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14 October 2014

Legislative Council Secretariat  
(Attn: Ms Catherina YU)  
Legislative Council Complex  
1 Legislative Council Road  
Central  
Hong Kong

Dear Ms YU,

**Evaluation reports of the Community Care Fund assistance programmes**

At the meeting of the Subcommittee on Poverty under the House Committee of the Legislative Council held on 24 May 2013, Members asked the Administration to provide the evaluation reports of the Community Care Fund assistance programmes. We have provided a total of 15 evaluation reports (covering 17 programmes) so far. The following four evaluation reports, which have been completed recently, are now attached for Members' information:

- (1) the evaluation report for the programme of "Enhancing the flat rate grant under the School Textbook Assistance Scheme";
- (2) the evaluation report for the programme of "Enhancing the financial assistance for needy students pursuing programmes below sub-degree level";
- (3) the evaluation report for the programme of "One-off living subsidy for low-income households not living in public housing and not receiving CSSA"; and

- (4) the evaluation report for re-launching the programme of “Subsidy for Comprehensive Social Security Assistance recipients living in rented private housing”.

For enquiries, please feel free to contact the undersigned. Thank you.

<sup>\*</sup>  
Yours sincerely,



(Ms Rebecca WAN)  
for Secretary for Home Affairs

c.c.

Secretary for Education (Attn: Mr David LEUNG)  
Director of Social Welfare (Attn: Ms Ann CHAN)

**Community Care Fund Programme  
Enhancing the Flat Rate Grant under  
the “School Textbook Assistance Scheme”  
Evaluation Report**

## **Background**

The Community Care Fund (CCF) Task Force agreed at its meeting on 4 July 2013 to launch a new assistance programme in the 2013/14 school year to enhance the assistance for each primary and secondary student eligible under the School Textbook Assistance Scheme (STAS)(the programme), so as to strengthen the support for the needy parents of primary and secondary students for meeting their various school-related expenses. In addition, the CCF Task Force agreed that the enhancement should also cover primary and secondary students receiving the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA).

2. The programme was endorsed by the Commission on Poverty (CoP) on 22 July 2013. With funding provided by the CCF, the programme is to be jointly implemented by the Student Financial Assistance Agency (SFAA) and the Social Welfare Department (SWD). The programme is targeted at primary and secondary students eligible for full grant and half grant under the STAS<sup>1</sup> in the 2013/14 school year and students up to senior secondary level who are CSSA recipients<sup>2</sup>. Students eligible for full grant and receiving CSSA will each be provided with an additional flat rate grant of \$1,000, while those eligible for half grant will each be provided with an additional flat rate grant of \$500.

3. The programme was implemented by the SFAA and SWD in October 2013. The expenditure for the 2013/14 school year is estimated

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<sup>1</sup> The STAS provides means-tested assistance for needy Primary 1 to Secondary 6 students in government, aided, per caput grant schools and schools under the Direct Subsidy Scheme for covering the costs of essential textbooks and miscellaneous school-related expenses. The full level of assistance for the 2013/14 school year ranges from \$2,050 to \$4,194, depending on the student's level of study.

<sup>2</sup> Eligible students under the CSSA Scheme include primary and secondary students, as well as students pursuing full-time Yi Jin Diploma programme and full-time Vocational Training Council programmes at Secondary 6 level or below.

to be \$292.47 million (including administrative cost of \$0.47 million)<sup>3</sup>, and it is expected that about 348 000 students will benefit from the programme.

## **Implementation in the 2013/14 school year**

### Student Financial Assistance Agency

4. The SFAA started to disburse the subsidy to eligible applicants in October 2013. No separate application for the additional flat rate grant is required. The additional flat rate grant is disbursed to the eligible applicants together with the textbook assistance automatically and credited to their bank accounts through auto-transfer. To inform applicants of details about the additional flat rate grant, the SFAA uploads relevant information onto its website and notifies the applicants in writing of the related transaction after disbursement. As at May 2014, the SFAA has provided additional flat rate grant for 235 042 primary and secondary students (136 874 receiving full grant and 98 168 receiving half grant) and the amount of subsidy involved is about \$185.96 million (see Appendix I).

### Social Welfare Department

5. Based on the data of its Computerised Social Security System, the SWD also started to disburse an additional flat rate grant of \$1,000 to eligible CSSA students in October 2013. Likewise, it is not necessary for CSSA recipients to apply for the flat rate grant separately and the subsidy will be disbursed through auto-transfer. As at May 2014, the SWD has disbursed additional flat rate grant to 76 693 CSSA students and the amount of subsidy involved is more than \$76.64 million (see Appendix I). To inform CSSA recipients of details about this programme, the SWD uploads relevant information onto the website on government news of the Information Services Department and its departmental website, and posts notices at various Social Security Field Units.

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<sup>3</sup> The CoP gave approval to increase the administrative costs for this programme on 23 December 2013 (a rise from \$0.36 million to \$0.47 million) to cover the handling fees charged by the bank for making disbursement through auto-transfer.

## **Evaluation of programme effectiveness**

6. The SFAA and SWD have evaluated the effectiveness of the programme. The details and findings of the evaluation are as follows:

(i) Additional flat rate grant as support for low-income families

7. At present, on top of textbook expenses, parents of primary and secondary students also need to meet miscellaneous school-rated expenses each year, such as school uniforms, stationery, club fees, “Tong Fai” and air conditioning charges. Besides, to cater for the needs of students and facilitate students’ participation in co-curricular/extra-curricular activities, many schools have made available outfits other than school uniform and sports suit for parents to purchase for their children. Such expenses have certainly added to the financial burden of low-income families. There are views in the community that the current flat rate grant under the STAS is insufficient to cover various expenses. The launch of the new programme by the SFAA and SWD in the 2013/14 school year has nearly doubled the amount of the flat rate grant for each student eligible for full grant under the STAS, and CSSA students receiving a flat rate grant for selected items of school-related expenses are also provided with additional flat rate grant. The programme certainly can strengthen the support for low-income families.

(ii) Survey among beneficiaries

8. To gauge stakeholders’ views on the effectiveness of the programme, the SFAA and SWD conducted a telephone survey among parents of 856 primary and secondary student beneficiaries between November 2013 and January 2014. The findings showed that about 90% of the respondents agreed that the programme could help relieve their pressure in meeting the school-related expenses of their children, and over 95% were satisfied with the operational arrangements of the programme. In the survey, some respondents mentioned that the grant provided them with genuine assistance and should be provided on a continuous basis, while a small number expressed hope that the date of disbursement could be advanced. More details are given at Appendix II.

(iii) Programme-related support and information for the public

9. During the implementation of the programme, the SFAA and SWD set up telephone hotlines and posted notices at various Social Security Field Units respectively to provide relevant information and support to the interested public. Between November 2013 and January 2014, the SFAA received a total of about 150 enquiries about the programme, most of which were related to disbursement arrangement and the level of subsidy. More details are given at Appendix III.

(iv) Implementation mode of the assistance programme

10. The programme operates under the existing mechanism to disburse the subsidy to needy students through the SFAA and SWD. Apart from minimising cost and administrative work, such an arrangement can enable the disbursement of additional flat rate grant to eligible persons within the shortest span of time. Moreover, separate applications are not required for the convenience of applicants. The SFAA and SWD are of the view that the mode of operation has generally worked well and they do not need to engage additional manpower for implementation.

