

**The Legislative Council Meeting on 23 January 2013**  
**Motion on “Optimizing the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance**  
**for the unemployed”**

**Progress Report**

**Purpose**

At the Legislative Council meeting on 23 January 2013, the motion on “Optimizing the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance for the unemployed” moved by the Hon James TIEN and amended by Dr the Hon Fernando CHEUNG and the Hon CHAN Chi-chuen was carried. The wording of the motion carried is at **Annex**.

2. This report sets out the Administration’s follow-up actions taken in respect of the above motion.

**Encourage Comprehensive Social Security Assistance recipients with the ability to work to become self-reliant**

3. The aim of the Support for Self-reliance (SFS) Scheme under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme is to assist able-bodied CSSA recipients to secure employment and to move towards self-reliance. To enhance the assistance to the able-bodied CSSA recipients to find jobs, the Social Welfare Department (SWD) has integrated and enhanced the various employment assistance services under the CSSA Scheme and commissioned non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to implement the Integrated Employment Assistance Programme for Self-reliance (IEAPS) with effect from 1 January 2013. Through the integrated employment assistance services, the same NGO will provide able-bodied CSSA recipients with multifarious and one-stop employment assistance services on a family basis according to their individual needs. The services provided include assisting them in formulating work plans, providing them with information on employment and training opportunities, providing Work Exposure Services, post-placement support service and temporary financial aid, etc, to enhance their employability. Furthermore, able-bodied CSSA recipients are also required to actively seek employment under IEAPS in order to move towards self-reliance.

4. The employment situation of the able-bodied CSSA recipients is not dissimilar to that of other ordinary job seekers. They are affected by many factors, including the overall economy, the demand of individual industry and the personal factors of the job seekers. SWD will continue to improve the service contents of IEAPS in order to strengthen the employment assistance services to help the able-bodied CSSA recipients secure employment as soon as possible. This will help lessen their dependence on social benefits, so that the Government can re-direct public resources to those who are more in need of assistance.

### **Disregarded earnings arrangement**

5. The Disregarded Earnings (DE) arrangement under the CSSA Scheme is designed to encourage the able-bodied CSSA recipients to secure and sustain employment and become self-reliant ultimately. While the arrangement provides the financial incentive to encourage CSSA recipients to seek and sustain employment, if the arrangement is too relaxed, it will delay the CSSA recipients from leaving the CSSA net. We have to be careful to strike the right balance between encouraging CSSA recipients to secure employment and proper use of public funds.

6. To further encourage CSSA recipients to take up employment, the Social Security and Retirement Protection Task Force of the Commission on Poverty agreed at its meeting of 18 March to support a pilot scheme on savings accounts under the Community Care Fund (CCF). The pilot scheme aims to help CSSA recipients save their earnings above the maximum limit of disregarded income which would be deducted under the CSSA Scheme. When the savings reach a certain level above the applicable asset limits of the CSSA cases, the amount would be disbursed to the recipients to help them leave the CSSA net. SWD is working out the detailed arrangements in conjunction with the CCF Task Force.

### **Preventing abuses of CSSA**

7. To ensure public resources are properly disbursed, SWD continues to handle every CSSA case prudently. CSSA cases are subject to periodic review

and data matching and report mechanisms are in place to verify the information of cases. Investigations will be conducted on suspected fraud cases to ensure that assistance is provided to eligible persons with genuine needs.

### **Age discrimination in employment**

8. We attach great importance to safeguarding equal opportunities in employment. To this end, we have been encouraging employers to count on talent, not age in recruitment and employment through publicity and promotion. We also provide training and re-training programmes to assist the workforce to upgrade their skills and knowledge, thereby improving their competitiveness in the labour market.

### **Employment Support for the Middle-aged and the Elderly**

9. To encourage employers to take on middle-aged and elder job seekers, the Administration has announced the increase of the on-the-job training allowance level payable to employers under the Employment Programme for the Middle-aged (EPM). Under this enhanced measure, the on-the-job training allowance will be increased from the current level of \$2,000 to \$3,000 per month. The allowance is payable to an employer engaging an unemployed job seeker aged 40 or above in full-time post with a monthly salary of \$6,000 or above, and providing him/her with a mentor and on-the-job training. The subsidy period lasts for three to six months. The Labour Department (LD) is now formulating the implementation details and will soon launch a series of publicity and promotional activities to publicise the enhanced measure and encourage employers to participate in the EPM.

10. In parallel, the Job Centres of LD will continue to set up dedicated counters to provide priority registration and job referral services for job seekers aged 50 or above to help them find work.

### **Promoting family-friendly working environment**

11. The Administration has all along been dedicated to encouraging employers to adopt employee-oriented good people management measures. Family-friendly employment practices (FFEP) has been one of the major

measures being promoted.

