

政府總部
民政事務局

香港灣仔
軒尼詩道一百三十號
修頓中心四樓



GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT
HOME AFFAIRS BUREAU

4TH FLOOR, SOUTHORN CENTRE,
130 HENNESSY ROAD,
WAN CHAI,
HONG KONG.

25 November 2014

Legislative Council Secretariat
(Attn: Mr Colin CHUI)
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central, Hong Kong

Dear Mr Chui,

Subcommittee on Poverty Meeting on 23 June 2014

At the Legislative Council (LegCo) Subcommittee on Poverty meeting on 23 June 2014, Members and deputations raised a number of views and suggestions. Please find below our response.

The Community Care Fund (CCF) is an important part of the Government's poverty alleviation blueprint. Since its establishment in 2011, it has plugged gaps in the existing system by launching 27 assistance programmes with more than 810 000 beneficiaries.

Over the past three years of operation, relevant Government bureaux/ departments have been continuously reviewing the existing measures which assist the under-privileged, with a view to putting forward suggestions to the CCF for rolling out assistance programmes as soon as possible that seek to plug the gaps identified. Having regard to the experience gained and the views received on programmes, the CCF also timely identifies which programmes need to be revised or extended through its continuous review mechanism, so that the assistance can be provided in an effective manner.

In addition, the CCF has been implementing measures on a pilot basis to help the Government identify those initiatives that have been proven effective for incorporation into the regular assistance programme. So far, ten CCF programmes have been regularised. As far as the area of social welfare is concerned, the support provided under

the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme, pre-school rehabilitation services as well as services for persons with severe physical disabilities have been enhanced, after taking account of the effects of relevant CCF programmes. The Labour and Welfare Bureau and Social Welfare Department will continue to review the existing assistance schemes, as and when appropriate, in helping the disadvantaged.

For the comments and suggestions raised by Members and deputations on the existing CCF programmes, our response is at Annex 1. The relevant considerations for not regularising those programmes, which had been run for three years or more, are at Annex 2.

All along, the CCF has placed much emphasis on engaging the public/ stakeholders in mapping out assistance programmes. Focus group meetings on specific issues and public consultation sessions will continue to be held to gauge their views on the work of the CCF. The public/ stakeholders are always welcome to provide any ideas or suggestions to the CCF through various channels, including the CCF website, letters, faxes, emails or telephone hotlines, etc. Ideas and suggestions received will be circulated to the CCF Task Force for reference.

As regards the suggestion of uploading lists of issues to be discussed and issues under consideration onto the CCF website, we have considered that premature release of information about the issues being deliberated by the CCF will not be appropriate as that may cause undue expectation by the public. At present, apart from reporting regularly to the LegCo Subcommittee on Poverty the work progress of the CCF every six months, we have uploaded ample information about the CCF at its website for reference by the public. We will continue to provide more information on the website at suitable juncture.

The suggestions about new CCF programmes raised by Members and deputations were submitted to the CCF Task Force for discussion at its meeting on 8 October 2014. The CCF will, having regard to the ideas and suggestions received from the public and stakeholders, continue to launch more programmes to assist the underprivileged and low-income families.

Please contact the undersigned for any enquiries.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Candy Lau', with a stylized flourish at the end.

(Ms Candy Lau)
for Secretary for Home Affairs

Encl.

**Response to Comments and Suggestions on the
Existing Community Care Fund (CCF) Programmes**

(1) One-off living subsidy for low-income households not living in public housing and not receiving CSSA

