After the grant of subsidy, however, the number of cases which were still receiving the related training services dropped to 28% (14 cases) while the relevant expenses had no significant change.

(d) [Survey on Invitees](#)

15. As there was a discrepancy between the number of application (983 cases) and the number of invitees (4 694 cases), SWD also conducted an opinion survey to 40 randomly selected invitees, who had not submitted applications (about 1% of the invitees), to explore their reasons of not submitting application and their comments on the assistance programme.

16. Most of the interviewees did not submit the applications as they could not meet the eligibility requirements (35 cases, 87.5%), and these interviewees mostly have family income exceeding the income limit. Most of the interviewees offered no comments on the programme. Other views include relaxing the income limit and increasing the amount of subsidy, etc. The relevant data is listed at [Appendices III\(a\)](#) and [III\(b\)](#).

(e) [Survey on Service Providers](#)

17. SWD also conducted a survey on the 18 approved SPs by questionnaires and 17 of them completed the questionnaires.⁷ All the 17 SPs agreed that the programme could help the learning and development of the beneficiaries and were satisfied with the arrangement and assistance of SWD. Some SPs have made suggestions such as relaxing the eligibility requirements including extending the specified date of the children being on the waiting list of

⁷ The SP without completing the questionnaire has not been chosen by any beneficiaries in this programme.

subvented rehabilitation services, extending the subsidised period, strengthening publicity of the programme and regularising the programme etc. to benefit more children. In general, the SPs were satisfied with the arrangement of this programme and indicated their willingness to join similar programme. Details of the survey are at [Appendix IV](#).

(f) Public Enquiries

18. In the course of implementing this programme, SWD has set up an enquiry hotline to provide support and information regarding the programme to the public. From November 2011 to August 2012, SWD received 616 enquiries on the programme, the majority of which concerned application procedures, completion of application forms and eligibility criteria. The details are at [Appendix V](#).

Conclusion

19. As reflected from the findings, the interviewees and the SPs were generally satisfied with the effectiveness of the assistance programme. From the result of survey in Appendix II(b), the beneficiaries could receive appropriate rehabilitation services through the programme and subsequently received less training services from other organisation after the grant of subsidy. This demonstrated that the subsidised services had already satisfied or supplemented their training needs. The result also suggested that the purpose of the programme has been achieved through effectively helping the children to receive timely training and relieve their families' financial burden. It has also fulfilled the objective of CCF which is to provide assistance to people facing economic difficulties, in particular those who fall outside the social safety net.

20. It is a crucial learning and development stage for the children aged below 6, especially those preschoolers with special needs. Timely arrangement of training for children with special needs would be definitely beneficial to their learning and development. Owing to the increase of public understanding on the special needs of children and enhancement of assessment services in recent years, there was an increasing trend for the number of children diagnosed with special needs which also induced a significant increase in new applications for pre-school rehabilitation services. The increasing service quota, however, could not sufficiently meet the growth of service demand. The programme has effectively filled the service gap of waiting for the subvented services and enabled the disabled children of low income families to timely receive necessary services earlier, which enabled them to enjoy a higher chance of admitting to

normal school and participating in daily activities. We consider that the programme is in line with the development direction of rehabilitation services policy under Hong Kong Rehabilitation Programme Plan and suggest incorporating it into the regular service programmes.

21. The experience and mode of services of this programme are worth to be considered in planning the regularisation, i.e. inviting non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to provide subsidised pre-school training services (extending the invitation to private service sector could also be considered under feasible condition). The beneficiaries are therefore allowed to choose the SPs to procure the services according to their needs while they are waiting for the subvented services. Besides, with reference to the result of the evaluation, the Government should also consider the factors that would affect the service quality when determining the details of service arrangement, such as the different service needs of beneficiaries with different types of disability, availability of trained professionals or services in the market to absorb the demand, the distribution of training places in individual district, the choice and needs of families for the services, etc.

22. Bearing in mind that this assistance programme only provides subsidised services for low-income families, which is about 19% of the total number of children being on the waiting list of subvented pre-school rehabilitation services, and there are still a small number of cases waiting for assignment of SPs. In planning the regularization of the programme, a thorough study to explore the availability of NGOs from both subvented and private sector to cope with the service demand is necessary for effective allocation of resources and services for serving the most needy children.

23. Since the regularisation of the programme have far-reaching implication on the future development and operational mode of pre-school rehabilitation services, it is necessary to conduct a comprehensive and in-depth study on its feasibility and consult relevant stakeholders including parents groups, NGOs providing rehabilitation services, healthcare professionals, etc. to ascertain meeting the needs of the service users before a concrete timeline for the regularization can be made.

24. Having regard to the time required for the above-mentioned preparatory work, it is anticipated that a concrete proposal for regularising the pre-school programme concerned may only be available in early 2013 the earliest. Before the regularization can be actualised, extension of the assistance programme is proposed so as to enable the children in need to receive timely and

necessary training. Based on the result of the evaluation, the parents / guardians and the SPs were satisfied with the arrangement of the programme and the followings could be considered in the arrangement for extension of the programme:

- (a) The average waiting time for the subvented services ranged from 12 months to 17 months in 2011-12. Though a portion of the beneficiaries will start receiving the subvented pre-school rehabilitation service and ceased using the subsidized service under CCF, it is expected that some children may still need to wait for the subvented services after the end of subsidising period. As the programme is planned to be regularised in first half of 2014, the subsidised period may be considered to be extended to 31 March 2014 so that the existing beneficiaries can continue to receive the subsidised training before admitting to the subvented pre-school services or primary education;
- (b) Besides admission to subvented pre-school rehabilitation services, some existing beneficiaries will be admitted to primary education and thus more training places will be released by then. Another round of application may be considered by extending the specified date (e.g. 31 August 2012) for children being on the waiting list so as to benefit more children in need; and
- (c) There was suggestion on relaxing the income limit (i.e. 75% of Median Monthly Domestic Household Income (MMDHI), excluding assets). Though this could allow more children to benefit, the additional service demand may not be absorbed readily by the SPs in view of the limited number of training places and trained professionals provided by existing SPs. The affordability of the SPs to absorb the service demand has to be thoroughly assessed, or the time on service assignment will be prolonged and another waiting list for subsidised services be created. This certainly violates the objective of the programme.

25. To conclude, in view of its effectiveness, regularisation of this programme is recommended. While it is necessary to take time to consult relevant stakeholders and undertake comprehensive study on the regularised programme to better addressing the needs of the service users and optimizing the

use of resources, CCF can consider extension of the assistance programme in the interim to allow the children in need receive appropriate training timely.

Social Welfare Department
October 2012

Statistical Data on Application and Services Arrangement and
Profile of Service Providers

(a) Average Household Income of Ineligible Applicants

Household Size	75% MMDHI (Note 1)	Number of Applications	Average Monthly Household Income	Income Exceeded in %
2 persons	\$11,250	5	\$14,327.80	27.36%
3 persons	\$15,450	42	\$20,610.86	33.40%
4 persons	\$20,025	40	\$24,769.00	23.69%
5 persons	\$25,875	2	\$32,590.50	25.95%
6 persons	\$29,325	1	\$70,000.00	138.70%

Note 1: According to the Report on General Household Survey for Third Quarter 2011 published by Census & Statistics Department.

(b) Age Distribution of Beneficiaries (Note 2)

Age	Number of Beneficiaries	%
Below 1 year old	14	1.62%
1 year old	62	7.16%
2 years old	165	19.05%
3 years old	321	36.72%
4 years old	221	25.29%
5 years old or above	88	10.16%

Note 2: The categorisation here is based on the age of beneficiaries as at the date of receipt of the application.

(c) Disability Types of the Beneficiaries

Disability Types	Number of Beneficiaries	%
Physically Handicapped	11	1.27%
Mentally Handicapped	26	3.00%
Visually Impaired	13	1.50%
Hearing Impairment	19	2.08%
Delayed Development	481	55.31%
Autism	277	31.87%
Speech Impairment	433	49.54%
Attention Deficit / Hyperactivity Disorder	209	23.90%
Specific Learning Difficulties (including Dyslexia)	81	9.35%
Others	84	9.70%

(d) Types of Service offered by the Service Providers

Types of Service	No. of Service Units	%
Occupational Therapy	54	72.00%
Physiotherapy	34	45.33%
Speech Therapy	53	70.67%
Psychological Service	12	16.00%
Special Child Care Worker's Service	68	90.67%
Family Support Service	75	100.00%

(e) Assignment of Service Units for the Beneficiaries

	Number of Beneficiaries	%
Service unit of first choice	541	63.05%
Service unit of second choice	129	15.04%
Service unit of third choice	79	9.21%
Service unit out of the three choices	109	12.70%
Pending for assignment of service unit	3	
Application withdrawn before assignment of services	10	

(f) Time for Assigning Service Providers for the Beneficiaries

Time	Number of Beneficiaries	%
14 days or below	417	48.60%
15 days to 30 days	296	34.50%
More than 30 days	145	16.90%
Pending for assigning service unit	3	
Application withdrawn before assignment	10	

