

**For discussion
on 15 February 2016**

Legislative Council Panel on Welfare Services

**Pilot Scheme on Living Allowance
for Carers of the Elderly Persons from Low Income Families**

PURPOSE

This paper briefs Members on the progress of implementing the Pilot Scheme on Living Allowance for Carers of the Elderly Persons from Low Income Families (Pilot Scheme) and the Government's proposal to invite Community Care Fund (CCF) to extend the Pilot Scheme.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PILOT SCHEME

2. On 24 March 2014, the Commission on Poverty (CoP) endorsed the allocation of funds from CCF to Social Welfare Department (SWD) for rolling out, on 30 June 2014, a two-year Pilot Scheme whereby carers of elderly persons from low-income families would be provided with a living allowance. Under the Pilot Scheme, a monthly allowance of \$2,000 is disbursed to an eligible carer taking care of an elderly person, with a maximum of \$4,000 per month for an eligible carer taking care of more than one elderly person at the same time. The two-year Pilot Scheme was designed to benefit 2 000 carers.

3. To be eligible for the living allowance, carers of elderly persons must meet the following criteria:

- (a) the elderly person(s) being taken care of must be living in Hong Kong, have been assessed under SWD's Standardised Care Need Assessment Mechanism for Elderly Services (SCNAMES) as having moderate or severe level of impairment, and have been on the Central Waiting List (CWL) for subsidised long-term care services (i.e. residential care services (RCS) and/or community care services (CCS)) by or before end-December 2013;
- (b) the elderly person(s) being taken care of must be living in the

community without using any RCS or undergoing long-term hospitalisation for treatment at the time of application and while receiving the allowance;

- (c) the carer must be capable of taking up the care-giving role¹, and provide at least 80 hours of care-giving work per month² (or not less than 120 hours per month for taking care of more than one elderly person);
- (d) the carer must be a Hong Kong resident who is living in Hong Kong and not engaged in any form of employment relationship with the elderly person(s) under his/her care;
- (e) the carer must not be a recipient of Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) or Old Age Living Allowance (OALA); and
- (f) the monthly household income of the carer must not exceed 75% of the relevant Median Monthly Domestic Household Income, excluding assets.

4. Under the Pilot Scheme, the District Elderly Community Centres (DECC) or Neighbourhood Elderly Centres (NEC) act as service providers and provide the allowance recipients with necessary support and follow-up services, including referral/ arrangement of carer training, home visits to follow up on the care given to the elderly persons, and counselling for the carers as needed, etc. SWD has authorised 33 non-governmental organisations operating DECC and/or NEC as approved service providers (ASPs) under the Pilot Scheme, involving a total of 125 service units located in all districts throughout the territory. While their carers are receiving the allowance, the elderly persons being taken care of may still apply/ continue to wait for long-term care services or use subsidised CCS.

5. After obtaining CCF's funding approval for the Pilot Scheme,

¹ The carer must be aged 15 or above and capable of taking up the care-giving role. In general, a person assessed under SCNAMES to be of moderate or severe level of impairment, or on CWL waiting for subsidised long-term care services, or as a recipient of Disability Allowance will not be deemed to be a fit and capable carer and therefore will not be eligible for the allowance.

² The care provided by the carer to the elderly person(s) refers to independent activities of daily living, such as meal preparation, home making, medication management, purchase of daily necessities, and escort, etc. and/or personal care assistance in activities of daily living, such as mobility, dressing, toileting, and personal hygiene, etc. as required by the elderly person(s) concerned.

SWD issued letters to about 20 300 elderly persons, inviting their carers to apply for participating in the Pilot Scheme. As at 31 January 2015, which was the closing date of submitting applications, over 2 900 applications were received, among which around 920 cases were ineligible³ or withdrawn. During the pilot period, a total of 1 997 eligible cases had received the living allowance. As at end-December 2015, 1 500 carers were receiving the living allowance while the remaining 497 cases had ceased participating in the Pilot Scheme owing to various reasons (such as the elderly persons being taken care of were admitted into residential care homes for the elderly, receiving CSSA or deceased, etc.).

6. Among the eligible cases, most carers were taking care of one elderly person (accounting for around 96% of the eligible cases). Around 85% of the elderly persons being taken care of lived with their carers, and around 70% and 22% of the elderly persons were taken care of by their children and spouses respectively. Please refer to the Annex for details.

7. Since the commencement of the Pilot Scheme, the services units have served over 2 000 elderly persons by providing them with the support and follow-up services as needed, including home visits, arrangement for training, providing counselling, etc.