- The CCF launched the programme to relieve the financial pressure of low-income households not living in public housing and not receiving the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) (i.e. known colloquially as the “n have-nots”). The application for the current programme has closed on 29 August 2014.
- The Commission on Poverty (CoP) approved to re-launch the programme in January 2015. While the eligibility criteria of the programme to be re-launched will largely follow those of the current programme, we will make reference to the latest “Waiting list Income Limits for Public Rental Housing for 2014/15” for the income limits of the programme to be re-launched. Notably, the income limits of the re-launched programme has recorded a 8% to 12% (for respective household sizes) increase when compared with those of the existing programme. In addition, the amount of subsidy will be increased and one more tier of subsidy will be introduced for households with four persons or more to cater for the needs of bigger families. The subsidy amounts for one-person, two-person, three-person and four-or-more-person households are \$4,000, \$8,000, \$11,000 and \$13,000 respectively.
- To ensure a wide coverage for more convenience to the applicants, 239 service units from 45 non-governmental organisations (NGOs) will assist in implementing the programme to be re-launched.
- For a prospective new arrival from the Mainland, he/ she will not be counted as a family member in the means tests under the programme to be re-launched. This is in line with the consideration of the existing Government policies.
- The programme provides subsidy to “n have-nots” who cannot benefit from the Budget’s various short-term relief measures. While the Government has no plan to incorporate the programme into the regular assistance programme, the experience of implementing the programme will facilitate the Government’s consideration of more

comprehensive poverty alleviation arrangements.

(2) Subsidy to meet lunch expenses at whole-day primary schools for students from low-income families

- The programme was launched in the 2011/12 school year to meet lunch expenses of students receiving full-grant in whole-day primary schools. The subsidy level was determined by the actual fee charged by lunch suppliers and the subsidy was directly paid to lunch suppliers through the schools. The programme has become a regular government assistance programme starting from the 2014/15 school year.
- When the CCF launched the programme, it was decided that the programme should focus limited resources on those who needed the subsidy most, i.e. primary students who received full-grant.

(3) After-school care pilot scheme

- The scheme was initially a one-year programme starting in the 2012/13 school year. Its objective is to identify the most needy students from primary one to secondary three, to co-ordinate and integrate after-school learning and supplementary activities for them, so that the students can make better use of their time before they return home. The scheme was later extended to the 2013/14 and the 2014/15 school year. Near the completion of the scheme, the CoP will consider its future.
- Information on the Government's existing "After School Care Programme" and the "Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project" are set out at the Appendix to this Annex.

(4) Enhancement of the flat rate grant under the "School Textbook Assistance Scheme"

- The programme was implemented in the 2013/14 school year. It has now been regularised starting from the 2014/15 school year. With the additional \$1,000 for flat rate grant, each full-grant student will receive about double the amount of the flat rate grant they received in 2013/14 school year. Apart from the flat rate grant for meeting academic expenses, the CCF also launched the After-school Care Pilot Scheme. The Government also supports the extra-curricular activities of students by providing funding to schools and NGOs through various schemes, including the School-based After-school

Learning and Support Programmes, After-school Learning Support Partnership Pilot Scheme, and the Hong Kong Jockey Club Life-wide Learning Fund.

(5) Elderly dental assistance programme

- The CCF rolled out the programme in September 2012 to subsidise low-income and needy elders for receiving dentures and related dental services.
- The CCF Task Force under the CoP has set up a working group to consider expanding the target beneficiaries of the programme to persons who have financial difficulties and do not receive CSSA, for example, elderly persons who are Old Age Living Allowance recipients, taking into account the progress of the implementation and the experience gained.

(6) Subsidy for the severely disabled persons aged below 60 who are non-CSSA recipients, requiring constant attendance and living in the community

- The CCF launched the programme in September 2011 to provide a special care subsidy to persons with severe disabilities aged under 60 who are living in the community, requiring constant attendance and not receiving CSSA for assisting them to purchase care goods/services or for other purposes related to caring needs. The programme was extended twice in November 2012 and November 2013, and will be further extended in late November 2014.
- There are three levels of subsidy: those with household income at or less than 100% of the Median Monthly Domestic Household Income (MMDHI) to receive “full grant” of the subsidy (\$2,000 per month); those in the range of above 100% to 125% of the MMDHI to receive “three-quarters” of the subsidy (\$1,500 per month) and those in the range of above 125% to 150% of the MMDHI to receive “half grant” of the subsidy (\$1,000 per month).
- The income requirement for CCF programmes is generally set at 75% of the MMDHI so as to ensure that the CCF can reach those facing financial difficulties. In view of the additional care needs of persons with severe disabilities, the monthly household income limit of this programme was relaxed from 75% to 100% of the MMDHI in 2012 and further to 150% of the MMDHI in 2013. The income limit of this programme is considered sufficient to support the

persons with severe disabilities for their higher expenses related to additional care needs.

