

Legislative Council Panel on Welfare Services

Integration of the Employment Assistance Services under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme

Purpose

The Social Welfare Department (SWD) proposes to integrate various employment assistance services under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme. This paper briefs Members on this proposal.

Background

2. In June 1999, SWD launched the Support for Self-reliance (SFS) Scheme under the CSSA Scheme to encourage and help unemployed able-bodied CSSA recipients aged 15 to 59 to secure full-time paid employment and move towards self-reliance.

3. To meet the needs of different CSSA recipients, SWD provides different employment assistance services under the SFS Scheme, and has adjusted and updated these services from time to time having regard to the operational experience. Currently, SWD commissions non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to provide the following employment assistance services:

- (i) Integrated Employment Assistance Scheme (IEAS)¹ — to assist unemployed able-bodied CSSA recipients aged between 15 and 59 to secure full-time employment and move towards self-reliance. Under the IEAS, ordinary and intensive employment assistance services are provided to CSSA job seekers to meet their needs and to help them overcome work barriers, thereby enhancing their employability. The IEAS was introduced in October 2008. By January 2012, there had been a total of 106 055 participants;
- (ii) Special Training and Enhancement Programme (My STEP) — as recommended by the former Commission on Poverty, SWD has implemented the My STEP pilot project in Yuen Long district (including Tin Shui Wai) since October 2006. My STEP provides

¹ To replace the Intensive Employment Assistance Projects implemented in 2003.

unemployed able-bodied CSSA youths aged between 15 and 29 with counselling and structured motivational and disciplinary training to enhance their self-esteem, self-confidence and sense of responsibility, and to assist them in rejoining the workforce. In October 2009, My STEP was extended to all 18 districts. By January 2012, a total of 1 944 persons had participated in this programme; and

- (iii) New Dawn (ND) Project² — to provide employment services to single parents and child carers on CSSA, whose youngest child is aged 12 to 14, to enhance their employability. The ND Project was rolled out in April 2006. By January 2012, there had been a total of 24 594 participants.

4. Besides, participants of the SFS Scheme are usually required to join the Community Work (CW) Programme implemented by SWD. The aim is to help them build up a work habit, enhance their self-confidence and widen their social network. The CW Programme also enables them to make contribution to the community while receiving CSSA payment. Community work is broadly categorised into community services and environmental protection work. Between June 1999 and January 2012, a total of 137 687 persons had participated in the CW Programme.

Need for integration of the services

5. At present, the CW Programme is implemented by SWD direct, but the various employment assistance services are provided by 32 NGOs through 77 service projects. Such a large number of projects results in tedious administrative and co-ordination work. The same CSSA recipient and his family members may also need to receive different services from different NGOs, which is inconvenient and confusing. Moreover, the same support (such as provision of information on employment and job vacancy, training in computer and job seeking skills, etc.) are provided under different services, resulting in overlapped service provision and resources.

6. In the 2011-12 Policy Agenda, the Chief Executive proposed to review various employment assistance services under the CSSA Scheme to integrate and improve these services, thereby enhancing effectiveness and achieving synergy. Having regard to the experience gained from the existing services and taking into consideration stakeholders' views, SWD proposes:

- (i) to integrate the three employment assistance services and the CW Programme. NGOs will be commissioned to provide, within small districts, employable CSSA recipients (including unemployed

² To replace the Ending Exclusion Project implemented in 2002.

able-bodied adults, young CSSA recipients, single parents and family carers on CSSA) with multifarious and one-stop employment assistance services on a family basis according to their individual needs. The services provided may include interviewing the beneficiaries individually or in small groups, assisting them in formulating job search plans, providing them with information on employment and training courses, arranging community work for them, providing them with post-placement support service and temporary financial assistance, etc.;

- (ii) as there are relatively few young service users, NGOs will have to provide structured motivational and disciplinary training to them in a larger service catchment area; and
- (iii) as regards CW, NGOs may make use of their expertise and network to enrich the existing CW Programme as appropriate. For instance, it may cover more diversified and structured voluntary work and work trial experience etc. This can enhance service flexibility and effectiveness and meet the needs of individual unemployed CSSA recipients. To ensure the sustainable development of CW service, SWD will render support to NGOs and help them strengthen the connection with the organisations currently providing community work placements.

7. We are of the view that the integrated service can help NGOs use resources more effectively and achieve synergy. After streamlining the administrative procedures, NGOs can focus on service delivery. Also, the same NGO can provide CSSA recipients and their family members with different services to meet their needs. Not only will this bring convenience to them, but will also enhance their employability. In addition, the NGOs can flexibly deploy resources to provide dedicated services to meet the needs of specific groups of CSSA recipients in the district, such as the ethnic minorities.

Way forward

8. All the contracts of the existing employment assistance services will expire on 31 December 2012. SWD proposes to launch the integrated employment assistance service in January 2013. The Administration has earmarked a provision of \$230 million in the 2012-13 Budget to implement the new services for a period of 27 months.

9. SWD will invite NGOs to submit proposals in mid-2012 and evaluate proposals received in the second half of 2012, with a view to selecting suitable NGOs for the provision of services.

10. Members are invited to note this paper.

Social Welfare Department
April 2012