Survey on Beneficiaries**(a) Satisfaction and Comments of the Interviewees on this Assistance Programme**

Questions and Comments	No.	%
1. Do you agree that this programme could benefit the learning and development of the beneficiary?		
- Agree	49	98.00%
- Disagree	0	0.00%
- No comment	1	2.00%
2. How would you rate the services offered by the service provider?		
- Very satisfactory	8	16.00%
- Satisfactory	40	80.00%
- No comment	2	4.00%
- Unsatisfactory	0	0.00%
- Very unsatisfactory	0	0.00%
3. In general, are you satisfied with the arrangement of this programme?		
- Yes	50	100.00%
- No	0	0.00%
4. Do you have any comments on this programme?		
- No comment	37	74.00%
- Targeted beneficiaries	4	8.00%
- Relaxing the criteria for eligibility (2)		
- Beneficial to the targeted beneficiaries (2)		
- Amount and period of subsidy	5	10.00%
- Increasing the number of sessions of subsidised training (2)		
- Extending the subsidising period (3)		

Questions and Comments	No.	%
- Other	4	8.00%
- Enhancing the flexibility of training arrangement (3)		
- Launching the programme earlier (1)		

(b) Comparison of Beneficiaries Receiving Other Training Services before and after the Grant of Subsidised Training

Questions and Comments	No.	%
1. Which type of service has the beneficiary been received?		
- Occupational Therapy	15	30.00%
- Physiotherapy	11	22.00%
- Speech therapy	27	54.00%
- Clinical Psychologist Service	0	0.00%
- Special Child Care Worker's service	18	36.00%
- Other (e.g. play therapy, music therapy)	6	12.00%
2. Had the beneficiary received other related training services before having subsidised training from CCF?		
- No	27	54.00%
- Yes	23	46.00%
If it is 'Yes', the services received was:		
- Occupational therapy, physiotherapy and/or speech therapy services from Hospital Authority	6	
- Self-financing services from NGOs	6	
- Services from private institutes	11	
- Other	0	

(b) Comparison of Beneficiaries Receiving Other Training Services before and after the Grant of Subsidised Training (Cont'd)

Questions and Comments	No.	%
3. If it is 'Yes' in Question 2, how much did it cost per month?		
- Free of charge	4	17.39%
- Less than \$500	10	43.47%
- \$500 or more, but less than \$1,000	2	8.70%
- \$1,000 or more, but less than \$1,500	5	21.74%
- \$1,500 or more, but less than \$2,000	0	0.00%
- \$2,000 or more, but less than \$2,500	0	0.00%
- \$2,500 or more, but less than \$3,000	1	4.35%
- Could not provide	1	4.35%
4. Has the beneficiary received other related training service after receiving subsidised training from CCF?		
- No	36	72.00%
- Yes	14	28.00%
If it is 'Yes', the services received was:		
- Services as stated in Question 2	7	
- Services in addition to the services stated in Question 2	2	
- Other types of service	3	
- New services (Note 1)	2	
5. If it is 'Yes' in Question 4, is there any change on the expense for the service?		
- Increase	1	
- No change	11	
- Decrease	0	
- Could not provide	2	

Note 1: The three options above are for the beneficiaries who had received other related training service before the grant of subsidy while this option is for the beneficiaries who did not receive training service before but additionally received other training service after having subsidised training.

Survey on Invitees who have not submitted Applications**(a) Reasons for Not Applying the Subsidy**

Reasons	No.	%
Not meeting the criteria for eligibility - Income exceeded the limit (29) - Has been admitted / will soon be admitted to the subvented services (6)	35	87.50%
No subsidy need	3	7.50%
Missed application deadline	2	5.00%

(b) Views of Invitees

Views	No.	%
No comments	28	70.00%
Relaxing the income limit	9	22.50%
Beneficial to the beneficiaries	2	5.00%
Increasing the amount of subsidy	1	2.50%

Survey on Service Providers**Satisfaction and Comments of Service Providers on this Assistance Programme**

Questions and Comments	No.	%
<p>1. Do you agree that this programme could help the learning and development of the beneficiaries?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agree <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The beneficiaries were enabled to timely receive training which helped their rehabilitation (8) - Children of low income family were allowed to receive the training (5) - Improvement was shown in the learning of beneficiaries (2) - Disagree - No comment 	<p>17</p> <p>0</p> <p>0</p>	<p>100.00%</p> <p>0.00%</p> <p>0.00%</p>
<p>2. Is the arrangement and preparation of SWD (including the briefing session, guideline of service requirement, application form, notification etc.) appropriate for the service providers interested in joining this programme?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Appropriate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Information and support provided by SWD was sufficient (10) - Information provided could be more simplified (1) - Briefing session could be arranged earlier (2) - Inappropriate - No comment 	<p>17</p> <p>0</p> <p>0</p>	<p>100.00%</p> <p>0.00%</p> <p>0.00%</p>

Satisfaction and Comments of Service Providers on this Assistance Programme (Cont'd)

Questions and Comments	No.	%
<p>3. Is the arrangement on assigning the service units for the beneficiaries according to their preference appropriate?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Appropriate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The need of the parents / guardians could be satisfied by this arrangement (5) - Training arranged by the services units chosen by the parents / guardians may not be able to satisfy all their needs (2) - More information about the service providers could be provided to the parents / guardians (1) - The cases could be sorted according to the degree of disability of the beneficiaries before the assignment of service units (1) - Inappropriate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The cases should be evenly assigned to all the service providers for better utilising the resources (1) - No comment 	<p>14</p> <p>1</p> <p>2</p>	<p>82.36%</p> <p>5.88%</p> <p>11.76%</p>
<p>4. Is the arrangement of releasing subsidy to the service providers appropriate?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Appropriate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Subsidy was timely released (1) - Procedures was clear (3) - It would be better if the procedures could be more simplified (2) - Inappropriate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Subsidy should be directly released to the families of the beneficiaries (1) - No comment 	<p>16</p> <p>1</p> <p>0</p>	<p>94.12%</p> <p>5.88%</p> <p>0.00%</p>

Satisfaction and Comments of Service Providers on this Assistance Programme (Cont'd)

Questions and Comments	No.	%
5. In general, are you satisfied with the arrangement of this programme?		
- Satisfied	17	100.00%
- Clear guidance and appropriate follow-up were provided (4)		
- Unsatisfied	0	0.00%
6. Are you willing to join similar programme again in the future?		
- Yes	17	100.00%
- No	0	0.00%

Summary of Public Enquiries

Number and Nature of Enquiries for this Assistance Programme (Note)

Nature of Enquiry	Number
Criteria for Eligibility	167
Application Procedure	25
Completion of Application Form	236
Supporting Documents for Application	55
Submission and Receipt of Application	66
Progress of Application	24
Arrangement of Services	144
Others	24
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enquiry from the service providers about operation of this programme (7) - Update of information (8) - Launching date of this programme (3) - Explanation on the approval letter (4) - Enquiry hotline for following up the submitted application (2) 	

Note: If an enquiry involved more than one subject nature, each subject would be categorised and summarised in this table.

Assistance Programme under Community Care Fund Evaluation Report on Subsidy for Tenant Purchase Scheme Flat Owners on Comprehensive Social Security Assistance

Background

Community Care Fund (CCF) has been established since early 2011 to provide assistance to people facing economic difficulties, in particular those who fall outside the social safety net or those within the safety net but have special circumstances that are not covered. In addition, the CCF can take forward measures on a pilot basis to help the Government identify those that can be considered for incorporation into the Government's regular assistance and service programmes.

2. Steering Committee on the CCF endorsed at the meeting on 20 April 2011 to launch this assistance programme in 2011-12 for providing a one-off subsidy of \$2,000 to recipients of Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) who are the owners of flats under Tenant Purchase Scheme (TPS) for five years or above and residing in that flat as at 1 July 2011, so as to relieve their financial burden.

3. The programme, with budget of \$2.73 million (including the administrative cost of \$0.13 million), is administered by the Social Welfare Department (SWD) and estimated to benefit 1 300 households.

Implementation of Assistance Programme

4. SWD announced the details of this programme and arranged publicity¹ in September 2011. Based on the information from Computerised Social Security System (CSSS), SWD sent invitation letters to about 1 300 CSSA households who may meet the eligibility criteria² in early October for inviting the eligible households to apply for the subsidy on or before 30 November 2011.

¹ Besides distributing the programme leaflets via District Social Welfare Offices and Home Affairs Department, SWD has uploaded all relevant information onto SWD website.

² Refer to all CSSA households residing in flats within public housing estates participating in the TPS who are not given rent allowance under the CSSA Scheme. However, there is no record of owners and length of ownership of the flats concerned in the CSSS.

5. The CCF Team of SWD was responsible for vetting the applications. There were 858 applications received and a one-off subsidy of \$2,000 has been released to all the beneficiaries. Up to now, SWD has released a total of \$1.65 million of subsidy.