- The objective of the programme is to support the caring needs of persons with severe disabilities aged below 60. Since persons aged 60 or above might receive support from the existing subvented community support services for the elderly, they were not the programme's target beneficiaries. The programme has to be operated in accordance with its original objective. This is to follow the guiding principle that CCF programmes should complement the assistance and services provided by the Government or other charitable funds, and duplication of efforts should be avoided as far as practicable.
- The evaluation result of the programme which was reported to the CoP in May 2013 concluded that the programme would not be incorporated into the Government's regular assistance programme for the following reasons:
 - The beneficiaries mainly used the subsidy for medical consultation, drugs and daily household expense. Existing measures have already provided a long-term protection to the persons with severe disabilities on their needs in these aspects e.g. medical waiver, Samaritan Fund, Higher Disability Allowance, etc.
 - the Social Welfare Department (SWD) has been continuously enhancing the subvented services for persons with severe disabilities to meet their specific needs, e.g. provision of training service through District Support Centre for Persons with Disabilities and Day Care Service for Persons with Severe Disabilities, and regularisation of the Home Care Service for Persons with Severe Disabilities since March 2014; and
 - SWD will also implement an integrated support service programme for persons with severe physical disabilities in the fourth quarter of 2014, and will by then regularise two related CCF assistance programmes for persons with severe physical disabilities who need constant attention and care so as to relieve their burden arising from respiratory support medical equipment and related medical consumables, and to enable them to continue staying in the community.

(7) Special subsidy to persons with severe physical disabilities for renting respiratory support medical equipment

- The CCF launched the programme in January 2013 to provide a special subsidy to persons with severe physical disabilities living in the community, requiring constant attendance and not receiving CSSA but coming from financially vulnerable households for renting respiratory support medical equipment. It was extended in September 2013 and May 2014.
- The amount of subsidy that eligible individuals received is determined according to their monthly household income and their annual household disposable financial resources. There are three levels of subsidy and the details are as follows:

Monthly household income	Monthly subsidy granted	
	Annual household disposable financial resources of \$100,000 or below	Annual household disposable financial resources over \$100,000 but not exceeding \$180,000
At or less than 100% of the MMDHI	“Full grant” of the subsidy (\$2,500)	“Full grant” of the subsidy (\$2,000)
In the range of above 100% to 125% of the MMDHI	“Three-quarters” of the subsidy (\$1,875)	“Three-quarters” of the subsidy (\$1,500)
In the range of above 125% to 150% of the MMDHI	“Half grant” of the subsidy (\$1,250)	“Half grant” of the subsidy (\$1,000)

- The income requirement for CCF programmes is generally set at 75% of the MMDHI so as to ensure that the CCF can reach those facing financial difficulties. To provide stronger support for the additional care needs of persons with severe physical disabilities, the monthly household income limit of this programme was relaxed from 100% to 150% of the MMDHI in September 2013. The income limit of this programme is considered sufficient to support the persons with severe physical disabilities for their higher expenses related to medical equipment and consumables.

- The programme has been incorporated into the Government's regular assistance programme since November 2014.
- (8) Special subsidy to persons with severe physical disabilities for purchasing medical consumables related to respiratory support medical equipment
- The CCF launched the programme in September 2013 to provide a special subsidy to persons with severe physical disabilities living in the community, requiring constant attendance and not receiving CSSA but coming from financially vulnerable households for purchasing medical consumables related to respiratory support medical equipment. It was extended in May 2014.
 - With annual household disposable financial resources not exceeding \$180,000, the amount of subsidy that eligible individuals received is determined according to their monthly household income. There are three levels of subsidy, viz. those with household income at or less than 100% of the MMDHI to receive "full grant" of the subsidy (\$2,000 per month at most), those in the range of above 100% to 125% of the MMDHI to receive "three-quarters" of the subsidy (\$1,500 per month at most) and those in the range of above 125% to 150% of the MMDHI to receive "half grant" of the subsidy (\$1,000 per month at most).
 - The income requirement for CCF programmes is generally set at 75% of the MMDHI so as to ensure that the CCF can reach those facing financial difficulties. To provide stronger support for the additional care needs of persons with severe physical disabilities, the monthly household income limit of this programme was set at 150% of the MMDHI. The income limit of this programme is considered sufficient to support persons with severe physical disabilities for their higher expenses related to medical equipment and consumables.
 - The programme has been incorporated into the Government's regular assistance programme since November 2014.
- (9) Subsidy for CSSA recipients living in rented private housing and paying a rent exceeding the maximum rent allowance under the CSSA Scheme
- The programme, launched twice in October 2011 and September 2013 respectively, aims at providing CSSA households living in rented private housing and paying a rent which exceeded the