## **Conclusion**

11. According to the findings of the above evaluation and survey, we note that as at May 2014, the programme has benefited over 310 000 primary and secondary students. The vast majority of the parents surveyed agreed that the programme could, to a certain extent, relieve their pressure in meeting the school-related expenses of their children and found the operational arrangements satisfactory. Some respondents indicated that the additional flat rate grant provided them with genuine assistance and should be implemented on a continuous basis. They also expressed that it was appropriate for the programme to be implemented by the SFAA and SWD. This shows that the programme can meet the objective for which it was launched as well as the objective of the CCF to render appropriate assistance to people facing economic difficulties.

## **Regularisation of the programme**

12. In light of the effectiveness of the programme and the beneficiaries' expectation of its continued implementation, the Government announced in the 2014 Policy Address that starting from the 2014/15 school year, the programme would be incorporated into its regular assistance programme and provision for regularisation has already been earmarked in the 2014-15 estimates.

13. Upon regularisation, subsidy of the programme will be disbursed to needy students through the STAS of the SFAA and the CSSA Scheme of the SWD. Subsidy will be disbursed to parents of eligible students before the commencement of each school year in July/August the earliest to provide them with appropriate support. Since the programme will be implemented under the existing mechanism, the SFAA and SWD do not need to augment their existing manpower.

14. Upon regularisation of the programme in the 2014/15 school year, it is estimated that about 260 000 full-grant and half-grant primary and secondary students and 80 000 CSSA students will benefit through the Government's subvention mechanism.

Education Bureau  
May 2014

**Appendix I**

**Number of student beneficiaries of additional flat rate grant and  
amount of grant disbursed**  
**(as at May 2014)**

	<b>No. of beneficiaries</b>	<b>Amount disbursed</b>
<b>Primary and secondary students receiving school textbook assistance</b>	235 042	\$185.96 million
<b>Primary and secondary students receiving CSSA</b>	76 693	\$76.64 million
<b>Total</b>	<b>311 735</b>	<b>\$262.60 million</b>



## Appendix II

### Survey among beneficiaries of additional flat rate grant

#### Respondents' satisfaction level and views about the assistance programme

Questions and views	No. of responding beneficiaries	Percentage
1. Do you agree that this assistance programme has relieved your pressure in meeting the school-related expenses of your children? - Agree - Disagree - No comment	775 70 11	90.5% 8.2% 1.3%
2. Generally speaking, are you satisfied with the arrangements of this assistance programme? - Satisfied - Not satisfied - No comment	820 35 1	95.8% 4.1% 0.1%
3. Do you have any other comments on this assistance programme? - No - Yes ( <b>can comment on more than one aspect</b> <sup>Note 1</sup> ) <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Level of assistance<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- raise the level (112)</li><li>- standardise the level (7)</li><li>- adequate (2)</li></ul></li><li>● Timing of disbursement<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- appropriate (5)</li><li>- should be disbursed at an earlier date (3)</li></ul></li><li>● Others<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- The grant can help beneficiaries and should be provided on a continuous basis (33)</li><li>- Other special subsidy should be provided (15)</li></ul></li></ul>	684 121 8 48	79.9% 14.1% 0.9% 5.6%

Note 1: The total of 856 respondents is used as the base for deriving the percentages for different items.

For item 3, the corresponding percentages do not add up to 100% as some respondents chose to comment on more than one aspect.

## Appendix III

### Category and number of enquiries about this programme received by the SFAA <sup>Note 2</sup>

<b>Category of enquiries</b>	<b>No. of cases</b>
Eligibility	18
Application procedures	12
Disbursement arrangements	66
Level of subsidy	49
Others	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>151</b>

Note 2: If a single enquiry involves questions touching on more than one topic, each topical question will be counted once in its respective category.

**Community Care Fund Programme  
Enhancing the Financial Assistance for Needy Students  
Pursuing Programmes Below Sub-degree Level  
Evaluation Report**

**Background**

The Community Care Fund Task Force agreed at its meeting on 4 July 2013 to allocate funds for the implementation of a new assistance programme entitled “Enhancement of the financial assistance for needy students pursuing programmes below sub-degree level” (the programme). Subsequently, the Commission on Poverty endorsed at its meeting on 22 July 2013 the one-year implementation of the programme in the 2013/14 academic year, with a view to enhancing the support for needy students pursuing programmes below sub-degree level in two aspects, namely:

- (a) establishing a tuition fee reimbursement mechanism for students (“Tuition fee reimbursement scheme”); and
  - (b) providing a “Flat rate grant for academic expenses” for students.
2. Proposed target beneficiaries must meet all of the following criteria:
- (a) students who are pursuing full-time programmes below sub-degree level;
  - (b) students who are pursuing subvented programmes; for self-financing programmes, the following conditions must be met:
    - (i) the programmes are accredited by the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications;
    - (ii) the tuition fee levels are approved by the Education Bureau (EDB); and
    - (iii) the programmes are accepted by the Civil Service Bureau as meeting the entry qualification of civil service grades requiring Level 2 in five subjects (including Chinese Language and English Language), in the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination;

- (c) students who are assessed to be eligible for full or half grant under the means-test mechanism of the Student Financial Assistance Agency (SFAA); and
  - (d) students whose families are not recipients of the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) since “school fees and school-related expenses” of the students concerned are already covered by the “special grants” under the CSSA Scheme.
3. Students meeting the above criteria will be eligible for tuition fee reimbursement, regardless of the programme duration, and will receive reimbursement of 100% or 50% of the tuition fees payable depending on the result of their means tests. Eligible students pursuing programmes lasting one year or more may also receive the “Flat rate grant for academic expenses” (\$2,094 for full grant and \$1,047 for half grant).
4. The estimated funding for the programme is \$64.89 million, and the administrative expenses will be borne by the respective implementing agencies.

### **Implementation in the 2013/14 academic year**

5. In the 2013/14 academic year, students meeting the criteria for this programme are those pursuing Yi Jin Diploma programme and subvented Vocational Training Council (VTC) programmes below sub-degree level. These include students pursuing the Diploma in Vocational Education programme, the subvented Foundation Diploma (Level 3) programme, as well as programmes offered by the Hospitality Industry Training and Development Centre and the Chinese Cuisine Training Institute, etc. Students pursuing the self-financed Foundation Diploma (Level 3) programme offered by the VTC are also eligible. Since students pursuing Yi Jin Diploma programme are already eligible for the tuition fee reimbursement under the SFAA, they cannot receive further benefit from the Tuition Fee Reimbursement Scheme of this programme.
6. Upon the implementation of this programme, the SFAA provides a “Flat rate grant for academic expenses” for eligible students pursuing Yi Jin Diploma programme on top of tuition fee reimbursement. As regards students pursuing VTC programmes, the VTC directly

processes their applications and disburses tuition fees as well as the “Flat rate grant for academic expenses” by drawing reference from the SFAA’s means-test mechanism<sup>1</sup>.

