

Community Care Fund Programme After-school Care Pilot Scheme Evaluation Report

Purpose

1. This paper outlines the findings of a report on evaluation of the effectiveness of the After-school Care Pilot Scheme (the Scheme) of the Community Care Fund (CCF) and proposals on the way forward. The Education Bureau (EDB) proposes to extend the Scheme for one year to the 2014/15 school year and to incorporate the effective elements identified in the Scheme progressively into other after-school support programmes.

Background

2. Launched in the 2012/13 school year, the Scheme is introduced to encourage schools and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to collaborate in order to provide after-school care to Primary 1 to Secondary 3 students from low-income families. The Scheme aims to co-ordinate and integrate after-school learning and supplementary activities for the students, so that apart from participating in existing after-school activities provided by schools or other organisations, they can make best use of their time after school. On 28 March 2013, the Commission on Poverty (CoP) resolved to extend the Scheme for one year to the 2013/14 school year. This report has consolidated the findings of the evaluation of the Scheme and proposed the way forward.

Implementation of the Scheme in the 2012/13 school year

3. In the 2012/13 school year, the EDB received a total of 135 application proposals (75 from schools and 60 from NGOs). The assessment panel under the CCF had vetted all application proposals and found that some of them were not acceptable because the number of service days/hours was insufficient or they failed to strike a balance between academic and non-academic after-school activities. After the vetting, a total of 73 schools and NGOs (34 schools and 39 NGOs) were

provided with funding from the Scheme amounting to about \$28 million. Participating schools and NGOs received about \$380,000 per capita, benefitting about 6 400 students.

4. To ensure that the funding was well spent, the EDB had started to conduct inspection on all of the funded schools and NGOs since October 2012. The inspection was completed by June 2013. All the participating 73 schools and NGOs of the Scheme had submitted their interim report and annual report to the EDB.

Findings of the Interim Report

5. The interim reports showed that intake of students by a total of 36 schools/NGOs was lower than the number put forward by them in their application proposals, with a difference of more than 700 students. In 13 out of the 36 schools/NGOs, the shortfall was as much as 30% of the targeted student beneficiaries or above. The EDB had approached the schools/NGOs concerned for reasons of the shortfall. The key reasons given were: (i) parents did not allow their children to participate in the pilot scheme (for example, they worried that the activities would tire their children out); (ii) students were not enthusiastic about joining the Scheme (for example, a variety of extra-curricular activities had already been arranged by some schools for their students; there were school team activities or other after-school support activities; or students were engaged in other after school activities and private tutorial classes outside school); and (iii) some student beneficiaries dropped out of the Scheme.

6. The EDB had reported the shortfall as mentioned above to the CCF Task Force. In April 2013, the Task Force resolved that funds already earmarked to the schools/NGOs concerned would not be deducted but it was necessary to issue a warning letter to them and request them to give a reasonable explanation, while informing them that the shortfall would be one of the factors to be taken into account when the assessment panel considered their application for the Scheme in the 2013/14 school year. As a follow-up action, the EDB had also requested them to allow more students to benefit from the Scheme in the remainder of the school term.

Findings of Annual Report

7. According to the annual reports submitted to the EDB by participating schools/NGOs in December 2013, there were about 6 400 student beneficiaries.

8. A total of 58 173 hours were assigned for after-school care activities by the schools/NGOs. As compared to the 41 895 hours as reported in their application proposals, there was an increase of about 27%. Reasons given included: (i) schools/NGOs extended the activity time during school examinations or holidays to cater for the needs of students and their parents; (ii) schools/NGOs made use of the unspent funding to arrange additional activities for needy students; and (iii) NGOs continued the after-school support service in the summer holiday in response to parents' needs.

9. About 60% (or 35 723 hours) of the activities provided by schools/NGOs were academic-oriented activities (for example: tuition class, English class and writing skills class), and the remaining 40% (or 22 450 hours) were non-academic-oriented after-school activities (for example: magic class, craft and art class and chess class).

Implementation of the Scheme in the 2013/14 school year

10. The CoP resolved in March 2013 that the Scheme will be extended for one year to the 2013/14 school year.

11. In response to requests from schools and NGOs, the EDB has streamlined the relevant application procedures for the 2013/14 school year and expanded the coverage of the target beneficiaries under the Scheme from Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) students or students in receipt of full grant from the Student Financial Assistance Schemes (SFAS) in the 2012/13 school year to students eligible for half grant from the SFAS. Participating schools and NGOs are still given discretion to use 25% of the funding provided to them to take care of other needy students.