Result of Analysis

6. SWD has analysed the collected information and data for the evaluation as follows.

(a) Statistical Data on Application

7. Among 1 379 invitation letters issued, SWD received a total of 858 applications, of which 96.5% (828 cases) met the eligibility criteria and 3.5% were not eligible applications (30 cases). All the ineligible applications were related to the applicants' failure to prove owning the TPS flats for 5 years or above.

8. Among the beneficiaries, 93.6% of them (775 cases) have owned the flats for 8 years or above and 6.4% of them (53 cases) have owned the flats for 5 to 7 years. The relevant statistical data is at Appendix I.

(b) Survey on Beneficiaries

9. SWD has conducted an opinion survey on 48 randomly selected beneficiaries (6% of the total). All the interviewees agreed that this programme could relieve their financial burden and were satisfied with the arrangement of the programme.

10. The interviewees mainly spent the subsidy on daily family expenses (73%) and regular housing-related expenses (40%) including management fee, rates and government rent. Details are at Appendix II(a). In addition, this survey also explored the expenses of interviewees on mortgage repayment, management fee, rates and government rent and the relevant data is listed at Appendix II(b). In general, most of the interviewees have fully repaid their mortgage and their expense on management fee was mostly in the range of \$201 to \$400 per month. For the expenses on rates and government rent, interviewees mostly spent \$0 to \$500 per quarter.

(c) Survey on Invitees who have not submitted Application

11. As there was a discrepancy between the number of applications (858 cases) and the number of invitees (1 379 CSSA households), SWD also conducted an opinion survey on 36 randomly selected invitees who had not submitted applications (about 7% of the total), to explore their reasons for not submitting application and their comments on this assistance programme.

12. Most of the interviewees did not submit the applications (11 cases, 30.6%) because they could not meet the eligibility criteria (mainly because of being the owner of the TPS flats for less than 5 years). Some of the interviewees claimed that they had not received the invitation letters or they were not sure whether they had received the invitation letters (9 cases, 25.0%)³. The relevant data are listed at Appendix III. Among the 36 interviewees, 26 of them offered no comments on the programme while the other interviewees commented that it was time-consuming to make application and suggested that the scope of targeted beneficiaries should be widened.

(d) Public Enquiries

13. In the course of implementing this programme, SWD has set up an enquiry hotline to provide support and information regarding the programme for the concerned public. From November 2011 till present, SWD received about 300 enquiries on the programme, the majority of which were concerned about application progress, submission of application forms and the supporting documents required for the application. The details are listed at Appendix IV.

Conclusion

14. According to the data of survey, all the interviewees agreed that the effectiveness of the assistance programme was apparent. Most of them need not repay mortgage, but have regular housing related-expenses on management fee, rates and government rent, which basically was sufficiently covered by the subsidy of this assistance programme. Most of the interviewees also indicated

³ The invitation letters were sent out in early October of 2011, yet the opinion survey was conducted during April to May of 2012, therefore some of the interviewees could not ascertain whether they had received the invitations. The correspondence addresses of these interviewees were verified correct and non-delivery mail was not found. However, to ensure those in need could receive the assistance, SWD has sent again the application forms together with the programme briefs to the interviewees concerned.

that they had used the subsidy for daily family expenses and housing related expenses, which showed that the objective of this programme has been achieved by effectively relieving the financial burden of the beneficiaries. It has also fulfilled one of the objectives of CCF, which is to provide assistance to those within the safety net but have special circumstances that are not covered.

15. As noticed from the survey on invitees who have not submitted application, their major reason for not submitting the application is not meeting the eligibility criteria. A few eligible persons however revealed no need for the subsidy or were reluctant to spend time to make application. The application procedures and the documents required have in fact been made as simple as possible and whether the invitees would apply for the subsidy is a matter of their personal decision.

16. The set up of enquiry hotline had effectively provided immediate support to the applicants in the course of application process. Given a significant number of enquiries are concerned about the progress of application, it may be considered to inform the applicants of the expected processing time for the applications through the programme leaflets and publicity.

17. The public, in particular the beneficiaries, welcomed the launch of this assistance programme. Though the one-off subsidy could temporarily relieve the financial burden of the beneficiaries, regularisation of the programme is worthy of consideration on a long-term basis in response to their genuine needs. While the housing-related expenses of the beneficiaries varied from household to household, SWD may, as other CSSA recipients, consider provide rent allowance to the TPS flats owners receiving CSSA for paying the expenses on management fee, rates and government rent.

18. The regularisation of this assistance programme under the CSSA Scheme will not incur much preparatory work and is expected to have no great impact on the administrative expenses. The existing manpower of SWD should be adequate for the required tasks related to the policy change, except that the information system may need appropriate change and enhancement to accommodate the new policy.

19. As reflected by the survey, most of the beneficiaries had their mortgage fully repaid and their expenses for management fee, rates and government rent was predominantly below \$1,000. As Housing Authority has

shown no intention to re-launch TPS starting from 2005-2006,⁴ it is expected that the number of potential beneficiaries will not have significant change. From the experience of this programme, the number of CSSA households meeting the eligibility criteria, i.e. being the owner of TPS flats for 5 years or above and are residing in that flat, is about 830. The regularisation of the programme should not have great financial implication against the total expenditure on CSSA.

20. To conclude, based on the effectiveness of this assistance programme, regularisation of the programme, by relaxing the existing restriction on rent allowance under the CSSA Scheme to benefit also CSSA recipients who have been TPS flat owners for 5 years or above, is worth considering. SWD is seeking legal advice on the arrangement of regularising the programme and will then formulate the details and schedule for implementation.

Social Welfare Department
October 2012

⁴ Refer to the Press Releases on the LegCo meeting of 29 February 2012:
<http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201202/29/P201202290278.htm>.

Length of TPS Flat Ownership of the Beneficiaries

Length	Number of Beneficiaries	%
5 Years	23	2.78%
6 Years	27	3.26%
7 Years	3	0.36%
8 Years	95	11.47%
9 Years	119	14.37%
10 Years	136	16.43%
11 Years	183	22.10%
12 Years	145	17.51%
13 Years	97	11.71%

(a) Use of Subsidy by the Beneficiaries (More than 1 option can be chosen)

Items	Number of Beneficiaries	%
Family daily expenses	35	72.92%
Management fee, rates and government rent	19	39.58%
Repayment of mortgage	2	4.17%
Other	3	6.25%

(b)(i) Repayment of mortgage

Monthly Expenses (\$)	Number of Beneficiaries	%
0 to 1,000	5	10.42%
1,001 to 2,000	7	14.58%
2,001 or above	1	2.08%
Fully repaid	35	72.92%

(b) (ii) Management fee

Monthly Expenses (\$)	Number of Beneficiaries	%
0 to 200	5	10.42%
201 to 400	36	75.00%
401 or above	7	14.58%

(b) (iii) Rates and Government Rent

Quarterly Expenses (\$)	Number of Beneficiaries	%
0 to 500	34	70.83%
501 to 1,000	8	16.67%
1,001 or above	3	6.25%
Could not provide	3	6.25%

Invitees' Reasons for not Submitting Applications (More than one option can be chosen)

Reasons	Number of Invitees	%
Not meet the eligibility criteria	11	30.56%
Not receive the invitation letter or uncertain if received (Note 1)	9	25.00%
No subsidy need	6	16.67%
Not understand the programme details	3	8.33%
Others (e.g. missed the deadline, considered time-consuming to make applications)	7	19.44%

Note 1: For interviewees who claimed that they had not received the invitation letters or could not ascertain whether they had received the invitation letters, their addresses were verified matching with the records and there was no non-delivery mail found. However, to ensure those in need were able to receive the assistance, invitation letters were sent to these invitees again.

**Number and Nature of Enquiries for this Assistance Programme
(Note)**

Nature of Enquiry	Number
Eligibility Criteria	38
Application Procedure	7
Completion of Application Form	39
Supporting Documents for Application	47
Submission of Application	62
Progress of Application	116
Arrangement for Release of Subsidy	23
Verification for Receipt of Subsidy	11
Other (Update of information and whether another round of the assistance programme will be launched)	2

Note: If an enquiry involved more than one subject nature, each subject would be categorised and summarised in this table.

**Community Care Fund Programme
Subsidy for Low-income Elderly Tenants in Private Housing
Evaluation Report**

Background

The “Subsidy for low-income elderly tenants in private housing” programme (the programme) under the Community Care Fund (CCF) was implemented by the CCF Secretariat (the Secretariat) commencing 9 July 2012 with the assistance of 113 elderly centres. The application period ended on 31 January 2013. As at 31 March 2013, the Secretariat has received a total of 2 130 applications, and disbursed a subsidy at an amount of about \$10.43 million to 2 106 eligible households (2 608 persons).

Evaluation Results Analysis

(A) *Application Statistics*

(a) Information of households

2. The Secretariat received 2 130 applications. Applicant households came from various districts across the territory. In terms of district which applications were submitted, Sham Shui Po (356 applications), Yau Tsim Mong (292 applications) and Yuen Long (235 applications) had the largest numbers of applicant households. Among the 2 129 applications referred to and vetted by the Secretariat after initial vetting by the elderly centres, 99% (2 106 applications, 2 608 persons) were eligible and 1% (23 applications, 27 persons) were ineligible. Most eligible applications came from one-person households, representing 76.4% of the households disbursed with the subsidy. Two-person and three-or-more-person households represented 23.3% and 0.3% respectively.