7. Most of the programmes eligible for the “Tuition fee reimbursement scheme” and the “Flat rate grant for academic expenses” commence in September. As at 31 March 2014, the amount of subsidy disbursed and the number of beneficiaries are as follows:

2013/14 academic year (as at 31 March 2014)	Tuition fee reimbursement scheme	Flat rate grant for academic expenses
<b>Amount of provision</b>	\$52.59 million	\$12.3 million
<b>Amount of subsidy</b>	around \$39.84 million	around \$6.92 million
<b>No. of beneficiaries</b>	<b>2 510</b>	<b>4 109</b>
- <i>VTC programmes</i>	2 510	2 561
- <i>Yi Jin Diploma programme</i>	--	1 548

Note: Some of the programmes below sub-degree level invite application several times within an academic year. The number of beneficiaries is therefore expected to increase further.

8. On the principle of proper use of public funds, the SFAA/VTC matches applicants’ information against the records of the Social Welfare Department to ensure that “Flat rate grant for academic expenses” will not be provided for students already receiving special grants under the CSSA Scheme. Since some of the VTC students are admitted in the middle of an academic year, the VTC has to match their information separately against the SFAA’s records to avoid double subvention.

9. The “Tuition fee reimbursement scheme” and the “Flat rate grant for academic expenses” are effective in relieving the financial burden of needy students pursuing programmes below sub-degree level

<sup>1</sup> Before the implementation of this programme, the VTC was already providing partial fee remission for needy students with its limited resources, in a way modelled on the SFAA’s means-test mechanism.

in meeting their academic expenses. Students and parents are of the view that the programme provides them with genuine assistance and the administrative arrangements have generally worked well.

### **Regularisation of the programme**

10. The various existing student financial assistance provided by the Government target mainly primary and secondary students as well as students pursuing programmes at sub-degree, degree or post-graduate levels. In recent years, the number of students pursuing programmes below sub-degree level has been on the increase. The Government is therefore actively reviewing the financial assistance provided for needy students pursuing such programmes<sup>2</sup>. The “Tuition fee reimbursement scheme” and the “Flat rate grant for academic expenses” under this programme are well-received by the stakeholders. The EDB is aware of students’ strong demand that the assistance in this area should be provided on a continuous basis. In this connection, the Government announced in the 2014 Policy Address that starting from the 2014/15 academic year, this programme would be incorporated into its regular assistance programme to benefit needy students pursuing programmes below sub-degree level and provision for regularisation has already been earmarked in the 2014-15 estimates.

11. Upon regularisation of the programme in the 2014/15 academic year, it is estimated that the “Tuition fee reimbursement scheme” will benefit over 3 500 students, while the “Flat rate grant for academic expenses” will benefit more than 7 000 students. The total annual provision required is estimated to be \$68 million. The administrative expenses will be borne by the respective implementing agencies.

12. In deliberation about how to regularise the programme, the EDB has taken into account the following major factors:

#### *Mode of subvention and target beneficiaries*

13. Since programmes below sub-degree level are generally pitched at levels from Secondary 3 to Secondary 6, we consider it more appropriate to adhere to the present mode of subvention by putting in

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<sup>2</sup> Students pursuing Yi Jin Diploma programme are eligible for the SFAA’s tuition fee reimbursement. At present, they can only apply to the SFAA for Student Travel Subsidy and Subsidy for Internet Access Charges as well as Non-means-tested Loan.

place a tuition fee reimbursement mechanism for needy students pursuing programmes below sub-degree level, instead of grant/loan schemes applicable to post-secondary students. Moreover, the level of “Flat rate grant for academic expenses” should remain comparable to the annually-adjusted flat rate grant for primary and secondary students, in order to relieve the financial burden of needy students pursuing programmes below sub-degree level in meeting their academic expenses.

14. As for the target beneficiaries, both the “Tuition fee reimbursement scheme” and the “Flat rate grant for academic expenses” draw reference from the SFAA’s means-test mechanism and make full-level or half-level reimbursement and/or disbursement according to the results of the means test of eligible students. We will continue to adopt the existing eligibility criteria for beneficiaries under this programme (details in paragraph 2 above). The reason is that such criteria can be used as a means to ensure that the programmes below sub-degree level pursued by student beneficiaries are up to standard and widely-recognised and prevent a hike of the tuition fees charged by the programmes because of the tuition fee reimbursement provided by the Government.

#### *Implementation details*

15. In general, curriculum at primary and secondary levels as well as programmes at post-secondary level have been well established. The SFAA has accumulated a wealth of experience in implementing student financial assistance schemes for primary, secondary and post-secondary students. Relatively speaking, programmes below sub-degree level are more diversified in terms of delivery mode. Take the VTC programmes below sub-degree level as an example. The duration of study ranges from eight weeks to three years and the programme structure and mode of study also vary greatly. In view of this, we consider it more desirable for individual institutions which have the best knowledge of their delivery mode to process students’ applications in accordance with the SFAA’s means-test mechanism. As regards students pursuing Yi Jin Diploma programme, since the SFAA is currently responsible for processing their applications for tuition fee reimbursement, it should be more cost-effective for the SFAA to disburse “Flat rate grant for academic expenses” to eligible students pursuing Yi Jin Diploma programme as well. The same approach has been adopted for this programme. After the evaluation, we think that the administrative arrangements have generally worked well.

16. In light of the above considerations, we will continue with the existing mode of implementation by having the SFAA and VTC directly process applications submitted by students pursuing Yi Jin Diploma programme and VTC programmes respectively after regularisation of the programme. If programmes below the sub-degree level offered by other institutions also meet the relevant criteria, we are prepared to allow the institutions themselves to process the applications submitted by their students and make reimbursement and/or disbursement for their students. The EDB will work out implementation details and arrangements for the reference of institutions, and carry out appropriate monitoring of the matter.

Education Bureau  
May 2014



**Community Care Fund Programme**  
**One-off living subsidy for low-income households**  
**not living in public housing and not receiving CSSA**  
**Evaluation Report**

## **Background**

The “One-off living subsidy for low-income households not living in public housing and not receiving CSSA” programme (the Programme) under the Community Care Fund (CCF), as implemented by the CCF Secretariat (the Secretariat) with the assistance of 247 service units, commenced on 2 December 2013 to relieve the financial pressure of low-income households. The application period ended on 29 August 2014. As at 30 June 2014, the Secretariat has received around 44 000 applications, and disbursed about \$280.18 million subsidy to 38 546 eligible households (91 471 persons).

2. The amount of subsidy under the Programme is \$3,500 for one-person households, \$7,000 for two-person households, and a uniform \$10,000 for three-or-more-person households. The beneficiaries of the two CCF programmes rolled out earlier, namely the “Subsidy for Low-income Elderly Tenants in Private Housing” (the elderly tenants programme) and the “Subsidy for Low-income Persons who are Inadequately Housed” (the inadequately housed programme), were also included as targeted beneficiaries of the Programme.

3. Application for the Programme adopted a phasing arrangement. The Secretariat first verified in December 2013 the eligibility of households that had benefited under the elderly tenants programme and the inadequately housed programme (old application households). The Programme then started to accept new applications in phases according to the household size from January 2014 onwards.

## **Evaluation Results Analysis**

### ***(A) Application Statistics***

4. The Secretariat received around 44 000 applications, of which 39 005 have been vetted. Among these vetted applications, 38 546 households have been disbursed with the subsidy, while 445 applications have been considered ineligible and 14 applications withdrawn. The following analysis is based on the information of the 38 546 households (91 471 persons) who have been disbursed with the subsidy.