12. To achieve synergy effects and bring convenience to students and parents, the CCF has resolved that in the 2013/14 school year, NGOs in the Scheme are required to partner with at least one school while schools are allowed to apply for the Scheme on their own as in the past.

13. In the 2013/14 school year, the EDB received 162 application proposals in total with 114 from schools and 48 from NGOs. After vetting by the CCF assessment panel, 93 schools and NGOs (62 schools and 31 NGOs) were provided with the Scheme funding. The total funding amounted to about \$36 million, benefitting about 12 800 students.

The EDB disbursed half of the funding, or about \$18 million, to the participating schools and NGOs in August 2013.

14. The number of schools and NGOs joining the Scheme and receiving the funding has increased, from 73 in the 2012/13 school year to 93 in the 2013/14 school year, while the number of student beneficiaries has nearly doubled from 6 400 to about 12 800. The funding has grown from about \$28 million to about \$36 million (see table below).

	2012/13 school year	2013/14 school year
Number of participating schools and NGOs	73 (34 schools and 39 NGOs)	93 (62 schools and 31 NGOs)
Number of student beneficiaries	about 6 400	about 12 800
Funding	about \$28 million	about \$36 million

15. According to the application proposals submitted by participating schools and NGOs, there should have been 12 404 target beneficiaries. However, taking into account the fact that 31 participating schools/NGOs have an intake shortfall and that 62 participating schools/NGOs report an intake of students at a level the same as or above that stated in their application proposals, the total student beneficiaries on balance are 12 856, or 452 students (3.6%) more than that stated in their application proposals.

16. In most of the participating schools/NGOs (62), the number of student beneficiaries is the same as or above that stated in their application proposals. In the other 30% of the participating schools/NGOs (31), the level of intake is lower than that stated in their application proposals, in which 23 have an intake shortfall of less than 30% while the remaining 8 schools/NGOs have an intake shortfall of 30% or more.

17. The EDB has approached the above mentioned 8 schools/NGOs for reasons of the intake shortfall. The reasons given are: lack of demand and insufficient publicity; time involved in the after-school care being too long as seen by students or parents, etc.

18. The CCF Task Force appreciated that the demand by students for the service was bound to fluctuate. At its meeting on 10 March 2014, the Task Force approved that no deduction would be made from the funding allocated to schools/NGOs which had an intake shortfall. That said, a warning letter would be issued by the EDB to the 8 schools/NGOs which

have an intake shortfall of 30% or more. They are required to give a reasonable explanation for the shortfall. They are also informed that the shortfall would be one of the factors to be taken into account when they apply for the Scheme in the 2014/15 school year.

Findings of the evaluation and experiences gained

19. To evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of the Scheme in the 2012/13 school year, the EDB has collected views from stakeholders including conducting a questionnaire survey to schools and NGOs. A summary of their views is in **Appendix**.

20. According to the views submitted to the EDB from schools/NGOs as well as the EDB's observations:

- i) The after-school support services jointly provided by schools and NGOs could achieve synergy effects in areas such as balancing students' academic needs with their non-academic needs, the use of venues and manpower arrangements.
- ii) Regarding the arrangement that schools and NGOs would apply for the Scheme on their own, it served to ensure that interested and needy schools and NGOs will submit their proposals, together with the funding required in the light of the estimated number of students and the specifics of their plan, to the CCF assessment panel. This would help ensure that resources are well-spent.
- iii) While nearly half of the participating schools/NGOs reckoned that demand outstripped supply when it came to after-school support service, about 80% of them indicated that they encountered difficulties in recruiting students to the Scheme. As a matter of fact, as reflected by some schools, the reasons for students not responding positively to the Scheme were: the availability of other extra-curricular activities and after-school support activities to students, the need for school team practices, and students joining after-school activities or tuition classes outside school.
- iv) Schools/NGOs generally supported the Scheme and the 25% discretion which allows them to take care of other needy students,

and the decision to expand the target beneficiaries from CSSA students or students eligible for full grant from the SFAS to students eligible for half grant from the SFAS.

- v) Schools/NGOs generally held that more flexibility should be allowed in the use of the funding (for example, the administrative costs and other expenses not meant to be used directly on students).