maximum rent allowance (MRA) under the CSSA Scheme with a one-off subsidy, so as to relieve their financial burden as a result of the periodic increase of rent.

- While SWD will continue to adjust the MRA in accordance with the existing mechanism to suitably reflect rental change, the CCF has re-launched the programme in September 2014 to further alleviate the financial burden of the households concerned. Each eligible one-person household and two-or-more-person household will be provided with a one-off subsidy of \$2,000 and \$4,000 respectively.
- The provision of one-off subsidy in two levels has taken into account both the needs of individual household of respective size and the principle of minimising administrative cost in operating CCF programmes through streamlining the vetting process.

(10) Training subsidy for children from low-income families who are on the waiting list for subvented pre-school rehabilitation services

- The CCF launched the programme in 2011 to subsidise children from low-income families who have been on the waiting list of subvented pre-school rehabilitation services to receive timely and necessary training to facilitate their learning and development while waiting for subvented services. The programme was extended in November 2012, July 2013 and February 2014. Currently, the maximum monthly subsidy for a child to receive relevant training services is \$2,615.
- Considering the effectiveness of the programme, SWD has incorporated it into the Government's regular service starting from October 2014. For the regularised service, there are two levels of subsidy for beneficiaries according to their levels of disabilities, i.e. a maximum subsidy of \$2,763 per month for each beneficiary who is waitlisting for Early Education and Training Centre or Integrated Programme for Disabled Children in Kindergarten-cum-Child Care Centre, and a maximum subsidy of \$3,867 per month for each beneficiary who is waitlisting for Special Child Care Centre or Residential Special Child Care Centre.

(11) Incentive scheme to further encourage CSSA recipients of the Integrated Employment Assistance Programme for Self-reliance to secure employment

- In April 2014, the CCF launched the three-year trial incentive scheme

to further encourage able-bodied unemployed CSSA recipients to take up employment and leave the CSSA net by incentive payment. During the implementation period, those earning from employment exceeding the prescribed disregarded earnings limit (i.e. the earnings not disregarded) under the CSSA Scheme will be accumulated in the form of incentive payment. When the accumulated amount of incentive payment reaches the incentive target, the CCF will release the full amount of the accumulated payment to the participants in one go to facilitate them to leave the CSSA net.

- A total of 2 050 able-bodied CSSA recipients of the Integrated Employment Assistance Programme for Self-reliance (IEAPS) were randomly selected to participate in this trial scheme. SWD has commissioned the current 26 service providers of the IEAPS to assist in the implementation of the scheme. The funding provision of \$226.62 million will be mainly used for disbursement of accumulated payments to the participants and the service fees for the service providers.
- Details of the incentive scheme were announced through press release and publicised in the websites of the CCF and SWD. The progress of the scheme will also be regularly uploaded to the CCF website.
- In addition, SWD has commissioned a consultancy team to conduct an evaluation study on the effectiveness of the incentive scheme.

(12) Pilot scheme on living allowance for carers of the elderly persons from low income families

- The CCF launched in June 2014 the two-year pilot scheme to provide carers of elderly persons from low income families with a living allowance to help supplement their living expenses. The pilot scheme aims to benefit a total of 2 000 eligible carers. A monthly allowance of \$2,000 will be disbursed to an eligible carer, and a maximum of \$4,000 per month will be disbursed to those carers who take care of more than one relevant elderly person.
- 33 NGOs that operate the District Elderly Community Centres and/ or Neighbourhood Elderly Centres assist to provide support services to the eligible carers.
- The provision of carer allowance does not necessarily affect the community care services received by the elderly persons.