3. In terms of income level, the average income of three-or-more-person households amounted to 54% of the relevant income limit under the programme, while one-person and two-person households’ respective figures were about 33% and 31%. In terms of household rental level, the average rent paid by three-or-more-person households was about 73% of the relevant rental limit under the programme, while the respective figures for one-person and two-person households were about 56% and 57%. As for the rental level of various regions, the average rent was higher on Hong Kong Island, but for three-or-more-person households the figure was higher in the New Territories, while the average rent paid by households disbursed with the subsidy represented about 67% to 92% of the average income. Meanwhile, among the ineligible applications, 16 of them were the applicants or household members

receiving Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA), 4 owned property in Hong Kong and 3 had already benefited from the “Subsidy for low-income persons who are inadequately housed” programme.

(b) Information of applicants and household members

4. There were a total of 2 840 applicants and household members altogether, of which 2 635 were elders aged 65 or above (with around 99% of them have been benefited from the programme). Among the household members, 194 were aged between 60 and 64 and 11 were mentally incapacitated persons aged below 60. Among the 27 persons who failed the matching procedures, about 67% were CSSA recipients.

(B) *Views of the Programme’s Stakeholders*

(a) Elderly beneficiaries

5. The Secretariat and elderly centres conducted a questionnaire survey with 133 benefited households (about 6% of the benefited households) by random sampling to understand their views on the programme’s subsidy amount, eligibility criteria, application procedures, publicity effort, programme implementation arrangements and services provided by the elderly centres.

6. About 80% of the respondents agreed that the subsidy provided by the programme did relieve their financial pressure brought by inflation and cyclical rental increase, but some respondents would like to see the programme continued with regular subsidy provided to needy elderly people. An absolute majority of the respondents found the programme’s eligibility criteria reasonable and that application procedures were simple and convenient (about 85% and 90% of benefited households respectively). However, some suggested that the programme should include persons aged between 60 and 64 as well, and should also raise the income and rental limits, as well as further streamline the application procedures. Some 75% of the respondents considered the programme’s publicity efforts adequate, but some said there should be more publicity channels and proposed sustained publicity through television, radio and newspapers so that more elders could know the details of the programme. Some 97% of the respondents were satisfied with the Secretariat’s arrangements and the services provided by the elderly centres. Some respondents also looked forward to a re-launched programme, so as to help more needy elderly people and relieve their financial pressure.

(b) Unsuccessful applicants

7. The Secretariat also tried to reach the 23 unsuccessful applicant households for telephone questionnaire survey to collect their views on the programme. Only 15 of these households (about 65%) were reached.

Among these households, 10 (about 67%) were willing to take the survey and complete the questionnaire. The respondents generally considered that the age limit should be lowered to cover those aged 60 to 64; CSSA households should also be eligible; and subsidy amount and income limit should be raised. In general, the respondents agreed that the application procedures of the programme were simple and convenient, but some of them thought that the publicity channels of the programme should be increased for better understanding of the eligibility criteria. However, some respondents were not satisfied about the eligibility criteria of the programme, mainly because they were not able to benefit from the programme, and they suggested that the Secretariat should strengthen publicity, increase the number of places for collecting application forms, and relax eligibility criteria to assist CSSA households and needy elders. All respondents were satisfied with the services provided by the elderly centres.

(c) NGOs/elderly centres engaged to assist in the implementation/staff members of the implementation team under the Secretariat (the implementation team)

8. The Secretariat distributed questionnaires to 35 NGOs and 113 elderly centres participating in the programme for survey, among which 84 NGOs/elderly centres had returned the questionnaires and the response rate was 57%.

(i) Details of the programme

9. About 70% of responding NGOs/elderly centres considered that the subsidy provided by the programme could relieve the financial pressure faced by the elders due to inflation and cyclical rent increase, and some responding NGOs/elderly centres thought that the programme should disburse subsidy regularly, increase the amount of subsidy and consider raising the rental limit. The responding NGOs/elderly centres said that some applicants were found ineligible during the initial vetting mainly because they were non-elderly households, were receiving CSSA, their rents exceeded the limit or they were not renting private housing. In addition, the responding NGOs/elderly centres expressed views on how to improve the programme if it was to be re-launched, including relaxing the eligibility criteria, setting the amount of subsidy according to the rent of districts, strengthening publicity, enhancing support for elderly centres and streamlining application procedures, etc.

(ii) Implementation arrangements and application procedures

10. Most responding NGOs/elderly centres agreed that it was appropriate to entrust elderly centres to assist in implementing the programme, for example, to handle tasks such as helping the elders fill in the application forms, simple checking, conducting home visits and income tests, and distributing cheques.

However, a small number of responding NGOs/elderly centres considered that the Secretariat should carry out all vetting work. On the whole, most responding NGOs/elderly centres agreed that the Secretariat had made suitable arrangements for them, and were satisfied with the Secretariat's arrangements and the operation procedures for implementing the programme. In addition, the responding NGOs/elderly centres expressed views on how to improve the implementation and operational arrangements, including giving more time for NGOs/elderly centres to get prepared for the implementation of the programme, organising briefings and issuing guidelines on handling application earlier, raising administrative fees and providing extra manpower support to elderly centers at the initial period of the programme.

11. Most responding NGOs/elderly centres indicated that they had promoted the programme through their established channels of communication with the elders. Some responding NGOs/elderly centres also put forward other suggestions for improving the application procedures if a similar programme was to be launched in future, including strengthening district coordination, preparing application notes to speed up application process and extending the application period. In conclusion, the responding NGOs/elderly centres were satisfied with the operation arrangements of the programme. They agreed that the programme could help identify the hidden elders in need and said that they were willing to continue to assist in the implementation of similar programmes in future.

12. In the course of implementation, noting the requirement that the beneficiaries must be paying rent but there was no specification on the minimum amount of rent, some NGOs/elderly centres remarked that some elders might benefit from the programme even though they might be paying only nominal rent (for example, paying several dollars for renting their relatives' flats) while those elders who did not have to pay rent could not benefit from the programme. This might not be fair.

13. The staff members of the implementation team agreed that the existing mode of implementation was convenient to the applicants as they could submit their applications to the elderly centres near their residences, and the elderly centres were equipped with professional experience to handle their applications and enquiries. Also, the mode of collaboration between the implementation team and elderly centres was smooth.

14. In addition, the Secretariat held an evaluation meeting on 12 March 2013 to collect views from NGOs/elderly centres on the implementation arrangements and eligibility criteria of the programme. The attending NGOs/elderly centres commented on the programme in terms of subsidy amount, age requirement, income limit, rental limit, types of residence, publicity, prevention of abuse, streamlining of procedures, and administrative fees. The NGOs/elderly centres put forward a number of suggestions on

relaxing the eligibility criteria. In respect of streamlining of procedures, they thought that if similar programmes were to be re-launched in future, the elderly beneficiaries of the programme should be exempted from re-submitting their applications as they had passed the vetting already and it was believed that their living condition would not have much changed since then. They also proposed to screen out ineligible elders according to a vetting checklist so as to speed up the processing of application.

(C) *Public Enquiries and Views*

15. During the implementation period of the programme, the Secretariat had set up an enquiry hotline to provide necessary support and information to the public and staff of the elderly centres. During the period from July 2012 to March 2013, the Secretariat had received 3 132 calls enquiring about the programme, mostly about the programme's eligibility criteria, application processing and administrative arrangements. There were also individual members of the public offering their views on the programme to the Secretariat, including requesting relaxation of eligibility criteria and raising the rental limit.

Conclusion

(a) Number of benefited households/elders

16. At the close of application, the Secretariat had received 2 130 applications, which was less than the estimated beneficiaries of 9 700 households. The estimation on beneficiary number was made by the Secretariat with reference to the largest possible number of beneficiaries (i.e. the figure provided by the Census and Statistics Department on elderly households renting private housing). There was no available information on the income level of relevant households, or whether they were CSSA recipients or owned any properties in Hong Kong. Under the circumstances, the actual number of beneficiaries should be less than the estimation.

(b) Types of residence

17. As for the elderly centres' suggestion that the programme should also include residents in commercial/industrial buildings, the former CCF Steering Committee decided against the idea having regard to the Government's determination to take enforcement actions against the use of industrial buildings for domestic use. It also did not want to indirectly encourage the public to live in industrial/commercial buildings that are not for lawful residential purpose. As such, if the programme was to be re-launched, it should not cover those living in industrial/commercial buildings.

(c) Household income and rental limits

18. As regards the eligibility criteria, while some respondents said the income limit should be raised, the average income of the programme's beneficiaries of one-person to three-or-more-person elderly households represent some 30% to 50% of the income limit. Therefore, the programme's income limit was effective in identifying needy low-income elders.