Way Forward

New initiatives put forward in the 2014 Policy Address

21. Under various assistance schemes offered by the Government and the CCF, schools and NGOs are able to provide extra-curricular activities as well as after-school learning and support for primary and secondary students in need. In the 2014 Policy Address, new initiatives were put forward to strengthen support in this regard. It was also stated that in the long run, the Government will explore ways to consolidated various assistance schemes to achieve greater effectiveness.

22. The EDB has implemented the School-based After-school Learning and Support Programmes (the Programme) since the 2005/06 school year. Currently, schools and NGOs are provided with the School-based Grant and Community-based Project Grant respectively to organise after-school activities for eligible participating students, i.e. Primary 1 to Secondary 6 students in receipt of the CSSA or full grant from the SFAS. In the 2013/14 school year, the funding for the Programme is about \$205 million¹ of which about \$84 million is for the School-based Grant. Schools receive on average a grant of \$100,000, and the largest amount received by a school is over \$300,000. A total of 497 projects were organised by 183 NGOs under the Community-based Project Grant and the average allocation per project is about \$240,000 with the largest allocation at about \$1.44 million.

¹ The Programme is under regular evaluation with subsequent refinement including, among others, the apportionment of the Programme into the “school-based programmes” and the “community-based projects” since the 2006/07 school year to better meet the different needs of target students. In the 2010/11 school year, the annual provision of the Programme has been increased to \$175 million upon the evaluation enabling the NGOs to organise more after-school activities. Subsequent to the Government’s evaluation and relaxation of the family income threshold of the means test mechanism in respect of the SFAS, the provision for the Programme has been further increased corresponding to the increased number of students receiving full grant assistance. In the 2013/14 school year, the provision of the Programme is about \$205 million.

23. Upon evaluation of the utilisation of funding under the Programme and with reference to the effectiveness of allowing more discretion to schools/NGOs under the Scheme of the CCF, the EDB will, starting from the 2014/15 school year, implement the following measures:

- i) increase the flexibility of the School-based Grant by giving more discretionary quota allowed for schools from 10% to 25% to benefit more needy students who are identified by schools but not in receipt of CSSA or eligible for full grant from the SFAS;
- ii) based on schools' previous utilisation rate of the School-based Grant, provide schools with a relatively higher utilisation rate (say 80%) incentive funding when calculating the Grant. The objective is to encourage schools to fully utilise the School-based Grant and to deploy their resources flexibly with a view to enhancing the opportunities of needy students to participate in after-school activities.

24. The additional recurrent funding is about \$35 million per annum, an increase of more than 40%, at a level equivalent to the funding provided for the Scheme of the CCF in the 2013/14 school year (as compared to \$28 million in 2012/13 school year and \$36 million in 2013/14 school year).

25. The provision of the Programme is complementary in nature. To cater for the diverse needs of needy students, the Government has also launched, apart from the Programme and the Scheme of the CCF, various funding schemes to support schools and NGOs to organise extra-curricular activities and after-school tutorial services for needy primary and secondary students. The EDB has launched the After-school Learning Support Partnership Pilot Scheme since the second school term of the 2011/12 school year to provide after-school learning support to needy primary students. The prominent feature of this pilot scheme is that it enlists the prospective teachers, i.e. local students who are undergoing full-time teacher training (including courses for Bachelor of Education and Post-graduate Diploma in Education), to be the tutors. On the other hand, the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust has launched the Life-wide Learning Fund since 2002 to provide more funding to schools to support their needy students to participate in after-school activities. In fact, these programmes have been set up at different times with different funding sources (funded by the Government or by charities) and some of the programmes are implemented on a pilot basis to explore new elements. In the long run, it is our plan to explore the feasibility of consolidating the

various Government-funded programmes and to incorporate into our regular assistance programmes those elements which have been confirmed to be effective under the pilot schemes.

26. Besides, the Government is pleased to see that the business sector and community organisations have, on their own initiative, launched extra-curricular activities and after-school learning support programmes. To further encourage the business sector and organisations to collaborate with schools to facilitate the whole-person development of students from grassroot families, the Government will earmark another \$200 million on top of the original injection of \$200 million. The additional funding will be provided on a matching fund basis under the Partnership Fund for the Disadvantaged to launch more after-school learning and support programmes for primary and secondary students from grassroot families. The Social Welfare Department will coordinate this initiative.