#### **(a) Information of households**

5. Application households came from various districts across the territory.

In terms of district of residence, Sham Shui Po (8 287 applications/around 22%), Yau Tsim Mong (6 201 applications/around 16%) and Kowloon City (3 717 applications/around 10%) had the largest numbers of application households. Among the beneficiary households, one-person households accounted for the largest share at around 30% (11 671 households), while two-person and three-person households accounted for around 26% (9 807 households) and 25% (9 737 households) respectively. The remaining share of some 19% (7 331 households) were four-or-more-person households.

6. As for the types of accommodation, most beneficiary households resided in rented private housing (33 199 households/around 86%) and temporary housing (4 424 households/around 12%). The rest accounted for around 2% of the beneficiary households, including those living on board vessels (4 households), renting unit in industrial buildings (152 households) and commercial buildings (114 households), renting bedspaces offered under the Home Affairs Department's Singleton Hostel Programme (139 households) and homeless persons (514 households). Among the 33 199 beneficiary households renting private housing, a majority resided in rented sub-divided units (around 59%) and rented independent units (around 22%), and the remaining 19% or so resided in rented rooms (cubicles/solid-partitioned cubicles) or bedspaces/cocklofts. As for the 4 424 beneficiary households residing in temporary housing, a majority resided in squatter structures (around 65%) and roof-top structures (around 17%), and the rest were residents of other temporary housing (around 10%) and licensed structures (around 8%). Among the 514 homeless households, most were street sleepers (around 84%) and the rest resided in temporary shelters (around 16%).

7. In terms of income level, the average income of households from one-person to six-or-more-person amounted to about 55% to 66% of the relevant income limits, of which four-person households accounted for the largest proportion. Among the 33 465 households paying rent for accommodation (including beneficiary households in private housing, industrial buildings or commercial buildings), the average rents paid by one-person and two-person households were higher as a proportion of the relevant rental limits (about 58% and 49% respectively), while the corresponding figures for three-person to six-or-more-person households were about 40% to 46%. As for the rental level of various regions, generally speaking, the average rent was higher on Hong Kong Island<sup>2</sup> and the average rent paid by households represented about 31% to 53% of the average income (of which the proportion for one-person households was the highest).

8. Meanwhile, among the 445 ineligible applications, the primary reasons were that applicants and the household members (if applicable) were Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) recipients (127 applications), owned property in Hong Kong (74 applications), and the rent (83 applications) or

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<sup>2</sup> The rental level in the New Territories was the highest for six-or-more-person households.

income (70 applications) exceeding the specified limits.

(b) Information of applicants and household members

9. Among the 38 546 beneficiary households, there were a total of 91 471 applicants and household members altogether, of which permanent residents and non-permanent residents accounted for 58 077 (about 63%) and 33 394 (about 37%) respectively. There were 65 642 persons aged 18 or above (about 72%) and the remaining 25 829 persons (about 28%) were household members aged under 18, which included 16 812 persons aged under 11. About 13 persons were mentally incapacitated household members aged between 18 and 51.

10. Among the 445 ineligible applications, there were a total of 801 applicants and household members altogether, of which permanent residents and non-permanent residents accounted for 590 (about 74%) and 211 (about 26%) respectively. There were 615 persons aged 18 or above (about 77%) and 186 persons (about 23%) aged under 18, which included 117 persons aged under 11.

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

(a) Beneficiaries

11. The Secretariat and service units conducted a questionnaire survey with 2 977 beneficiary households (about 7.7%) by random sampling to understand their views on the subsidy amount, eligibility criteria, application procedures, publicity effort, implementation arrangements of the Programme and services provided by the service units.

12. About 87% of the respondents agreed that the subsidy provided by the Programme could relieve their financial pressure, but some respondents hoped that the level of the subsidy could be raised and the subsidy could be disbursed on a continuous basis. As regards the four-or-more-person households, respondents suggested that the amount of subsidy should be granted in proportion to the number of eligible household members. A vast majority of the respondents considered the eligibility criteria reasonable (about 93%) and application procedures of the Programme simple and convenient (about 96%). Most of them agreed that exempting the beneficiary households under the elderly tenants programme and the inadequately housed programme from re-submitting applications could streamline the application procedures. Some respondents suggested that the income and rental limits of the Programme should be raised, the Programme should cover households receiving CSSA and those living in public housing and the income test should be replaced by the asset test. They also hoped that application forms could be submitted to the Secretariat by mail directly, or that collection boxes could be placed at the Public Enquiry Service Centres of the Home Affairs Department. About 90% of the respondents considered that the publicity efforts for the Programme were adequate. However,

some said there should be more publicity channels, such as mobile apps, emails and outdoor publicity activities, and the Programme should be more clearly promoted through television, e.g. the application methods and venues should be provided in the announcements of public interest.

13. On the implementation of the Programme, about 97% of the respondents were satisfied with the arrangement, but a few applicants said the requirement that supplementary information should be submitted by the applicant in person was not flexible. About 98% of the respondents found the services provided by service units satisfactory, commending the staff for providing good services and being helpful in explaining the application details and offering necessary assistance. Nevertheless, some respondents pointed out that the locations of a few service units were too remote, and hoped that more service units be set up in each district and clearer guidelines on the application procedures be provided to avoid confusion.

(b) Unsuccessful applicants

14. The Secretariat also tried to reach 40 unsuccessful application households (around 9%) for telephone questionnaire survey to collect their views on the Programme. However, only 23 applicants were reached and were willing to take the survey and complete the questionnaire. The respondents generally considered that the subsidy amount (about 31%), the income limit (about 17%) and the rental limit (about 26%) of the Programme should be raised. Some took the view that the subsidy should be granted regularly to those in need. About 22% of the respondents considered that the types of accommodation covered under the Programme were inadequate, and that households living in public housing were more needy and should also be covered. Some respondents said that it was unfair to reject their applications for the reason that their household members owned a property, and suggested that the applications should be individual-based instead of household-based.

15. In terms of application procedures, about 87% of the respondents agreed that they were simple and convenient, but some respondents thought that they should be further streamlined, the processing time should be reduced and the number of service units should be increased. About 78% of the respondents agreed that the publicity efforts for the Programme were sufficient, but a small portion of the respondents considered that the publicity was insufficient and suggested that the publicity channels of the Programme should be increased (e.g. distributing leaflets) for better understanding of the application procedures and the eligibility criteria. About 79% of the respondents were satisfied with the Secretariat's arrangement for implementing the Programme, and 83% of the respondents found that the service provided by the service units satisfactory. On the whole, they hoped that the CCF could continue to implement this Programme, so as to relieve the financial pressure of low-income families.

(c) Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)/ service units which assist in the implementation/staff of the implementation team under the Secretariat

16. The Secretariat held an evaluation meeting on 9 June 2014 to collect views from NGOs/service units on the implementation arrangements and eligibility criteria of the Programme with a view to evaluating the Programme. NGOs/service units which attended the meeting commented on the Programme in terms of subsidy amount, income and rental limits, types of accommodation, publicity efforts, prevention of abuse, application arrangements, streamlining of procedures and administrative duties, etc..

