

Community Care Fund
“One-off Ex-gratia Cash Allowance
for Locally Confirmed 2019 Coronavirus Disease Patients” Programme
Evaluation Report

Purpose

This paper reports on the evaluation results of the “One-off Ex-gratia Cash Allowance for Locally Confirmed 2019 Coronavirus Disease Patients” (referred hereafter as the ex-gratia cash allowance).

Background

2. The ex-gratia cash allowance, funded by the Community Care Fund (CCF) and launched by the Social Welfare Department (SWD) on 27 November 2020, was intended to remove the concern of potentially infected persons from coming forward to take COVID-19 tests that they would suffer from financial hardship whilst being hospitalised in public hospitals for treatment. An applicant does not need to be means-tested while he or she has to meet the following eligibility criteria in order to receive a one-off allowance of \$5,000:

- (i) a Hong Kong resident who is confirmed by the Department of Health to have contracted COVID-19 locally on or after 22 November 2020; and
- (ii) currently employed but not entitled to paid sick leave or is self-employed and face financial hardship whilst being hospitalised in public hospitals for COVID-19 treatment.

Implementation

3. A total of \$26.25 million was funded by the CCF in November 2020, out of which \$25 million was used for covering the ex-gratia cash allowance payment to a maximum of 5 000 cases and \$1.25 million for SWD’s administrative cost in implementing the programme. Patients treated in public hospitals may submit applications through medical social workers in the respective hospitals, whereas patients receiving treatment in Hospital Authority’s AsiaWorld-Expo Community Treatment Facility and North Lantau

Hospital Hong Kong Infection Control Centre may submit their applications directly to SWD.

4. With the Government's lifting of isolation orders on 30 January 2023 for people infected with COVID-19, the ex-gratia cash allowance scheme has ceased to accept applications since 14 February 2023.

Overview

5. As at 14 February 2023, a total of 3 286 applications had been received, among which 2 969 applications were approved, 34 were not approved, and 283 had withdrawn their application. Among the 2 969 approved applications, the applicants were mainly from the following sectors: construction (15%), retail trade and customer service (14%), catering (13%), transportation and courier service (13%) and cleansing service (7%). Major reasons for applications being not approved are as follows:

- (i) the applicants are not confirmed COVID-19 cases;
- (ii) the applicants are imported COVID-19 cases instead of locally confirmed cases;
- (iii) the applicants are entitled to have paid sick leave or the applicants are not employed/self-employed; or
- (iv) the applicants are not hospitalised in public hospitals for COVID-19 treatment.

Expenditure

6. A total of \$14.845 million (59% of the funding provision of \$25 million) had been granted to 2 969 applicants. SWD's administrative costs amounted to \$0.92 million.

Evaluation

7. During the earlier stage of the epidemic when some members of the public were skeptical about taking COVID-19 tests in fear of loss of income, the ex-gratia cash allowance has been effective in removing the concern of potentially infected persons from coming forward to take COVID-19 tests lest they would suffer from financial hardship whilst being hospitalised in public

hospitals for treatment. For the majority of beneficiaries who were from the working class or self-employed but not entitled to paid sick leave, the ex-gratia cash allowance has helped alleviate their possible financial hardship.

Conclusion

8. With the community resuming to its normal daily lives, the ex-gratia cash allowance scheme has ceased to accept applications and ended. All applications have been processed.

Labour and Welfare Bureau
Social Welfare Department
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