12. The Employment Ordinance provides the foundation for a family-friendly working environment, including the provision of various kinds of leaves, such as rest days, statutory holidays, annual leave, maternity leave and employment protection for pregnant employees. These help employees balance their work and family responsibilities.

13. Making the workplace family-friendly is a shared responsibility of the entire society. Employers may adopt different types of FFEP to serve the best interests of their organisations and employees by taking into account their size, resources and culture.

14. LD has all along been acting as a facilitator in encouraging employers to adopt FFEP through its promotional efforts. Apart from the network of its Human Resources Managers Clubs formed in various trades and industries as well as the industry-based tripartite committees, LD also disseminates the message and information on the relevant measures to employers, employees and the general public through a wide range of publicity channels.

15. We also notice that more and more employers have recognised the importance of FFEP. For example, the Family Council introduced the “Family-Friendly Employers Award Scheme” in 2011 and a total of 1 112 companies participated in the Award Scheme. With regard to the “Caring Company Scheme” organised by the Hong Kong Council of Social Service, some 1 200 awardees adopted family-friendly measures in 2007-08. In 2011-12, the number of companies providing employees with paid leave above the requirements of the Employment Ordinance and subsidising supporting services for staff and their family members reached 2 181 and 1 908 respectively.

16. The Administration consulted the Legislative Council Panel on Manpower on its legislative proposal for providing three days’ paid paternity leave for male employees on 25 January 2013 based on the consensus reached at the Labour Advisory Board. The Administration is drawing up the details of the proposal with a view to taking the legislation forward as soon as possible.

## **Development of industries**

17. Our competitive edge, together with our “appropriately proactive” approach, makes Hong Kong well placed to diversify its industries to meet the needs of our people for start-up initiatives, investment, business operation and employment. In light of this, the Chief Executive has announced in his Policy Address that we will formulate a holistic industrial policy. The Economic Development Commission (EDC) established in January this year will, from a high-level, cross-departmental and cross-sectoral perspective, explore ways to make use of our long-standing advantages and the opportunities offered by the Mainland. It will focus on efforts to broaden our economic base, work on the overall strategy and policy to enhance our long-term development, and identify industries which present opportunities for Hong Kong's further economic growth. The EDC, led by the Chief Executive and with four Working Groups on Transportation, Convention and Exhibition Industries and Tourism, Manufacturing Industries, Innovative Technology and Cultural and Creative Industries, and Professional Services respectively, has been set up to make concrete recommendations to the Government.

## **Promoting Lifelong Learning and Progression Pathway**

18. In May 2008, the Qualifications Framework (QF) was launched to establish an accessible articulation pathway to promote lifelong learning with a view to continuously enhancing the quality, professionalism and diversification of our local workforce. As at end-February 2013, the Government has assisted 19 industries<sup>1</sup> to set up their Industry Training Advisory Committees (ITACs), covering about 46% of the workforce in Hong Kong. Twelve of these ITACs have drawn up the Specification of Competency Standards (SCSs) of their respective industries, and the other ITACs will complete their SCSs successively so as to specify the competency standards of various levels of their industries for human resources management purpose. The ITACs also draw up the progression pathways of their industries based on SCSs to enhance

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<sup>1</sup> Printing & Publishing, Watch & Clock, Chinese Catering, Hairdressing, Property Management, Electrical & Mechanical Services, Jewellery, Information & Communications Technology, Automotive, Beauty, Logistics, Banking, Import & Export, Testing, Inspection & Certification, Retail, Insurance, Manufacturing Technology (Tooling, Metals and Plastics), Elderly Care Service and Security Services.

practitioners' understanding of the progression and learning opportunities of the industries.

**Labour and Welfare Bureau**  
**Commerce and Economic Development Bureau**  
**Education Bureau**  
**Social Welfare Department**  
**Labour Department**  
**April 2012**

(Translation)

**Motion on  
“Optimizing the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance  
for the unemployed”  
moved by Hon James TIEN  
at the Council meeting of 23 January 2013**

**Motion as amended by Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG and Hon CHAN  
Chi-chuen**

That, as there is no legislation prohibiting age discrimination in Hong Kong, making it extremely difficult for middle-aged and elderly people with low education attainment to find jobs, with some of them having to apply for Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (‘CSSA’), this Council urges the Government to expeditiously adopt effective measures, including reviving labour-intensive industries, human services, agriculture and other industries for the development of economic diversification; increasing training opportunities, establishing career ladders for different trades, creating more employment opportunities, and promoting a family-friendly working environment; and optimizing the system of CSSA for the unemployed by relaxing the disregarded earnings mechanism to encourage employment and motivate those with the ability to work to be self-reliant, and taking measures to eradicate abuse of CSSA for the unemployed, so as to focus resources on helping people with genuine needs; as the situation of CSSA recipients being adversely labelled has become increasingly serious in recent years, this Council urges the Government to review the system of CSSA for the unemployed.