17. The NGOs/service units generally agreed that the subsidy provided by the Programme could relieve the financial pressure faced by the low-income households. They also considered that relaxing the eligibility criteria to cover people living in sub-divided units with individual entrance doors and industrial/commercial buildings could benefit more persons in need. They suggested that the Programme should also cover those who rented accommodations in Home Ownership Scheme (HOS)/Tenants Purchase Scheme (TPS) flats which were subject to the alienation restriction, as well as guesthouses. Taking account of the rapid increase of rent, some NGOs/service units suggested that the income and rental limits and the subsidy amount under the Programme should be raised, and an additional level of subsidy should be provided for four-or-more-person households, and the amount of subsidy should be increased across all levels.

18. Regarding publicity, most NGOs/service units indicated that they had promoted the Programme through the established channels of communication with the targeted clients, set up street stations, distribute promotional leaflets, conducted door-to-door visits, and sent staff to explain the application procedures and helped registration at squatter areas. They considered that promotion of the Programme to people residing in remote areas and ethnic minorities should be strengthened, and wordings of “squatter” should be mentioned on publicity materials. In addition, they suggested that the number of service units allocated with additional publicity fees should be increased.

19. Most NGOs/service units agreed that the phasing arrangement of submitting applications could effectively regulate the flow of applicants, so as to keep them from crowding in the service units for making applications at the same time. In view of the large number of applications made by eligible three-or-more-person households, it was suggested that a four-phase application streaming arrangement should be adopted, that is, an additional phase to accept applications from four-or-more-person households.

20. In order to prevent abuse of the Programme, some NGOs/service units considered that only requiring applicants to declare their household income in the application form was too lenient. They suggested that a condition should be

included in the form to require applicants to submit income proof together with the form for verification. If the Programme is to be re-launched, the Secretariat should conduct matching of the data of old application households with those at the Social Welfare Department (SWD) and the Land Registry to ensure that the households were not CSSA recipients or property owners, with a view to preventing abuse of the Programme.

21. Some NGOs/service units also raised other suggestions to enhance the application procedures, including inputting basic information of applicants on the application form referred by service units into the computer system as soon as possible to facilitate any enquiry about the progress by applicants. It was also suggested that choices like “Re-entry Permit”, “One Way Permit” and “Document of Identity” should be added under the column “Type of Identity Proof” in the application form to be completed by those children who do not have an identity card/a birth certificate but with the relevant identify proof documents. The requirement in relation to the submission of rental receipt copies and the information to be included in the receipts should be relaxed. On the whole, NGOs/service units were satisfied with the operational arrangement of the Programme and agreed that the Programme could help the needy low-income persons and allow follow-up action to be taken in response to their other welfare needs.

22. CSSA recipients are not eligible for the Programme. Some NGOs/service units suggested that the subsidy granted under the Programme should be excluded in the calculation of the amount of household income for CSSA applications. Others learnt that some applicants made applications for both CSSA and the Programme almost at the same time. They suggested that the Secretariat should coordinate with SWD to avoid any corresponding deduction of CSSA allowance paid to applicants who had been granted subsidy from the Programme but were required to refund the Secretariat as they had been granted CSSA eventually.

23. The views given at the evaluation meeting by NGOs/service units that assisted in implementing the Programme are set out in the Summary of Discussion of Evaluation Meeting as attached.

24. Furthermore, staff of the implementation team under the Secretariat agreed that the arrangement of processing old applications first and then new ones by phases could effectively speed up the application procedures and avoid confusion. With this arrangement, the Secretariat could process a large number of applications within a reasonable time period and allow application households to receive subsidy in time. Staff of the implementation team considered that under the existing mode of operation, applicants could submit their applications to the service units near their accommodations. This not only allowed service units to help handle their applications and enquiries with professional experience, but also made it easier for the staff to identify ineligible applicants through home visits. Also, the mode of collaboration between the implementation team and service

units was smooth.

**(C) *Public Enquiries and Views***

25. 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 service units. Public response to the Programme was positive, with the Programme hotline/the CCF's standing hotlines receiving over 10 000 enquiries during the first two weeks. In particular, over 1 500 enquiries were received each day during the first three days since the Programme was launched. As at the end of June, the Secretariat had received 54 824 enquiries about the Programme, among which 51 545 came from the public and were mostly about the Programme's eligibility criteria, application arrangements and progress. 3 279 enquiry calls came from staff of service units and were mostly about the Programme's application arrangements, eligibility criteria and administrative arrangements, etc.. In addition, the Secretariat received 25 written views/enquiries from the public/stakeholders.

26. The public and NGOs/service units had offered their views on a number of issues. Regarding Programme eligibility, low-income persons who did not fully meet the eligibility criteria might be given a half-amount subsidy; relaxing the eligibility to cover Hong Kong residents renting Mainland China housing, senior retirees or low-income persons who owned properties; covering persons who were temporarily residing in relatives' home without paying any rent; excluding alimony expenses from household income, etc.. As regards application arrangements, the Secretariat should also accept applications by mail as well; an acknowledgement of receipt of application should be provided upon receiving the reply slips from old application households; stepping up efforts to prevent abuses, etc.. As for the administrative arrangements, it was recommended that the Hong Kong resident status vetting should be scrapped and replaced by requiring applicants to submit documentary proof of Hong Kong resident status along with the application. On the whole, the views received were positive; respondents found the application procedures and the arrangements for application processing satisfactory, and they would like to see the continued disbursement of the subsidy.

**Conclusion**

**(a) Number of beneficiary households/persons**

27. As at the end of June, the Secretariat had received about 44 000 applications, among which some 20 700 were replies from old application households and around 23 300 were new applications. As for the 7 300 or so old application households which had yet to reply, around 2 900 households had informed the Secretariat that they were ineligible for the Programme. We were unable to contact some 450 households, and the relevant service units were

following up with the remaining 3 950 old application households which had yet to reply.

28. The original estimated number of beneficiary households of the Programme was some 78 700 (over 210 000 persons). Although there are still two months to go before the close of application, on the basis of the current progress, we can expect that the final number of applications to be received will be lower than the estimated number. The number of applications submitted by boat dwellers, households living in industrial and commercial buildings, residents of the “Singleton Hostel Programme” and households living in temporary housing will be lower than the respective estimated number by more than 50%. Details are shown in the table below:

Type of accommodation	Original estimated number of beneficiary households (a)	Number of households disbursed with the subsidy (b)	Percentage of the number of households disbursed with the subsidy as compared with the original estimated number (c=b/a)
Private housing	59 000	33 198	56%
Industrial and commercial buildings	5 000	266	5%
Temporary housing	13 200	4 424	34%
Vessels	159	4	3%
Bedspaces under the Singleton Hostel Programme	493	140	29%
Homeless persons	856	514	60%
<b>Total</b>	<b>78 708</b>	<b>38 546</b>	<b>Not applicable</b>

29. The number of beneficiary households was estimated by the Secretariat with reference to the largest possible number of beneficiaries (i.e. according to the figures provided by the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) and other related departments/organisations). However, there was no information on the economic conditions of those households, such as whether they owned a property in Hong Kong or not. Moreover, not all eligible households would submit applications for the Programme. Therefore, it was difficult to make an accurate estimate on the number of applications. If the Programme is to be re-launched, the latest statistics and the implementation experience of the current Programme



can be referred to for estimating the number of beneficiary households.

(b) Types of accommodation

30. Representatives of the NGOs/service units unanimously agreed that the relaxation of eligibility criteria of the Programme, for example, covering households living in sub-divided units with individual entrance doors and in industrial/commercial buildings, could benefit more needy people.