19. As there was difference in rent among regions (HK Island, Kowloon and New Territories), some considered that there should be different rental limit for different regions. In setting the eligibility criteria (including rental limit), the former CCF Steering Committee had already considered the relevant statistics and adopted a more lenient approach. An analysis of application statistics showed that some regions like Hong Kong Island have higher average rent. Though the rental level for three-or-more-person households was highest in the New Territories, there were only 6 applications from three-or-more-person households, the rental level concerned might not be able to reflect the reality. When compared to the programme's rental limit, the average rent for benefited households was only about 70% of the rental limit of the programme at most. Therefore, the rent paid by most households was still considerably below the rental limit under the programme.

20. In addition, the average rent paid by one-person to three-or-more-person households disbursed with the subsidy represented some 67% to 92% of the average income of households. This was probably because elderly households had lower income in general (average income represented about 30% to 50% of the income limit of the programme) and in some cases the elders' sons or daughters or relatives were paying the rent for the elders and as a result had raised the rent to income ratio accordingly.

(d) Other eligibility criteria

21. There were views that the programme should also cover those CSSA recipients renting private housing. When devising the programme, the former CCF Steering Committee took into account the fact that the Government's one-off or short-term relief measures over the past few years (e.g. paying rent for public housing tenants, providing extra allowance to CSSA recipients, waiving rates, granting subsidy on electricity, etc.) might not benefit non-CSSA elders renting private housing. Therefore, the programme was launched to relieve the pressure of inflation and cyclical rent increase on this group of elders. It might not be appropriate to include CSSA recipients in the programme in this case.

(e) Enhancing publicity and promotion

22. Some considered that there was a lack of diversified channels or

sustained efforts in the promotion of the programme such that it had not reached hidden elders in need of assistance. The survey results also showed that the involvement of elderly centres had helped to effectively promote the programme and identify low-income elders in need.

23. In fact, when launching the programme in July 2012, the Secretariat had made use of a variety of promotion channels including uploading information to the Internet, publishing and printing posters, application forms and programme briefs, holding media briefings, and issuing press release, etc. The Secretariat had placed posters at the Public Enquiry Service Centres of the Home Affairs Department and District Social Welfare Offices of the Social Welfare Department for information of elders. An enquiry hotline was also set up by the Secretariat to provide information to and answer queries from applicants and members of the public. Since September 2012, to encourage more elders to apply for the programme, posters were put up in places like markets, bus stops to which a wider audience have access.

24. In the light of the above comments received in respect of promotion work, if the programme was to be re-launched, the Secretariat would consider increasing the promotion channels and time and consider extending the application period so that elders living in remote areas or hidden elders could have ample time to submit application. Also, the Secretariat would consider inviting elderly centres to assist in implementing similar programme again.

(f) Administrative arrangements

25. Concerning administrative arrangements, elderly centres suggested streamlining of application processing procedures, increasing the number of elderly centres engaged to assist in the implementation of the programme; and strengthening the support to elderly centres that have to handle a relatively larger number of applications. Regarding administrative fees, elderly centres said that the amount of fees could not meet their manpower expenses and would like the Secretariat to disburse the administrative fees to them directly so that they can deploy resources with more flexibility. They also hoped that if the programme was to be re-launched, the Secretariat should give the elderly centres ample time to get prepared and to put forward comments on the programme. The Secretariat should also issue handy application guidelines to elderly centres to expedite processing of applications.

(g) Overall effectiveness

26. As far as the overall effectiveness of the programme is concerned, the elder beneficiaries, NGOs/elderly centres, or the staff members of the implementation team all agreed that the programme helped to relieve the financial pressure of elders and hoped that the CCF could re-launch the programme. Most elders were positive about the service provided by the

elderly centres and agreed that the application procedures were simple and convenient. If the programme was to be re-launched, the Secretariat would make reference to the existing mode of implementation.

27. A consolidated analysis of the information and data collected showed that the stakeholders were positive about the programme and were generally satisfied with the existing operational arrangement. They supported to re-launch the programme so as to help more needy low-income persons. They also suggested that the CCF should consider relaxing the eligibility criteria, increasing publicity channels and enhancing the support to the elderly centres.

28. The programme had reached out to a number of “n have-nots” (generally refer to those who do not own any properties, live in public rental housing or receive CSSA) and provided them with financial assistance. It also helped the elderly centres to identify hidden elders and enabled them to follow up with the welfare needs of the elders on a long-term and sustainable basis. The experience gained in implementing the programme would facilitate the Government’s consideration of more comprehensive poverty alleviation arrangements.

CCF Secretariat
April 2013

Community Care Fund Programme

Subsidy for Low-income Persons who are Inadequately Housed

Evaluation Report

Background

The “Subsidy for low-income persons who are inadequately housed” programme (the programme) under the Community Care Fund (CCF) was implemented by the CCF Secretariat (the Secretariat) commencing 8 October 2012 with the assistance of 42 community service units. The application period ended on 8 April 2013. As at 31 March 2013, the Secretariat has received a total of 22 250 applications, and disbursed a subsidy at an amount of about \$111.61 million to 18 910 eligible households (44 105 persons).

2. As this programme is similar in nature to another CCF programme, “Subsidy for low-income elderly tenants in private housing” (“subsidy for elderly tenants in private housing” programme), the experience in implementing the latter programme and the approach adopted in its evaluation have been referred to when conducting evaluation on this programme.

Evaluation Results Analysis

(A) *Application Statistics*

(a) Information of households

3. The Secretariat received 22 250 applications. According to the information of 22 127 applications entered into the computer database, applicant households came from various districts across the territory. In terms of district which applications were submitted, Sham Shui Po (6 402 applications), Yau Tsim Mong (3 943 applications) and Kowloon City (2 847 applications) had the largest numbers of applicant households. Among the 19 133 applications referred to and vetted by the Secretariat after initial vetting by community service units, 99% (18 910 applications, 44 105 persons) were eligible and 1% (223 applications, 414 persons) were ineligible. Most eligible applications came from one-person households, representing 32% of the households disbursed with the subsidy. Two-person and three-person households accounted for 26% and 24% respectively, and the remaining 18% or so were four-or-more-person households.

4. Based on the information of the 18 910 households disbursed with the subsidy, in terms of income level, the average income of households from one-person to six-or-more-person amounted to about 57% to 65% of the relevant income limit, of which four-person households accounted for the largest proportion. As for the types of residence among the households disbursed with the subsidy, most of them were residing in rooms/cubicles, cocklofts or bedspaces in private housing (about 89%), followed by those residing in temporary housing (about 10%). Among households residing in rooms/cubicles, cocklofts or bedspaces in private permanent housing, in terms of

household rental level, the one-person and two-person households' average rents paid were higher as a proportion of the relevant rental limits (about 53% and 42% respectively), while the corresponding figures for three-person to six-or-more-person households were about 27% to 37%. As for the rental level of various regions, the average rent was higher on Hong Kong Island and the average rent paid by households disbursed with the subsidy represented about 22% to 47% of the average income (of which the proportion was the highest for one-person households).

5. Meanwhile, among the 223 ineligible applications, the primary reasons were that applicants or the household members were Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) recipients (174 applications), owned property in Hong Kong (25 applications) or already benefited from the “subsidy for elderly tenants in private housing” programme (24 applications).

(b) Information of applicants and household members

6. Based on the data of the 22 127 applications entered into the computer database, there were a total of 51 078 applicants and household members altogether, of which permanent residents and non-permanent residents accounted for 47% and 53% respectively. There were 37 329 persons aged 18 or above (about 73%) and the remaining 13 749 persons were household members aged under 18, which included 8 371 persons aged under 11. About 10 persons were mentally incapacitated household members aged between 18 and 58. The main reason for the 414 persons failing the matching procedures was that they were CSSA recipients (about 79%).

(B) *Views of the Programme Stakeholders*

(a) Beneficiaries

7. The Secretariat and community service units conducted a questionnaire survey with 983 benefited households (about 5% of benefited households) by random sampling to understand their views on the programme's subsidy amount, eligibility criteria, application procedures, publicity effort, programme implementation arrangements and services provided by the community service units.

8. About 78% of the respondents agreed that the subsidy provided by the programme did relieve their financial burden, but some respondents hoped that the level of subsidy could be raised and the subsidy should be disbursed on a continuous basis. The vast majority of the respondents found the programme's eligibility criteria reasonable (87%) and that application procedures were simple and convenient (89%). However, some suggested that the income and rental limits could be raised and sub-divided units with individual entrance doors could be covered under the programme, and that the application procedures could be further streamlined and the vetting process could be accelerated. In case the programme was to be re-launched, previous beneficiaries should be exempted from re-submitting their applications. Some 79% of the respondents found the programme's publicity effort adequate, but some said there should be more publicity channels and proposed sustained publicity through television, radio and newspapers. Some 92% of the respondents were satisfied with the

Secretariat's arrangements and some 97% found the services provided by community service units satisfactory. Some respondents also looked forward to an increase in the number of community service units, clearer application guidelines to reduce the frequencies of submitting supplementary documents, as well as simplifying the application form.