Extending the Scheme to the 2014/15 school year and direction of consolidation

27. As a means to evaluate the effectiveness of the Scheme and premised on the need to avoid duplication of resources and effectively consolidate all relevant funding schemes, the EDB proposed to extend the term of the Scheme to another year to the 2014/15 school year and consolidate the schemes progressively in order to sustain the long-term effects of the Scheme. The additional one year will allow the elements of the Scheme which have proven to be effective to be incorporated into the current funding schemes, so as to ensure a smooth consolidation and facilitate easy adjustment of the schools and students.

28. In the consolidation process, the EDB will study the details of the relevant programmes, including funding arrangements, scope of subsidy, as well as the ratio and use of administrative costs, etc.

29. The EDB proposes to extend the Scheme generally on the existing mode of operation for another year. The CCF Task Force at its meeting on 10 March 2014 noted the evaluation report of the Scheme, and supported the proposal to extend the Scheme to the 2014/15 school year; and that actions would be taken to progressively consolidate various after-school support programmes. The CoP at its meeting on 24 March 2014 endorsed the proposal.

Education Bureau
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Appendix

Views of Schools/Non-governmental Organisations on After-school Care Pilot Scheme of the Community Care Fund in the 2012/13 School Year

The Education Bureau (EDB) conducted an evaluation of the After-school Care Pilot Scheme (the Scheme) in November 2013. A total of 73 questionnaires were distributed. Altogether 33 schools and 37 non-governmental organisations (NGOs) responded, a response rate of about 95%. The salient findings are as follows:

I. Effectiveness of the Scheme

- The schools/NGOs held that 81% of the participating students and parents rated the pilot scheme as “good”.
- The majority of the schools/NGOs held that students/parents rated the effectiveness of the “after-school learning” (88%) and “after-school activities” (80%) as “good”.
- The vast majority of the schools/NGOs (68 or 97%) held that participation in the Scheme would benefit more students from low income families who otherwise could not afford to participate in after-school activities. Without the Scheme, the majority of the students (87%) would have stayed at home.
- The schools/NGOs held that after participation in the Scheme, about 70% of the students were able to learn how to work with others, broaden learning experience and increase knowledge.

II. Student intake

- About 65% of the schools/NGOs selected students to fill the discretionary places on teachers’ recommendation, followed by other selection channels such as through applications by parents (32%) or interviews (20%).
- The majority of the schools/NGOs (64 or 97%) informed parents of details of the Scheme through letters/notices to parents, whereas a

small number of them held briefings (22%) or informed students verbally (14%).

- Nearly half of the schools/NGOs (34 or 48%) held that the supply of places under the Scheme could not meet the demand. Among them, however, about half of the schools/NGOs (18) could not make available more places due to shortage of funding (38%) or venue (29%).
- About 78% of the schools/NGOs reported difficulties in recruiting students mainly due to the fact that students did not have time for after-school activities or parents did not want their children to join the Scheme.
- About 81% of the schools/NGOs held that the ratio of students (25%) recruited through discretionary places to the total student population under the pilot scheme was appropriate; about 92% of the schools/NGOs were in support of covering students eligible for half grant from the SFAS in the Scheme.

III. After-school activities for participation

- To encourage students to join the Scheme, the schools/NGOs indicated that they would make the activities more interesting (54 or 77%) or stress the importance of attendance to students/parents (46 or 62%).
- More than half of the schools/NGOs (36 or 51%) held that the appropriate proportion between tuition and extra-curricular activities should be 7:3.

IV. Teachers' qualifications

- Tutors/teacher assistants employed by the majority of the schools/NGOs (56 or 80%) had teaching experience of less than five years and most of them were degree holders (49 or 70%).
- Most of the schools/NGOs (45 or 64%) had difficulties in recruiting tutors/teaching assistants, mainly because of insufficient applicants, applicants' asking salaries too high or applicants failing to meet minimum qualifications requirements.

V. Others

- On the other hand, the responding schools/NGOs had put forward a number of suggestions for improving the Scheme. There were three key points: (i) increasing the funding amount; (ii) increasing flexibility in the use of the funding/more subsidised items/more subsidy for the administrative costs; and (iii) allowing flexibility in terms of hours for academic and non-academic activities.