

**For information
on 9 January 2017**

Legislative Council Panel on Welfare Services

**Support Measures for Low-income Households not Receiving
Comprehensive Social Security Assistance**

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on the support currently provided by the Government for low-income households not receiving Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA).

Existing Support for Low-income Households

2. The CSSA Scheme provides a safety net to meet the basic needs of households which cannot support themselves financially owing to old age, disability, unemployment and low income, etc. For low-income households not on CSSA, the Government puts in place various subsidies and fee waiving schemes in a number of areas, including education, healthcare, housing, transport and other social welfare, etc. Details are set out at **Annex 1**.

3. In addition, the Community Care Fund (CCF) has launched various assistance programmes, many of which benefit non-CSSA low-income households. A list of the relevant on-going/to be rolled out CCF programmes is at **Annex 2**.

4. The Government also provides a number of subsidies and services, such as the Pre-Primary Education Voucher Scheme, 12-year free education and public in-patient or out-patient services, etc. These subsidies and services are not means-tested, and they benefit, among others, low-income households.

Latest Development

5. The Statutory Minimum Wage (SMW) provides wage protection for the low-income working population. The current SMW rate, effective from May 2015, is \$32.5 per hour. The Minimum Wage Commission has completed the latest round of review of the SMW rate and its recommendation report is being considered by the Government.

6. The Low-income Working Family Allowance (LIFA) Scheme has been implemented since May 2016. The policy objective of the LIFA Scheme is to encourage self-reliance of low-income families through employment. It focuses on supporting families with youth and children to ease intergenerational poverty. As at 23 December 2016, a total of 50 600 applications have been received, of which 32 169 applications have been approved with the total amount of allowance approved over \$379 million. Around 103 700 persons have benefited from the Scheme. Of these persons, around 46 100 are children or youths.

7. The Government has decided to abolish the absence rule with effect from 6 December 2016, i.e. the requirement for all household members included in a LIFA application not to be absent from Hong Kong for more than 30 days in any six-month claim period has since been removed. A comprehensive policy review of the LIFA Scheme will be conducted in mid-2017. Comments received from the public and concern groups on the Scheme will be carefully and comprehensively considered in the review.

8. On the CCF front, the Commission on Poverty approved five new assistance programmes in 2016 which will benefit low-income persons not receiving CSSA, for example, free cervical cancer vaccination for teenage girls from eligible low-income families and living allowance for low-income carers of persons with disabilities. Please refer to items 12 to 16 of **Annex 2**.

9. On education, the free quality kindergarten (KG) education policy will be implemented starting from the 2017/18 school year. The policy objectives are to provide good quality and highly affordable KG

education, and enhance the accessibility of students to different modes of services that suit their specific needs. The new policy will involve substantial increase in government commitment in pre-primary education from an estimated expenditure of about \$4 billion in 2016-17 to about \$6.7 billion in the 2017/18 school year. It is estimated that 70% to 80% of the subsidised half-day KG places will be provided free of charge for parents. As for whole-day KG services, the school fees will also be maintained at a low level given that the Government will provide an additional grant for whole-day and long whole-day kindergartens to alleviate the financial burden of school fees on parents. The KG services are not means-tested, and low-income households will, among others, be benefited under the new policy.

10. To ensure that no child will be denied access to KG education due to a lack of financial means, fee remission (at three subsidy levels of 100%, 75% or 50%) will continue to be provided under the Kindergarten and Child Care Centre Fee Remission Scheme (KCFRS) for needy families passing the means test. Besides, under the new policy, an additional grant will be provided for KG students from needy families meeting the same eligibility criteria under KCFRS to defray school-related expenses incurred from the students' KG education (e.g. books, stationery and school uniforms). Before the implementation of the new policy in the 2017/18 school year, the Commission on Poverty approved the allocation of funds from the CCF for the provision of a one-off grant for school-related expenses to each eligible student in the 2016/17 school year. According to the results of means test on their families, each eligible KG student may receive the full grant of \$3,770, 3/4 grant of \$2,828, or half grant of \$1,885.