(b) Unsuccessful applicants

9. The Secretariat also tried to reach the 223 unsuccessful applicant households for telephone questionnaire survey to collect their views on the programme. Only 101 of these households (about 45%) were reached. Among these households, 80 (about 79%) were willing to take the survey and complete the questionnaire. The respondents generally considered that the level of subsidy of the programme should be raised, and the subsidy should be granted regularly to those in need. While the existing income limit of the programme was able to identify those in need, the respondents thought that the definition of types of residence was relatively complicated, and they also considered that some CSSA recipients who were more needy should also be benefited. About 68% of the respondents agreed that the application procedures of the programme were simple and convenient, but some respondents thought that the application procedures of the programme should be further streamlined, the processing time should be reduced and the number of community service units should be increased. About 59% of the respondents agreed that the publicity effort for the programme was sufficient, but other respondents indicated that the publicity channels of the programme should be increased for better understanding of the application procedures and the eligibility criteria. About 63% of the respondents were satisfied with the Secretariat's arrangement for implementing the programme, and 68% of the respondents found that the service provided by the community service units was satisfactory. However, some respondents were not satisfied that the application guidelines of the programme were not clear enough, mainly because they were not able to benefit from the programme, and they also suggested that the processing time should be reduced, the number of places for collecting application forms should be increased, and the needs of CSSA recipients should be taken into account. Some respondents said that the locations of some community service units were not convenient, while some considered that home visit arrangements would enable social workers to understand their other welfare needs, and they hoped that the CCF could continue to implement this programme, so as to relieve the rental pressure of low-income families.

(c) NGOs/community service units engaged to assist in the implementation/staff members of the implementation team under the Secretariat (the implementation team)

10. The Secretariat distributed questionnaires to 14 NGOs and 42 community service units participating in the programme for survey, among which 26 NGOs/community service units had returned the questionnaires and the response rate was 46%.

(i) Details of the programme

11. About 74% of the responding NGOs/community service units considered that the subsidy provided by the programme could relieve the financial pressure faced by the low-income persons who are inadequately housed, and some responding NGOs/community service units thought that the programme should disburse subsidy regularly. The responding NGOs/community service units said that some applicants were found ineligible during the initial vetting mainly because the types of their residence were not covered by the programme (for example, households living in sub-divided flats with individual entrance doors, large families renting self-contained flats and households living in sub-divided flats in industrial/commercial buildings), they were CSSA recipients or their income level exceeded the limit, etc.

12. Some other NGOs/community service units pointed out that the coverage of the programme should be extended to fishermen households living on vessels. They considered that the living environment of some boat dwellers was as poor as that in temporary housing, and the income limit could exclude those boat dwellers with a high level of income.

13. In addition, the responding NGOs/community service units expressed views on how to improve the programme if it was to be re-launched, including raising the level of subsidy, calculating the subsidy amount on the basis of the difference between market rent and the rent of public rental housing (PRH), relaxing the eligibility to cover the other types of residence, strengthening publicity efforts in rural areas and squatter areas, increasing the number of community service units, streamlining the application procedures, deploying manpower to support community service units with a larger number of applications, and increasing administrative fees to recruit additional manpower, etc.

(ii) Implementation arrangements and application procedures

14. Most responding NGOs/community service units agreed that it was appropriate to entrust community service units to assist in implementing the programme, for example, to handle tasks such as helping applicants fill in the application forms, simple checking, conducting home visits and income tests, and distributing cheques. However, a small number of responding NGOs/community service units considered that home visits and income tests could be handled separately. On the whole, most responding NGOs/community service units agreed that the Secretariat's arrangements (including briefings, service specification, and guidelines on handling applications, etc.) were appropriate, and the collaboration arrangements with the Secretariat were satisfactory. However, some responding NGOs/community service units considered that the roles of handling applications and vetting taken up by the community service units and the Secretariat should be defined in a clearer manner, the guidelines on application should be streamlined, the administrative fees should be raised and the support for community service units should be strengthened.

15. Regarding publicity, most responding NGOs/community service units indicated that they had promoted the programme through the established channels of

communication with the targeted clients, sent staff members to distribute promotional leaflets in mailboxes of targeted buildings, conducted door-to-door visits, and explained the application procedures and helped registration at large-scale temporary housing areas.

16. Some responding NGOs/community service units also put forward other suggestions for improving the application procedures of similar programmes that would be launched in future, including granting higher and advanced administrative fees to community service units for recruiting additional manpower, requiring applicants to provide income proof or introducing asset tests to avoid abuse, increasing the number of community service units engaged to assist in the implementation, distributing application forms in Public Enquiry Service Centres of District Offices of the Home Affairs Department, and providing follow-up programmes to provide support for low-income families. In conclusion, the responding NGOs/community service units were satisfied with the operation arrangements of the programme. They agreed that the programme could help those low-income families who were in need and then follow up with their other welfare needs. They were willing to continue to assist in the implementation of similar programmes in future.

17. In addition, the representatives of NGOs/community service units remarked at the briefings organised for the programme that due to the poor living environment of temporary housing (especially squatter huts and licensed structures), the programme should cover all residents in such residence but not the tenants only. They thought that in view of the relatively loose application approach adopted for the programme, it was possible that some applicants who were living in sub-divided flats that were not covered in the programme, owing to a lack of understanding of the requirement or for other reason, might make an application and be granted with the subsidy as they might not be picked for random checking. Front-line social workers also said that the residence (e.g. squatter huts) of some eligible households might have some “irregularities”, which might keep these families away from making an application. Some NGOs/community service units also said that the CCF should explore whether there was a need to expand the beneficiary coverage of the programme (e.g. whether households living in sub-divided flats in industrial buildings and sub-divided flats with individual entrance doors should be eligible), and required that a mid-term review be conducted on the programme, so as to draw up improvement measures in the course of implementation of the programme.

18. The staff members of the implementation team agreed that the existing mode of operation was convenient to the applicants as they could submit their applications to the community service units near their residences, and the community service units were equipped with professional experience to help handle their applications and enquiries, in particular, effectively identify ineligible applicants through home visits by staff of the units. In addition, through proactive publicity work at district level, community service units had effectively promoted the programme, successfully identified low-income families in need in districts, in particular the street sleepers and squatters, and helped them apply for the programme. Also, the mode of collaboration between the implementation team and community service units was smooth.

19. Apart from this, the Secretariat held an evaluation meeting on 18 March 2013 to collect views from NGOs/community service units on the implementation arrangements and eligibility criteria of the programme. The attending NGOs/community service units commented on the programme in terms of subsidy amount, age requirement, income limit, rental limit, types of residence, publicity, prevention of abuse, streamlining of procedures, and administrative fees, etc. The NGOs/community service units put forward a number of suggestions on relaxing the eligibility criteria, such as including the sub-divided flats with individual entrance doors. As for publicity, they considered that more publicity should target at residents living in temporary housing (especially squatter huts) and rural areas, and ethnic minorities, and words/terms used in the publicity materials should be familiar to the public, such as using the colloquial names for “sub-divided flats” and “squatter huts”. In respect of streamlining of procedures, they thought that if similar programmes were re-launched in future, the beneficiaries of the programme should be exempted from re-submitting their applications as they had passed the vetting already and it was believed that their living condition would not have much changed since then. In addition, they also suggested inviting other NGOs/service units/local organisations (such as Integrated Family Service Centres, Integrated Children and Youth Services Centres and Support Service Centres for Ethnic Minorities) to help implement the programme in districts without any service units (such as Shatin).

(C) *Public Enquiries and Views*

20. During the implementation period of the programme, the Secretariat had set up an enquiry hotline to provide necessary support and information to the public and staff of community service units. Public response to the programme was positive, with the Secretariat’s hotline receiving over 4 100 enquiries during the first two weeks, in particular, over 700 enquiries were received each day during the first two days of the programme. As at the end of March, the Secretariat had received 12 374 calls enquiring about the programme, mostly about the programme’s eligibility criteria, application formalities and procedures. There were also individual members of the public offering their views on the programme to the Secretariat. There were views that the Secretariat might consider other approaches (such as “land search”, i.e. checking the land registers in the Land Registry database) to identify which units with an individual entrance door were still “sub-divided flats”, such that all tenants of sub-divided flats might benefit from the programme.

Conclusion

(a) Number of benefited households/persons

21. As at the end of March 2013, the community service units had received about 24 000 applications and referred 22 250 applications to the Secretariat for further processing after initial vetting. With the programme closing in about a week’s time, it is believed that the final number of applications received would be slightly lower than the estimated number of benefited households (27 718 households) as revised in December 2012.

(b) Types of residence

22. Regarding certain organisations/community service units' proposal to include all residents, instead of only tenants, of squatter huts and licensed structures, the former CCF Steering Committee (Steering Committee) approved in August 2012 that all residents of temporary housing, including those not paying any rent, would benefit from the programme as long as they met the programme's other eligibility criteria.