31. Some NGOs/service units considered that the Programme should cover tenants of guesthouses as well. At present, applicants of the Programme must be renting/residing in one of the accommodation types specified under the Programme. Yet, such accommodations do not include collective living quarters (i.e. psychiatric hospitals, convalescent hospitals, infirmaries, penal institutions, elderly homes, boys' and girls' homes, hotels, hostels and dormitories (such as those for university students)). Noting that the low-income persons may have a chance to rent and live in hotels, guesthouses, hostels or serviced apartments, the Secretariat would consider including households living in those types of accommodation under the Programme.

32. In addition, some NGOs/service units noted that the Programme already covered tenants living in industrial and commercial buildings, and suggested that the Programme should also cover tenants living in flats which were still subject to alienation restrictions under the HOS and the TPS because those households were not benefited from the housing assistance. However, since the Programme aims to provide support to households not living in public housing and the types of accommodation above fall within the category of "public housing" as defined by C&SD, this issue will require careful consideration.

(c) Household income and rental limits

33. As for the eligibility criteria, while some respondents said that the income limit should be raised, the average income of the beneficiary households only represented some 55% to 66% of the income limits. There were also views that reference could be made to the updated income limit for applying public rental housing to revise the income limit under the Programme. If the Programme is to be re-launched, the Secretariat will consider the latest data concerned.

34. There were also views that the Programme's rental limit should be raised and revised according to the changes in rental level. When the CCF Task Force endorsed the Programme, the statistics provided by C&SD showed that in 2012, households meeting the Programme's income limit and renting private housing in Hong Kong had a median rent-to-income ratio of about 39%. As such, the Programme's rental limit, which was 50% of the household size's respective income limit (e.g. \$4,400 for one-person household), should be appropriate. From the analysis of the application statistics, the average rent paid by the

beneficiary households (from one-person to six-or-more-person households) represented 40% to 58% of the respective rental limits, and 31% to 53%<sup>3</sup> of the average household income. Therefore, the rent paid by most households was still considerably below the respective rental limit under the Programme.

(d) Prevention of abuse

35. There were views that exempting applicants from submitting applications with income proof was too lenient. Besides, since some cases were not selected for home visits/income tests, abuses might be resulted. Moreover, some old application households who were receiving CSSA had confirmed their eligibility for the Programme because they did not have a clear understanding of the eligibility criteria. The Secretariat will consider the vetting procedures to avoid abuses. However, requiring applicants to submit their application with income proof may increase the vetting workload or cause inconvenience to the applicants. The Secretariat will need to strike a balance between streamlining administrative arrangements and preventing abuses.

(e) Enhancing publicity and promotion

36. Some respondents said the Secretariat should step up promotion of the Programme to people living in the squatter areas or the ethnic minorities, suggested that the Support Service Centres for Ethnic Minorities should be invited to assist in the implementation of the Programme. In implementing the Programme, posters in six ethnic minority languages were prepared (for distribution to ethnic minority students in primary and secondary schools) and announcements of public interest were prepared for broadcast on television and radio. Also, each service unit of the Neighbourhood Level Community Development Project (NLCDP) which assisted in the implementation of the Programme (17 in total) was provided with additional publicity fees of \$10,000 for enhancing the publicity work in the district and covering the related manpower expenditure. The Secretariat consulted the concerned NLCDP units on whether the additional publicity fees could help promote the Programme. Nine of them (about 53%) had responded and they unanimously agreed that the

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<sup>3</sup> The percentage for one-person households was 53%. The figure was relatively higher possibly because 13% of the one-person households were elderly households who had no income or generally lower income (for one-person households, the average rent paid by elderly households was 91% of the respective average household income and the average rent paid by non-elderly households was 47% of the respective average household income).

<u>Number of household members</u>	<u>Percentage of average rent over average household income (%)</u>
1	53
2	41
3	36
4	32
5	32
6 or more	31

publicity fees could enhance the promotion of the Programme. Some hoped that the amount of fees could be increased.

37. When launching the Programme in December 2013, the Secretariat made use of a variety of promotion channels, including broadcasting on television and radio, uploading information to the Internet, printing posters, application forms and programme briefs, holding press briefings, and issuing press release, etc.. The Secretariat placed posters at the Public Enquiry Service Centres of the Home Affairs Department, the District Social Welfare Offices of SWD as well as the Support Service Centres for Ethnic Minorities for information of applicants. An enquiry hotline was also set up by the Secretariat for applicants or other members of the public to seek information and make enquiries.

38. In view of the above comments on the Programme's publicity efforts, the Secretariat can consider increasing the number of service units receiving additional publicity fees and inviting the Support Service Centres for Ethnic Minorities to assist in the implementation of the Programme. The Secretariat also welcomes service units and members of the community to give advice on the promotion channels.

(f) Streamlining the procedures and administrative arrangements

39. On enhancing the administrative arrangements, some service units suggested that upon receipt of the application forms referred by the service units, the Secretariat should input the basic information of the applicants provided on the forms into the computer system as soon as possible, so as to facilitate the applicants to enquire about their application progress and avoid duplication of applications. Other service units hoped that more service units could assist in the more densely populated districts and the support to units that had to handle a relatively larger number of applications could be strengthened. If the Programme is to be re-launched, the Secretariat can consider enhancing the handling procedures, inviting other NGOs' service units to assist in implementing the Programme, and continuing to provide additional manpower support to service units that have to handle more applications.

(g) Other views

40. There were views suggesting that the Programme might spur rental rates and in the end property owners would be the beneficiaries. In this regard, the CCF had commissioned the University of Hong Kong (HKU) to analyse the distribution of households<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> HKU assisted in converting the benefited households' addresses into "geographic coordinates" to analyse their distribution. Moreover, the Secretariat would contact some of the beneficiary households immediately after subsidy disbursement and six months later to understand their rental payment status, as well as comparing and analysing such rental rate changes (if any) against territory-wide rental data (provided by the Rating and Valuation Department), at that time so as to see if the Programme's subsidy had affected the rental rates paid by the beneficiary households.

41. Regarding the coordination between applications under the Programme and CSSA applications, the Secretariat would liaise with SWD to make appropriate arrangements. As regards views that the Secretariat and SWD should discuss the arrangement of including the Programme's subsidy as household income while processing CSSA applications so that applicants' entitled CSSA payment would not be reduced, the Secretariat had already consulted SWD. As the subsidy disbursed under the Programme and CSSA were similar in nature in the sense that both were subsistence subsidies for beneficiary households, SWD decided that while beneficiaries of the Programme should not receive CSSA at the same time, subsidy received under the Programme by such households, should be included as their household income for CSSA applications.

(h) Overall effectiveness

42. As far as the overall effectiveness of the Programme is concerned, the beneficiaries, NGOs/service units, or the staff of the implementation team under the Secretariat all agreed that the Programme helped to relieve the financial pressure of low-income persons who are not living in public housing and not receiving CSSA and hoped that the CCF could re-launch the Programme. Most beneficiaries were positive about the service provided by the service units and the Secretariat and agreed that the application procedures were simple and convenient.

43. 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 service units.

44. In the light of the Budget's various short-term relief measures, the Programme was launched to utilise the CCF's effective identification mechanism to provide a one-off subsidy to the "n have-nots" who could not benefit from those relief measures, so as to plug the gaps in the existing system. The Government has no plan to incorporate the Programme into the regular assistance programme and service, but the experience in implementing the Programme would facilitate the Government's consideration of more comprehensive poverty alleviation arrangements.