Professional assessment on the service mix for the elderly persons concerned would be made by the service providers of subsidised community care service taking into account the care provided by the carers and having regard to the circumstances of individual cases.

- The target beneficiaries of the CCF are those facing economic difficulties and in need of assistance. The monthly household income limit of the pilot scheme is set at 75% of the MMDHI which follows the practice of the general income requirement for CCF programmes so as to ensure that the CCF can reach those carers from low income families.

**Information on the Government's Existing
"After School Care Programme" and
"Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project"**

After School Care Programme

- The Social Welfare Department (SWD) provides After School Care Programme (ASCP) through non-governmental organisations (NGOs) on a self-financing and fee charging basis, offering half-day support services for children aged 6 to 12 whose parents are unable to provide proper care for them during after-school hours owing to work, job-searching, attending vocational/ job training or other reasons. Services provided include homework guidance, parent guidance and education, skill learning and other social activities.
- SWD provides assistance for low-income families to make use of ASCP services through the "Fee Waiving Subsidy Scheme for ASCP" (FWSS). Needy and eligible families may apply to the NGOs operating ASCP for fee waiving. SWD is providing 1 660 full fee waiving places, which can be used flexibly by the ASCP centres, to families with financial difficulties but with the need for after school care service. As at June 2014, 36.5 unused quotas are available.
- To improve ASCP, SWD will allocate additional resources to extend the service hours on weekday evenings, Saturdays, Sundays and school holidays till 9:00 p.m. in some ASCP centres and provide additional fee-waiving and fee-reduction quotas. This could strengthen support for those parents working longer, irregular hours on weekdays and/ or at weekends and those intending to join the workforce. Apart from the existing provision of services including homework guidance, parent education/ counselling and skill learning, other services such as social and development programmes, volunteer services, outdoor activities/ visits will also be included. Meals/ snacks will also be provided to the children receiving ASCP service.
- SWD will conduct regular review on the demand for fee-waiving subsidies in various districts and will also liaise with NGOs concerned to increase their ASCP places to cope with additional demand as and when required.

Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project

- To further address the need of child care services in the society and provide a more flexible form of services, SWD has enhanced the Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project (NSCCP) since October 2014, which includes -
 - (a) adding at least 234 home-based child care places;
 - (b) extending the age limit of children receiving the service from aged under six to aged under nine; and
 - (c) increasing funding to operators to enhance social work support to the service.
- Under the NSCCP, SWD is all along providing fee waiving or reduction to families with financial hardship and social needs.

Community Care Fund (CCF) Assistance Programmes not Incorporated into the Government's Regular Programme but Had Been Run for Three Years or More

- (1) Setting up the School-based Fund (Cross-boundary Learning Activities) to subsidise primary and secondary school students from low-income families to participate in cross boundary learning activities and competitions
- The Fund was a three-year assistance programme implemented from July 2011 to June 2014. Its objective was to subsidise primary and secondary school students from low-income families to participate in cross-boundary learning activities/competitions, so as to widen their horizons and learning experiences.
 - The Commission on Poverty (CoP) and the CCF Task Force considered the evaluation report of the Fund. Members of the Task Force noted the low utilisation rates, and in general agreed that the programme had room for improvement. It was agreed that the Fund should be suspended upon the completion of the programme for 2013-14. The Education Bureau (EDB) was tasked to keep in view students' use of funding from other sources in cross-boundary learning activities and report to the CCF Task Force.
- (2) Subsidy for patients of Hospital Authority for specified self-financed cancer drugs which have not yet been brought into the Samaritan Fund safety net but have been rapidly accumulating medical scientific evidence and with relatively higher efficacy
- The programme was implemented on 1 August 2011. It provides financial assistance to Hospital Authority patients to use specified self-financed (SFI) cancer drugs which have not yet been brought into the Samaritan Fund (SF) safety net but have been rapidly accumulating medical scientific evidence and with relatively higher efficacy. The prevailing mechanism for SF applications, including referral procedures, financial assessment criteria, and processing/approving of applications, has been adopted.
 - As far as the programme is concerned, regularisation means incorporation into the SF safety net. Drugs supported by the SF are