PROPOSED EXTENSION OF THE FIRST PHASE ALLOWANCE PERIOD AND INVITATION OF APPLICATIONS FOR THE SECOND PHASE

8. SWD has commissioned the Sau Po Centre on Ageing (CoA) of The University of Hong Kong to conduct an evaluation study during the implementation of the Pilot Scheme to review its effectiveness and implications. The evaluation report is expected to be completed by October 2016. SWD will examine the findings and recommendations of the evaluation in deliberating the longer-term future direction of the Pilot Scheme.

9. It is noted that one of the recommendations arising from the review of the eligibility criteria for Disability Allowance conducted by the Inter-departmental Working Group on Review of the Disability Allowance co-ordinated by the Labour and Welfare Bureau is to invite

³ The main reasons for ineligibility were that the applicants were receiving other living allowances provided by the Government (such as OALA or CSSA) or Disability Allowance, or the elderly persons were receiving RCS.

CCF to launch a pilot scheme on living allowance for carers of persons with disabilities. The Government now proposes to launch this new pilot scheme in October 2016. This new pilot scheme will last for two years till September 2018. CoA will also be invited to conduct an evaluation study on this new pilot scheme.

10. Having regard to the timetables referred to in paragraphs 8 to 9 above, the Government proposes to extend the first phase of the Pilot Scheme upon its expiry on 31 May 2016 for four months to last till September 2016, and implement the second phase immediately from October 2016 to end-September 2018. To allow more eligible carers of elderly persons to benefit from the Pilot Scheme, there would be an additional 2 000 places in the second phase, providing a total of 4 000 places through the two phases of the Pilot Scheme. During the four-month extension period from June to September 2016, SWD will invite applications for the 24-month allowance (from October 2016 to end-September 2018) of the second phase. Eligible carers in the first phase can continue to receive the living allowance during the four-month extension period and may also apply for the living allowance in the second phase.

11. SWD will confirm with all the participating ASPs whether they will continue to provide services. Moreover, 49 social centres for the elderly which have been provided with additional resources to upgrade to NEC since October 2014 will be invited by SWD to participate in the Pilot Scheme so as to provide more service points to support the carers.

WAY FORWARD

12. SWD will draw up the implementation details for the extension of the Pilot Scheme, including reviewing areas of ASP's administrative work which could be streamlined so as to implement the scheme more effectively. A proposal will be submitted to CCF Task Force under CoP for its consideration in March 2016. Subject to the views of the CCF Task Force, the proposal would be submitted to CoP for endorsement.

13. SWD will invite CoA to submit preliminary reports on the second phase of the Pilot Scheme and the pilot scheme on living allowance for carers of persons with disabilities in mid-2017. These reports will assist the Government in its consideration of the future direction of the two schemes.

ADVICE SOUGHT

14. Members are invited to note the content of this paper and comment on the above proposals.

**Labour and Welfare Bureau
Social Welfare Department
February 2016**

**Pilot Scheme on Living Allowance for Carers of the Elderly Persons
from Low Income Families
(As at 31.12.2015)**

I. Overall statistics

No. of invitation letters issued:	20 383
Specified date for the invited elderly persons under care to be registered on the CWL for long term care services:	On or before 31.12.2013
Total funding allocation:	\$126 million (Allowance: \$120 million ^{Note} ; Administrative cost : \$6 million)
No. of applications received:	2 923
No. of eligible cases:	1 997
No. of cases having ended or ceased participation in the Pilot Scheme:	497
No. of cases currently receiving allowance:	1 500

Note: Including the allowance for carers, service fee for ASPs and training fee for carers.

II. Profile of cases currently receiving allowance

(1) Information about carers			
Age	No. of carers who are		
	Taking care of 1 elderly person	Taking care of 2 elderly persons	
39 or below	113	2	
40 – 49	306	15	
50 – 59	537	25	
60 – 69	340	8	
70 or above	154	0	
	1 450	50	Total: 1 500

(2) Information about elderly persons under care			
Age	No. of elderly persons under care	Elderly persons under care who are	
		Living with their carers	Receiving subsidised CCS
60 – 69	137	126	85
70 – 79	378	336	216
80 – 89	777	651	448
90 or above	258	213	141
	1 550	1 326*	890*

(3) Relationship between the elderly persons under care and their carers			
(i) Parents	1 096	(v) Siblings	7
(ii) Spouse	334	(vi) Friends	7
(iii) In-laws	90	(vii) Other relatives	5
(iv) Grandparents	11	(viii) Neighbours	0

III. Reasons for carers having ended or ceased participation in the Pilot Scheme

Reasons	No. of carers
(i) Elderly persons under care started to receive RCS	249
(ii) Elderly persons under care passed away	167
(iii) Carers started to receive the CSSA/OALA	31
(iv) Circumstances of the elderly persons under care/carers changed	50
Total no. of persons:	497

*Some of the elderly persons under care are living with carers and receiving subsidised CCS at the same time.