**Community Care Fund**  
**One-off living subsidy for low-income households**  
**not living in public housing and not receiving CSSA**

**Evaluation Meeting**

**Summary of Discussion**

The CCF Secretariat (the Secretariat) held an evaluation meeting for the “One-off living subsidy for low-income households not living in public housing and not receiving CSSA” (the Programme) on 9 June 2014. For the purpose of evaluating the Programme, the meeting collected the views of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and service units on aspects such as the implementation arrangement and eligibility criteria of the Programme. Views and recommendations from the participants are summarised below:

**Types of Accommodation**

- The relaxation of eligibility criteria (e.g. to cover households living in sub-divided units with individual entrance doors and in industrial/commercial buildings) could benefit more needy people.
- It was recommended that the Programme should cover tenants living in flats which were still subject to alienation restrictions under the Home Ownership Scheme (HOS) and the Tenants Purchase Scheme (TPS) because these households were not benefited from housing assistance.
- It was recommended that the Programme should cover tenants of guesthouses.

**Income and Rental Limits**

- As rental rates continued to soar (e.g. in Kwai Chung and Kwun Tong), some applicants (especially one-person households) failed to benefit from the Programme as their monthly rent exceeded the Programme’s rental limit. It was recommended that the rental limits should be raised.
- The income limits for the Waiting List for Public Rental Housing were adjusted every April. It was recommended that the income and rental limits of the Programme should be adjusted accordingly after the

Programme was launched.

### **Subsidy Amount**

- For large families (e.g. ethnic minorities families) with a large number of household members, the subsidy amount was inadequate to meet the expenses. It was recommended that a further level of subsidy should be added for households with four-or-more persons and that the subsidy amount of each level should be raised.

### **Publicity**

- It was recommended that there should be more channels and time spent on publicity, such that the Programme's information might reach more needy households.
- Promotion of the Programme to ethnic minorities who did not understand Chinese or English should be strengthened. It was recommended that promotional leaflets should be delivered to the service units as soon as possible before the Programme's implementation, such that more time would be available to publicise the Programme.
- It was recommended that the Support Service Centres for Ethnic Minorities should be invited to assist in implementing the Programme.
- Publicity of the Programmes at squatter areas and remote areas should be strengthened. It was recommended that the term "squatter" should be highlighted in promotional materials and announcements of public interest.
- It was recommended that the number of service units receiving additional publicity fees should be increased. For example, certain units in the New Territories with expansive service coverage, which had established solid community network, would facilitate the publicity efforts at the community level.

### **Application Arrangements**

- It was agreed that the phasing arrangement of submitting applications could effectively regulate the flow of applicants, so as to keep them from crowding in the service units for making applications at the same time and avoid chaos.

- In view of the large number of applications made by eligible three-or-more-person households, it was suggested that a four-phase application arrangement should be adopted, i.e. an additional phase to accept applications from four-or-more-person households should be arranged.
- To minimise the inconvenience caused to applicants and service units, it was suggested that old application households, who had already moved to another district, could submit applications through other service units in the district concerned.
- It was suggested that application households should be required to submit the application forms in person to service units which assist in implementing the Programme, so as to minimise the submissions of applications by community bodies or organisations on behalf of the application households.

### **Prevention of Abuse**

- There was a view that only requiring applicants to declare their household income in the application form was too lenient. It was suggested that a condition should be included in the form to require applicants to submit income proof together with the form for verification.
- It was hoped that the Secretariat would provide reference materials on the types of identity proof, so as to facilitate service units to verify the eligibility of applicants and their household members for the Programme when checking their identity documents.
- If it was found after the home visit that an applicant was not living in the stated address on the date of application but only moved in after the application was made, such application should be turned down because applicants were required to meet the eligibility criteria of the Programme on the date of application.
- It was found that some old application households who were receiving CSSA confirmed their eligibility for the Programme in the reply slip to the Secretariat. For the sake of preventing any abuse, it was suggested that if the Programme was to be re-launched, the Secretariat should match data with SWD and the Land Registry for the old application households to ensure that the households were not CSSA recipients or property owners.

## **Streamlining Procedures and Administrative Arrangements**

- Upon receipt of application forms referred by service units, the Secretariat should input the basic information of applicants into the computer system as soon as possible. This was meant to facilitate applicants to enquire about the progress of their applications and avoid duplication of applications.
- If applicants were tenants of flats under the HOS or the TPS, it was difficult for service units to ascertain if the alienation restrictions imposed on those flats had been lifted.
- A reply slip should be provided for service units to report to the Secretariat about the follow-up results on old application households who had yet to reply to the Secretariat.
- Choices like “Re-entry Permit”, “One Way Permit” and “Document of Identity” should be added under the column “Type of Identity Proof” in the application form for those children who did not have an identity card/a birth certificate but held the relevant identify proof documents.
- The Secretariat should relax the requirement of information to be included in the copies of rental receipts submitted so as to minimize the inconvenience caused to application households and service units.

## **Other Views**

- It is hoped that the Programme’s subsidy should not be counted as the household income for CSSA applications.
- At present, some applicants made applications for both CSSA and the Programme almost at the same time. The eligibility of an applicant for the subsidy under the Programme would depend on the “application date”. The Secretariat should coordinate with SWD to avoid any corresponding deduction of CSSA allowance paid to applicants who had been granted subsidy under the Programme but were required to refund the Secretariat as they had been granted CSSA eventually.
- The Secretariat should discuss with SWD to avoid the inclusion of Programme subsidy into household income at the time of submitting CSSA application, leading to a corresponding deduction of CSSA allowance.



- The Secretariat should provide information about the application details and distribution of households with young people, so that youth service units can have a better understanding of the situation of households with young people who had made the application.
- More service units of NGOs should be invited to assist in implementing the Programme in more densely populated districts (such as Tseung Kwan O), where not many service units participated in the Programme comparatively.
- It was agreed that the approach of providing additional manpower support by the Secretariat to service units that had to handle more applications was an effective way to share out the caseload of service units.
- The CCF should give an analysis on the household information collected under the Programme to find out if there was any rise in rental which benefited the landowners as a result of the provision of subsidy under the Programme.
- An evaluation should be conducted as soon as possible and the results be released for service units to have a better understanding of the situation of the “n have-nots”.
- Regularisation of the Programme should be considered in the light of inflation and escalating rental rates in order to relieve the financial pressure faced by low-income households. In the long run, the Government should impose rent control and provide rent allowance to those households.
- Since one-person households and the non-working elderly were not covered in the “Low Income Working Family Allowance”, it was hoped that the Programme could provide subsidy to the needy “n have-nots” under the Programme in a sustainable manner.

**Community Care Fund Programme**  
**Re-launching “Subsidy for Comprehensive Social Security Assistance**  
**Recipients Living in Rented Private Housing”**  
**Evaluation Report**

## **Background**

The Community Care Fund (CCF) re-launched the “Subsidy for Comprehensive Social Security Assistance recipients living in rented private housing” programme (the Programme) to provide a one-off subsidy to Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) households living in rented private housing and paying a monthly rent which exceeded the maximum rent allowance (MRA) under the CSSA Scheme, so as to relieve their financial burden as a result of periodic increase of rent.