23. According to the evaluation results, stakeholders believed that the definition of "inadequately housed" should be relaxed to include households living in sub-divided flats with individual entrance doors but equally bad environment, as well as those large families renting self-contained units. In considering the living conditions of target beneficiaries to decide on the programme's eligibility criteria, the former CCF Steering Committee wished to identify the neediest groups. The programme's target beneficiaries include those renting rooms/cubicles, cocklofts or bedspaces in private housing, whose living conditions are generally worse than those living in self-contained units or in sub-divided flats with individual entrance door. In addition, sub-divided flats with an individual entrance door might be confused with other units having an individual entrance door (e.g. self-contained small units) as well. There are views that the CCF might consider other approaches (such as "land search") to identify which units with an individual entrance door are still "sub-divided flats", such that all tenants of sub-divided flats would benefit from the programme. However, having consulted the Buildings Department (BD), the Secretariat noted that to identify a building's sub-divided flats, professionals are required to cross-match the building plans in the BD archive with the actual layout of the relevant building on site. There will be considerable difficulty for the frontline social workers of the community service units to carry out such work. To cover sub-divided flats with an individual entrance door under the programme would require the programme to include self-contained small units as well, most of which have already benefited from the government's short-term relief measures in the last few years. In addition, the CCF would have difficulty shouldering the massive disbursement amount under such an arrangement. However, the stakeholders generally believed that the programme's income and rental limits were sufficient to identify the needy low-income persons and if the programme was to be re-launched, the eligibility criteria should be relaxed. The Secretariat will consider whether and how such criteria should be relaxed with reference to the opinions from different sectors.

24. Certain organisations/community service units noted that the living environment of some boat dwellers was as bad as temporary housing and that they needed assistance as well. If the programme was to be re-launched, the Secretariat will also consider including boat dwellers who meet the programme's other eligibility criteria.

25. As for community service units' suggestion that the programme should also include residents in commercial/industrial buildings, the former CCF Steering Committee decided against the idea having regard to the Government's determination to take enforcement actions against the use of industrial buildings for domestic use. It also did not want to indirectly encourage the public to live in industrial/commercial buildings that are not for lawful residential purpose.

(c) Household income and rental limits

26. As for the eligibility criteria, while some respondents said the income limit should be raised, the average income of the benefited households represented some 57% to 65% of the income limit. Therefore, the programme's income limit was effective in identifying needy low-income persons. There were also views that reference could be made to the updated income limit for applying PRH to revise the income limit under the programme. If the programme was to be re-launched, the Secretariat will consider the relevant updated data.

27. There were also views that the programme's rental limit should be raised and revised according to the changes in rental level. When devising the programme's eligibility criteria (including setting the rental limit), the former CCF Steering Committee had already considered the relevant statistics and adopted a more lenient approach in doing so. According to the statistics provided by the Census and Statistics Department, the median rent paid by inadequately housed one-person household in the fourth quarter of 2011 was \$1,500. As such, the programme's rental limit, which was 50% of a particular household size's respective income limit (i.e. \$4,370 for one-person household), should be appropriate. From the analysis of the application statistics, it is apparent that some regions like Hong Kong Island have higher rent. However, as compared to the programme's rental limit, the average rent for benefited households in various regions were only about 50% of the respective limit at most. Therefore the rent paid by most households was still considerably below the respective rental limit under the programme.

28. In addition, the average rent paid by one-person to six-or-more-person households disbursed with the subsidy represented some 22% to 47% of their average income. Therefore, setting the rental limit at 50% of respective household income limit was considerably lenient.

(d) Other eligibility criteria

29. There were views that the programme should also cover others who were also inadequately housed as well as needy CSSA recipients. When devising the programme, the former CCF Steering Committee took into account the fact that the continued rise in inflation and private property rents posed considerable financial pressure on inadequately housed low-income persons who were not receiving CSSA, and that the Government's one-off or short-term relief measures over the past few years (e.g. paying rent for public housing tenants, providing extra allowance to CSSA recipients, waiving rates, granting subsidy on electricity, etc.) might not benefit this group of persons. Therefore, the programme was launched to relieve the financial pressure of those low-income persons who were inadequately housed. It might not be appropriate to include CSSA recipients in the programme in this case.

(e) Prevention of abuse

30. There were views that only requiring applicants to declare their household income in the application form was too lenient, and for some cases which were not

selected for home visits/income tests, sole reliance on self-declaration might lead to abuses. Some community service units also proposed requiring applicants to provide income proof for their applications or introducing an asset test. However, other views noted that it might be hard for the community service units that received a larger number of applications to conduct home visits/income tests. If applicants could explain suspicious income items, they should also be considered having passed the vetting. If the programme was to be re-launched, a balance should be struck between the prudent use of CCF resources and streamlining relevant procedures.

(f) Enhancing publicity and promotion

31. Some considered that there was a lack of diversified channels or sustained efforts in promoting the programme such that it had not reached those in the rural areas or in the squatter areas. Some also pointed out the need to enhance promotion to ethnic minorities. The survey results also showed that some community service units had leveraged on their current activities and had successfully promoted the programme and identified low-income persons in need.

32. In fact, when launching the programme in October 2012, the Secretariat had made use of a variety of promotion channels including uploading information to the Internet, publishing posters, printing application forms and programme briefs, holding press briefings, and issuing press release, etc. The Secretariat had placed posters at the Public Enquiry Service Centres of the Home Affairs Department and District Social Welfare Offices of the Social Welfare Department for information of applicants. An enquiry hotline was set up by the Secretariat to provide information to and answer queries from applicants and members of the public.

33. In the light of the above comments from the community on the promotion work, the Secretariat agreed that the promotion channels and sustainability of efforts should be enhanced. With reference to the views of the community service units, the publicity materials should use wordings that the public were familiar with, such as the colloquial names for “sub-divided flats”, “squatter huts”, etc. As regards the comment that the enquiry hotline was difficult to get through at the beginning of the programme, the Secretariat should also consider increasing the number of hotlines to cope with the demand.

(g) Administrative arrangements

34. Concerning administrative arrangements, the community service units made the following suggestions: streamlining of application processing procedures; increasing the number of community service units engaged to assist in implementing the programme; and strengthening the support to units that have to handle a relatively larger number of applications. Regarding administrative fees, community service units called for a raise in fees and the disbursement in advance for hiring extra manpower to handle the applications. If the programme was to be re-launched, apart from community service units, the Secretariat should also consider inviting other NGOs/service units/local organisations to assist in implementing the programme, in particular for the Eastern, Wong Tai Sin and Shatin districts which do not have any community service units.

Moreover, increasing and advancing the disbursement of administrative fees would facilitate the community service units in the arrangement of its work.

(h) Overall effectiveness

35. As far as the overall effectiveness of the programme is concerned, the beneficiaries, NGOs/community service units, or the staff members of the implementation team all agreed that the programme helped to relieve the financial pressure of low-income persons who are inadequately housed and hoped that the CCF could re-launch the programme. Most beneficiaries were positive about the service provided by the community service units and agreed that the application procedures were simple and convenient.

36. A consolidated analysis of the information and data collected showed that the stakeholders were positive about the programme and were generally satisfied with the existing operation arrangement. They supported to re-launch the programme so as to help more needy low-income persons. They also suggested that the CCF should consider relaxing the eligibility criteria, increasing publicity channels and enhancing the support to the community service units.

37. The programme had reached out to a number of “n have-nots” (generally refer to those who do not own any properties, live in PRH or receive CSSA) and provided them with financial assistance. By identifying low-income persons who are in need, the community service units were able to follow up with the welfare needs of low-income persons on a long-term and sustainable basis. Finally, the experience gained in implementing the programme would facilitate the Government’s consideration of more comprehensive poverty alleviation arrangements.

CCF Secretariat
April 2013

**Community Care Fund Assistance Programme -
Provision of School Lunch Subsidy for Needy Primary Students
Evaluation Report by Education Bureau**

Background

1. On 20 April 2011, the former Steering Committee of Community Care Fund (CCF) endorsed the assistance programme of the School Lunch Subsidy for Needy Primary Students (the Programme) to be implemented in the 2011/12 school year. The Programme is implemented by the Education Bureau (EDB). Its objective is to assist the non-Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) primary school students coming from low-income families so that they could have a more balanced and ample diet at school. Their families could then utilise the lunch expenses for other purposes so as to alleviate their financial burden. This evaluation report consolidates the findings on the Programme reported earlier to the ex-CCF Steering Committee and CCF Task Force under Commission on Poverty (CoP).

2. The target beneficiaries of the Programme are Primary 1 to Primary 6 students studying in whole-day government, aided or direct subsidy scheme (DSS) primary schools, receiving full grant from the Student Financial Assistance Agency (SFAA), and having lunch as arranged by their attending schools. Due to its limited resources, the Programme targets the neediest students, with target beneficiaries being primary school students receiving SFAA full grants, and excluding those receiving SFAA half grants and secondary school students. The assistance is given to the needy students through their schools, but not in the form of cash, so as to ensure the whole subsidy is spent on students' lunch expenses. Before implementation, EDB has held briefing sessions for the schools to consult them on the implementation details. Circular memorandum was then issued to invite schools to join the Programme.

3. EDB has collected stakeholders' views on the operation and effectiveness of the Programme through conducting questionnaire survey to participating schools. The key results are summarised as follows:

- (a) The beneficiaries, stakeholders and the public generally agree to the objective of the Programme.