Advice Sought

11. Members are invited to note the content of this paper.

Labour and Welfare Bureau
January 2017

Government Support for Low-income Households not Receiving CSSA

(A) Education

| Programme Title | Objectives |
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| Tertiary Student Finance Scheme-Publicly-funded Programmes | To provide grant and/or loan for needy students pursuing full-time University Grants Committee-funded or publicly-funded recognised programmes at tertiary level. The grant is to cover tuition fees, academic expenses and compulsory union fees. The loan is for living expenses. |
| Financial Assistance Scheme for Post-secondary Students | To provide grant and/or loan for needy students pursuing full-time locally-accredited self-financing post-secondary programmes. The grant is to cover tuition fees and academic expenses. The loan is for living expenses. |
| Kindergarten and Child Care Centre Fee Remission Scheme | To provide needy families with financial assistance in the form of fee remission for their children to receive pre-primary education. |
| School Textbook Assistance Scheme | To provide assistance to needy 1 to Secondary 6 students in government, aided, per caput grant schools and local schools under the Direct Subsidy Scheme for purchasing essential textbooks and covering miscellaneous school-related expenses. |
| Student Travel Subsidy Scheme | To provide travel subsidy to needy students receiving formal primary, secondary education or attending a full-time day course up to first degree level in an acceptable institution, residing beyond 10 minutes walking distance from school and travelling to school by public transport. |
| Subsidy Scheme for Internet Access Charge | To provide subsidy to needy families whose children are full-time students receiving education at primary or secondary level, or full-time students pursuing Diploma Yi Jin programmes or equivalent courses of the Vocational Training Council to meet the Internet access charges for the e-learning at home for their children. |
| Examination Fee Remission Scheme | To provide assistance to needy students attending public examinations conducted by the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority. |

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| Tuition Fee Reimbursement for Diploma Yi Jin | To provide tuition fee reimbursement for eligible Secondary 6 school leavers and adult learners to obtain a formal qualification for employment and further study through an alternative pathway. |
| Financial Assistance Scheme for Designated Evening Adult Education Courses | To provide tuition fee reimbursement for eligible adult learners to attend designated evening secondary courses. |
| School-based After-school Learning and Support Programmes | To provide more opportunities to the disadvantaged students in joining after-school activities with a view to (i) increasing their learning effectiveness; (ii) broadening their learning experiences outside the classroom; and (iii) raising their understanding of the community and sense of belonging. The provision of the Programme is complementary in nature. Schools may deploy other resources to provide appropriate support for the disadvantaged students having regard to their needs. The grant should not be used for providing material assistance to students. |
| Hong Kong Jockey Club Life-wide Learning Fund | The Fund, set up with the donation from the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust, aims to support needy primary and secondary students in participating in life-wide learning programmes organised or recognised by schools for whole person development. |
| Provision of Free Lunch at Schools for Primary Students from Low-income Families | To assist the primary students from low-income families studying in whole-day public sector schools (including special schools) or schools under the Direct Subsidy Scheme to have a more balanced and ample diet at schools and alleviate the financial burden of their families. The programme was launched by the CCF from the 2011/12 to 2013/14 school years on a pilot basis for providing free lunch at schools for needy primary students and has been regularised starting from the 2014/15 school year. |

(B) Healthcare

| Programme Title | Objectives |
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| Samaritan Fund | To provide assistance for needy patients to meet expenses for designated Privately Purchased Medical Items (including drugs) or new technologies required in the course of medical treatment which are not covered by the hospital maintenance fees and consultation fees in public hospitals and clinics. |
| Medical fee waiver | To provide medical fee waiver for patients with financial needs. |

(C) Housing

| Programme Title | Objectives |
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| Public rental housing | To allocate rental flats to eligible applicants. |
| Rent Assistance Scheme | To provide relief in the form of rent reductions for rental housing and interim housing tenants who are facing temporary financial hardship. |

(D) Transport

| Programme Title | Objectives |
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| Work Incentive Transport Subsidy Scheme | To help low-income earners reduce their cost of travelling to and from work and encourage them to secure or stay in employment. |