## **Implementation of the Programme**

2. The Programme is implemented by the Social Welfare Department (SWD). SWD announced the details of the Programme and arranged publicity<sup>1</sup> in September 2013. Based on the record of the Computerised Social Security System (CSSS), eligible CSSA households were identified with a view to providing one-person household with a one-off subsidy of \$2,000 and two-or-more-person household with a one-off subsidy of \$4,000. A total subsidy of about \$51.26 million has been released so far.

## **Evaluation**

3. SWD commenced the evaluation on the effectiveness of the Programme in April 2014 and completed it in May 2014. The effectiveness of the Programme was analysed mainly through the number of beneficiaries, subsidy disbursed, how the beneficiaries use the subsidy and the opinions of the beneficiaries etc. The data was collected from the record in the CSSS that was used for processing the subsidy and the survey conducted with the beneficiaries. Besides, in conducting the Programme evaluation, SWD had also made reference to the experience

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<sup>1</sup> Publicity efforts included press release, distribution of programme leaflets via SWD’s District Social Welfare Offices and the Home Affairs Department’s District Offices, and uploading all relevant information onto the SWD Homepage.

gained in the evaluation of the Programme for its first launch in 2011 as well as the methodology used in other CCF programmes.

## **Analysis of the Evaluation Results**

### **(a) Statistical Data on the Beneficiaries**

4. Based on the record from the CSSS, SWD verified that 17 751 CSSA households had met the eligibility criteria and subsidy was already arranged to all of them. Meanwhile, another 25 households required follow-up action. The majority of beneficiaries, 9 873 households (approximately 55.6%) were from one-person households, followed by two-person households of 4 048 (approximately 22.8%). As at 31 May 2014, the total disbursement was about \$51.26 million, including \$19.75 million for one-person CSSA households and \$31.51 million for two-or-more-person CSSA households.

### **(b) Survey on the Beneficiaries**

5. SWD conducted a telephone survey with 150 randomly-selected CSSA household beneficiaries<sup>2</sup>, so as to understand their use of subsidy and their opinions on the Programme.

#### **(i) Use of Subsidy**

6. About 73% of the respondents used the subsidy for rental expenses, while 59% of the respondents spent it on daily expenses<sup>3</sup>. Some of the respondents had also used the subsidy on other aspects, including learning expense of their children (3 respondents), medical expense (1 respondent), consumables for infant (1 respondent) and savings (1 respondent).

#### **(ii) Opinion on the Programme**

7. Most of the respondents (95%) agreed that the Programme could relieve their burden on housing expenses, and 96% of the respondents were satisfied with the operational arrangement of the Programme. 75% of the respondents had no other comments on the

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<sup>2</sup> All the 150 respondents had agreed to give their opinions.

<sup>3</sup> As individual respondent was allowed to provide more than one option on their use of subsidy while the percentage for each option was calculated based on the overall number of respondents (i.e. 150), the total percentage did not add up to 100%.

Programme, while 12% and 8% of them suggested increasing the amount of subsidy and continuous release of the subsidy respectively. 5 respondents expressed that the subsidy was not effective enough and some of them considered that their housing problem could only be solved by assisting them in moving into the public housing in long run. There were also 4 respondents gave their opinions on the eligibility criteria and the release of programme information, and 1 respondent suggested providing other subsidies, for instance subsidy for furniture and equipment.

(c) Public Enquiries

8. Along with the re-launch of the Programme, SWD had set up a telephone hotline to provide necessary support and information to the individuals concerned. As at May 2014, SWD had received about 860 enquiries regarding the Programme, most of which were about their eligibility to the Programme (about 42%) and the arrangements for their payment (about 44%) while enquiries about confirming the amount of subsidy received and the implementation schedule of the Programme were both less than 10%.

**Conclusion**

(a) Programme Publicity

9. The CSSA households meeting the eligibility criteria were identified based on the CSSS records. Although the beneficiaries were not required to submit applications, SWD had carried out a series of publicity work, including press release, distribution of programme leaflets via SWD's District Social Welfare Offices and the Home Affairs Department's District Offices, and uploading all relevant information onto SWD Homepage so as to foster the eligible persons to understand the arrangement of the Programme, and also to let the persons, who had met the eligible criteria but did not duly report their change(s) in housing to SWD, aware of the launch of the Programme and to report respective change(s) timely so as to be disbursed the subsidy entitled to.

(b) Operational Arrangement

10. Although some of the surveyed beneficiaries suggested increasing the amount of subsidy and expressed their opinions on the eligibility criteria and the release of programme information, over 95% of the surveyed beneficiaries were satisfied with the operational

arrangement of the Programme. Furthermore, compared with the overall 17 751 CSSA household beneficiaries, the public enquiries concerning the Programme in a number of about 860 was on the low side, which reflected that the release of programme information during its implementation was sufficient, and the telephone hotline set up had effectively provided immediate support and information to the persons concerned.

(c) Overall Effectiveness

11. As revealed by the survey statistics, the surveyed beneficiaries generally agreed that the Programme could relieve their burden on housing expenses. This showed that the Programme had achieved its objective of relieving the financial burden of the beneficiaries as a result of periodic increase of rent.

12. 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 for measuring the rental movements of private housing among non-CSSA households with relatively low expenditure, the MRA is adjusted to meet the rental expenses of the CSSA households. Under the mechanism, the MRA in the years of 2012 to 2014 was adjusted upwardly by 5.7%, 7.8% and 6.5% respectively. Along with this, the number of CSSA households benefited from the Programme due to their rents exceeding the MRA has dropped from about 22 600 at its first launch to about 17 700 at its re-launch, which indicated that the mechanism had effectively reflected the relevant rental change. If the rent allowance is adjusted according to the actual rent paid by the CSSA households living in private housing, under the tight housing provision, it might induce an increase of private housing rent and thus increase burden to the non-CSSA households with low income which may indirectly result in more households falling into the net of CSSA.

13. The rent of private housing and its supply are closely linked. In long run, the Government will continue to increase the supply of public housing to fulfill the housing needs of those who cannot afford rented private housing. For individuals who have pressing housing needs, the social workers of the Integrated Family Service Centres of SWD or non-governmental organisations would provide them with appropriate assistance 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/or recommendation for allocation of public rental housing flats under the Compassionate Rehousing Scheme.

14. The above measures have already taken care of the housing needs of the CSSA households in various aspects, and SWD will continue to adjust the MRA in accordance with the existing mechanism, so as to reflect relevant rental change; hence it is not necessary to incorporate the Programme into the Government's regular assistance programme. In addition, as shown by the recent figures<sup>4</sup>, the variation of private housing rent has been relatively steady. Yet, there is still a sign of periodic rental increase and CSSA households living in rented private housing are therefore still in need of assistance at this stage. Since the Programme has acted as a buffer in relieving the financial pressure of the CSSA households living in rented private housing during the periodic increase of rent and can avoid triggering the increase of rent in private housing, it is recommended for its re-launch to provide additional support by one-off subsidy to the households concerned.

Social Welfare Department  
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<sup>4</sup> According to the Monthly Report on the Consumer Price Index published by the Census and Statistics Department, the month-to-month increase of private housing rent index under the Consumer Price Index (A) ranged from 0.4% to 0.6% during the period from January to May 2014.