- (b) It is perceived that there will be strong concern on the sustainability of the Programme in the future.
- (c) If the Programme becomes a regular government subsidised scheme, stakeholders in particular the schools are concerned whether there will be measures to address the special needs of students and to alleviate the school workload.

Implementation in the 2011/12 School Year

4. In the 2011/12 school year, there are 500 whole-day government, aided and DSS primary schools joining the Programme. The total number of student beneficiaries is around 57 000. There are 23 primary schools not joining the Programme (with around 300 eligible student beneficiaries). The main reasons for schools not joining the Programme include: the boarding service provided by schools has already covered meals (6 schools), there are other organisations providing lunch/ related subsidy (4 schools), and there is no need to arrange lunch for students (3 schools). There are another 10 schools with parents not requesting to join the Programme. Both EDB and members of the former Education Sub-committee on the CCF have contacted the above schools to understand their reasons for not joining and invite schools to have closer communication with the parents in explaining the situation.

5. To streamline the administrative procedures and to alleviate schools' workload, the funding was disbursed by EDB to participating schools in two phases (late August and late December 2011 respectively), with the calculation of funding based on the information of SFAA full grant recipients of each school. Any surplus/ deficiency of funding in schools will be calculated by the end of school year, with the net surplus returned to CCF.

6. In the 2011/12 school year, the budget for the Programme is \$183.6 million, and the final allocation is \$131.91 million (this is because the number of target beneficiaries and the number of school days are fewer than expected). The administrative fee incurred is \$0.4 million, which is used to hire an administrative assistant and a clerical staff to provide administrative support for implementation of the Programme.

7. The summary of the questionnaire survey conducted by EDB for

schools during the 2011/12 school year is at the Annex.

Implementation in the 2012/13 School Year

8. The former CCF Steering Committee endorsed, at its meeting on 23 May 2012, the extension of the Programme to continue providing assistance to eligible primary students in the 2012/13 school year. The implementation mode and target beneficiaries are the same as in the 2011/12 school year. This is to allow time for the government to consider the implementation details of the regularisation of the Programme.

9. For the 2012/13 school year, there are 505 schools joining the Programme (5 more when compared with 2011/12). The total number of student beneficiaries is around 62 000 (5 000 more when compared with 2011/12). In the 2012/13 school year, there are 18 primary schools not joining the Programme. The reasons are: the boarding service provided by schools has already covered meals (5 schools), there are other organisations providing lunch/ related subsidy (5 schools), parents of eligible students do not make any request (7 schools), and there is no eligible student in the school (1 school).

10. The budget reserved by CCF is \$210.4 million (including \$0.4 million administrative fee). It is estimated that \$180 million will be disbursed to participating schools in the 2012/13 school year.

Regularisation of the Programme

11. The Programme is well-received by the stakeholders. There is strong demand from both parents and students to have the Programme continued, and the public generally agrees to the continuous need of provision of lunch subsidy to the needy primary students. EDB has been proactively considering the feasibility of regularising the Programme but more time and deliberation is needed on the evaluation and implementation details of the Programme upon regularisation.

12. In considering the regularisation of the Programme, EDB has taken into account the following major factors:

Implementation Mode

13. The current practice is for CCF to provide funding direct to schools, which in turn would use the subsidy to pay the lunch providers on behalf of the eligible students. Such practice can ensure the funding is totally utilised for the lunch expenses of the student beneficiaries and has been operating well. If the subsidy is provided to the students' parents in the form of cash allowance as in the existing School Textbook Assistance and Student Travel Subsidy Scheme, it may not be guaranteed that the needy students can have a proper lunch. In fact, some former members of CCF and schools have reflected that individual needy students cannot receive such family support. Furthermore, the price of lunch varies among different schools. Subsidy through cash may lead to some students receiving fewer subsidies.

14. On the other hand, a small portion of students choose not to order lunch from the lunch provider in school because they prefer to have self-prepared lunch, some have food allergy or for other reasons. Thus, they cannot benefit from the Programme. EDB noted that there are not many such students. The schools have already explained to them and their parents about the Programme and they could consider whether to join or not.

School Administration Work

15. During the implementation period of the Programme in the 2011/12 school year, schools have reflected to EDB that lunch arrangement is not part of learning and teaching activities, and hence should not be included in schools' regular service. EDB also noted that the Programme has caused heavy workload to teachers, including arrangement of the operational details, record keeping and accounting, verification of students' eligibility, and payment and return of fees. Schools also have to handle parents' enquiries, such as children's sick leave on the day, uncertainty in the eligibility for the Programme due to the failure of the students in submitting timely applications for student financial assistance, CSSA students' requests to join the Programme instead of getting the CSSA "meal allowance", etc. All these have increased schools' administration work. There are suggestions that the subsidy under the Programme should be disbursed in the form of cash through SFAA to student beneficiaries.

16. As the 2011/12 school year is the first year of implementation of the Programme, both the schools and lunch providers have to adapt to the new

arrangement. EDB noted that in the second year of implementation, the administration work is getting smooth and is on the right track. Schools generally consider that the current operation can ensure that the needy students really benefit from the Programme.

Interface between SFAA and Schools

17. SFAA has been actively working with the schools in the Programme, including the provision of the list of eligible students to the schools. However, the list of eligible students has to be frequently updated due to various reasons, such as students' late submission of information or provision of incomplete information, and families having significant change in financial situation during the school year. It is understood that this would unavoidably cause additional workload to schools, particularly in verifying students' eligibility. SFAA has updated its computer system and improved the workflow in communicating with schools. Enhancement has been made in the 2012/13 school year for schools to have a closer grasp on the students who have a recent change in eligibility status.

Extension of the Subsidy Scope

18. There are views on extending the scope of the Programme to secondary school students, and to cover students receiving SFAA half grant and CSSA. Due to limited resources, the Programme is targeted at the neediest students, that is, primary school students receiving SFAA full grant. Furthermore, the existing mode of providing lunch in schools may not suit secondary schools.

Under CSSA, beneficiaries' basic meal expenditure has already been covered under the CSSA "standard rates". There is an additional "meal allowance"¹ for students receiving full-day education who need to have lunch outside their home. They are therefore not eligible to join the Programme.

2013/14 School Year

19. According to the experience in the 2011/12 and 2012/13 school years, there are two major concerns of the stakeholders, that is, it is effective and

¹ The rate of CSSA meal allowance was \$225 per month for the 2011/12 school year and has increased to \$245 per month for the 2012/13 school year.

worthy to continue to implement the Programme through schools but the additional workload brought to schools has to be addressed.

20. Taking into account stakeholders' views, EDB has proposed to the CCF Task Force to continue with the Programme in the 2013/14 school year, with eligibility and implementation mode remaining intact. In addition, administration fee will be provided to schools so as to alleviate their additional workload. The proposal was endorsed by the CoP in February 2013.

21. The estimated funding for the 2013/14 school year is \$216.9 million, inclusive of the additional administrative fee for schools. Participating schools will be provided with administration fees, with a cap at 3% of the funding allocation. The mode of disbursement will be in 3 tiers, at a fixed rate of \$6,000, \$12,000 or \$18,000 for each year. Schools with relatively more number of student beneficiaries will receive \$18,000 per year and schools with fewer number of student beneficiaries will receive \$6,000 per year. Schools with an average number of student beneficiaries will receive \$12,000 per year. This mode can ensure that schools can at least obtain an administration fee of \$6,000. Schools are given the flexibility to utilise the administration fee². The ceiling for this additional administration fee for the 2013/14 school year is \$6.5 million. The administration fee can be flexibly utilised together with other school grants.

Education Bureau

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² When a school deploys a staff to assist in handling the related administration work for the Programme and other administration work, the school may apportion the staff cost based on the workload or work hours and charge it to the administration fee and other school grants provided by EDB accordingly.

**Provision of School Lunch Subsidy for Needy Primary Students
Views Collected from Schools in the 2011/12 School Year**

1. EDB conducted an evaluation of the Programme in March 2012. There is a return of 252 questionnaires among 262 issued. The return rate is over 96%. The key results are summarised as follows:

- i) Around half of the schools think the Programme should be regularised. 27% of schools hope for further streamlining of the administration work, and around 30% of schools have adjusted their usual lunch arrangement due to the Programme.
- ii) 89% of the responding schools have designated a teacher-in-charge for the Programme. The responsible staff in handling parents' enquiries are class teachers (36% of the schools), clerical staff (32% of the schools), deputy school head (11% of the schools) and social worker (14% of the schools).
- iii) For the additional workload caused by the Programme, the major areas are record keeping and accounting (97%), verification of students' SFAA full grant eligibility (96%), payment of fee (90%) and handling of fee return (79%). Views reflected above are mainly from schools with relatively large number of student beneficiaries. Around 60% of the participating schools have over 100 eligible students.
- iv) Parents are concerned about the eligibility of students for the Programme (including how to support those students who prepare their own lunch). Some parents suggest that the Programme should cover other students, such as those receiving SFAA half grant and secondary students. Some CSSA families request to join the Programme.