(E) Other social welfare

| Programme Title | Objectives |
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| Child Development Fund (CDF) | To effectively utilise and consolidate the resources from families, the private sector, the community and the Government in support of the longer-term development of disadvantaged children, thereby reducing inter-generational poverty. The CDF encourages children participating in the Scheme to develop an asset-building habit by formulating and implementing personal development plans, and to accumulate financial and non-financial assets (such as positive attitude and proper mindset, personal resilience and abilities, social networks, etc.). |
| District Support Scheme for Children and Youth Development: Direct Cash Assistance (DCA) | To address the developmental needs which cannot be covered by mainstream education system, other funds and financial assistance, of children and youth in disadvantaged circumstances in the districts. The DCA is categorised to meet the following needs: learning and education needs; job skills training and employment needs; and social exposure and potential development needs. |
| Fee Waiving Subsidy Scheme under After School Care Programme | To help parents take care of their children aged 6 to 12, so that they can stay in employment or attend employment retraining/job attachment with a view to enhancing self-reliance. |

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| Fee Reduction under Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project | To provide a flexible form of child care service for children aged under 9 and promote mutual help and care in the neighbourhood level. Fee reduction / waiving arrangement under the Project aims to enable needy low-income families to receive necessary services. |
| Subsidy Scheme for Extended Hours Service Users | To provide longer hours of child care assistance for low-income families with financial difficulties to meet the social needs of these families and working parents. |
| Subsidy Scheme for Occasional Child Care Service | To provide occasional child care assistance on a full-day, half-day or two-hour sessional basis for low-income families with financial difficulties to meet the social needs of these families or carers having to deal with occasional and sudden commitments or engagement. |
| Subsidy Scheme for Mutual Help Child Care Service | To provide service for low-income families with social needs and financial difficulties, and to enhance the support for families with child care service needs during evenings, weekends and holidays. |
| Short-term Food Assistance Service Projects | To provide short-term food assistance for people who have difficulties in coping with their basic daily food expenditure. |
| Social Security Allowance Scheme | To provide a monthly allowance to Hong Kong residents who are severely disabled or who are 65 years of age or above to meet the special needs arising from disability or old age. |
| Training Subsidy Programme for Children on the Waiting List of Subvented Pre-school Rehabilitation Services | To provide a monthly allowance to children from low-income families and in need of rehabilitation services to receive necessary services from self-financing services of recognised service providers as soon as possible so as to facilitate their learning and development while waiting for subvented pre-school rehabilitation services (Early Education and Training Centre). |
| Integrated Support Service for Persons with Severe Physical Disabilities | To provide cash subsidy to persons with severe physical disabilities for renting respiratory support medical equipment and for purchasing medical consumables; and rendering one-stop integrated home-based support services, including casework counselling, occupational therapy/ physiotherapy, nursing care service and carer support service etc. |

**Community Care Fund:
On-going/To be Rolled Out Assistance Programmes which could also
Benefit non-CSSA Low-income Households**

1. 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
2. Subsidy for the severely disabled persons aged below 60 who are non-CSSA recipients requiring constant attendance and living in the community
3. Relocation allowance for eligible residents of sub-divided units in industrial buildings who have to move out as a result of the Buildings Department's enforcement action
4. Elderly dental assistance programme
5. Subsidy for owners' corporations of old buildings
6. One-off living subsidy for low-income households not living in public housing and not receiving CSSA (Third launch)
7. Pilot scheme on living allowance for carers of elderly persons from low-income families
8. Providing hostel subsidy for needy undergraduate students
9. Increasing the academic expenses grant under the Financial Assistance Scheme for Post-secondary Students
10. Provision of funding for ordinary schools to arrange special educational needs coordinators
11. Enhancing the academic expenses grant for students with special education needs and financial needs pursuing post-secondary programmes
12. Provision of a one-off grant for school-related expenses to kindergarten students
13. Free cervical cancer vaccination pilot scheme
14. Pilot scheme on providing subsidy for Higher Disability Allowance recipients in paid employment to hire carers
15. Pilot scheme on living allowance for low-income carers of persons with disabilities

16. Dementia Community Support Scheme (a pilot scheme which adopts a medical-social collaboration model to provide dementia community support services for elderly persons)