those which had accumulated sufficient medical scientific evidence and with proven efficacy, whereas those supported by the programme are SFI cancer drugs which have been rapidly accumulating medical scientific evidence and with relatively higher efficacy. As the programme's evaluation criteria for drug coverage are different from the SF, regularisation of the programme is not appropriate. Having said that, the programme interfaces with the SF. Under the prevailing mechanism, SFI cancer drugs subsidised by the programme will be covered by the SF safety net when they have accumulated sufficient scientific and clinical evidence. With effect from 13 April 2013, Rituximab for Chronic Lymphocytic Leukaemia and Dasatinib for Acute Lymphoblastic Leukaemia had been repositioned from the programme to the SF.

(3) Subsidy for the severely disabled persons aged below 60 who are non-CSSA recipients, requiring constant attendance and living in the community

- The CCF launched the programme in September 2011 to provide a special care subsidy to persons with severe disabilities aged under 60 who are living in the community, requiring constant attendance and not receiving the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) for assisting them to purchase care goods/ services or for other purposes related to caring needs. The programme was extended twice in November 2012 and November 2013, and will be further extended in late November 2014.
- There are three levels of subsidy: those with household income at or less than 100% of the Median Monthly Domestic Household Income (MMDHI) to receive “full grant” of the subsidy (\$2,000 per month); those in the range of above 100% to 125% of the MMDHI to receive “three-quarters” of the subsidy (\$1,500 per month) and those in the range of above 125% to 150% of the MMDHI to receive “half grant” of the subsidy (\$1,000 per month).
- The evaluation result of the programme which was reported to the Commission on Poverty in May 2013 concluded that the programme would not be incorporated into the Government's regular assistance programme for the following reasons:
 - The beneficiaries mainly used the subsidy for medical consultation, drugs and daily household expenses. Existing measures have already provided a long-term protection to the persons with severe disabilities on their needs in these aspects e.g.

medical waiver, Samaritan Fund, Higher Disability Allowance etc.

- the Social Welfare Department (SWD) has been continuously enhancing the subvented services for persons with severe disabilities to meet their specific needs, e.g. provision of training service through District Support Centre for Persons with Disabilities and Day Care Service for Persons with Severe Disabilities, and regularisation of the Home Care Service for Persons with Severe Disabilities since March 2014; and
- SWD will also implement an integrated support service programme for persons with severe physical disabilities in the fourth quarter of 2014, and will by then regularise two related CCF assistance programmes for persons with severe physical disabilities who need constant attention and care so as to relieve their burden arising from respiratory support medical equipment and related medical consumables, and to enable them to continue staying in the community.

(4) Subsidy for elders aged 65 or above from low-income families who are on the waiting list for Integrated Home Care Services (IHCS) (Ordinary Cases) for household cleaning service and escorting services for medical consultations

- The CCF launched the programme in October 2011 to provide elderly persons from low income families who are on the waiting list of “IHCS (Ordinary Cases)” with subsidised household cleaning service and escorting service for medical consultations, so as to enable them to maintain household hygiene and attend medical consultations as scheduled. The programme was extended in December 2012 with application closed on 31 March 2013. Currently, the maximum monthly subsidy for relevant services an elderly person can receive is \$560.
- The evaluation of the programme revealed that the beneficiaries used a vast majority of the subsidy on home cleaning service, whereas only a small percentage on the escorting service for medical consultations. Their overall utilisation rate of the monthly subsidy was low (only about 60% of the full subsidy was used). Moreover, despite a series of publicity, less than 40% of the invited elderly persons applied for the programme, which was a comparatively low percentage. Most of the invited elderly persons who did not submit applications stated that they had no relevant need. This may

possibly be due to their self-care ability, family support and other related community support services. Based on the above, the programme has not been incorporated into the Government's regular assistance programme.

- The subsidy period of the programme was originally set to end on 31 March 2014. However, as some beneficiaries were still waiting for the subvented IHCS, the subsidy period was subsequently extended to 31 December 2014 to continue to provide support for the elderly persons concerned prior to their admission into the subvented IHCS.