

The Second Meeting of the Executive Committee on the Community Care Fund
28 March 2011

Summary of Discussion

The Executive Committee on the Community Care Fund (CCF) held its second meeting on 28 March 2011. A summary of the discussion is as follows:

1. Members were briefed on the work of the four sub-committees by their chairmen.
2. Members supported the setting up of a new school-based fund to subsidise students from low-income families to participate in cross-boundary learning activities which were organised or recognised by schools. Members also suggested that:
 - (1) Labelling effect should be minimised;
 - (2) Schools should be provided with greater flexibility on the use of the fund and restrictions should be minimised so as to benefit more students;
 - (3) Consideration should be given to the setting of a ceiling on the amount of financial assistance for each eligible student.
3. Members supported financial assistance to ethnic minorities and new arrivals from the Mainland for taking language-related international public examinations. They agreed that applicants who had passed the means tests for Financial Assistance Scheme for Post-secondary Students of the Student Financial Assistance Agency would be regarded as meeting the criterion of “low-income families” of the programme.
4. Members supported that for the first phase, subsidy would be provided for specified self-financed cancer drugs which had not yet been brought into the Samaritan Fund safety net but had been rapidly accumulating medical/scientific evidence and with relatively higher efficacy, and the second phase would work out a financial assessment criteria less stringent than those of the Samaritan Fund in order to benefit patients who were not eligible for assistance for the use of Samaritan Fund subsidised drugs

because their slightly better financial conditions than the requirements of the Samaritan Fund .

5. Members supported the provision of subsidy to elders from low-income families to hire household cleaning and escorting services for medical consultation. Noting that the proposed target beneficiaries were elders on the waiting list for “Integrated Home Care Services”, members proposed that the Social Welfare Department should consider adopting a more flexible administrative arrangement so that not only those elders on the waiting list would be benefited but others with pressing needs would also be provided with timely services.
6. Members supported the proposal to provide a monthly subsidy to people with severe disabilities. Members noted that this assistance programme would not cover people with severe disabilities aged 60 or above as they were already covered by the subsidised community care and support services for the elders. Members suggested that in rolling out the programme, the Administration should explain clearly the rationale in determining the beneficiaries covered. Members also noted that the Administration would finalise the criteria of the means test for this programme for consideration by the Steering Committee.
7. Members supported the proposal to provide a monthly subsidy to children who were on the waiting list for subvented pre-school rehabilitation services.
8. Members supported the provision of a one-off subsidy to owners of Tenant Purchase Scheme flats and were not eligible to receive rent allowance under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme, and CSSA households living in private housing paying rents that exceeded the maximum rent allowance under CSSA. Members were also concerned about the housing difficulties of other low-income families and suggested that more data be collected for future studies.
9. Members supported the proposal to provide subsidy to primary school students from low-income families to meet their lunch expenses at schools. Members suggested that the level of subsidy be set at the actual price charged by the lunch suppliers of the schools.

10. Members agreed to consider engaging independent consultant to give advice on ways of evaluating the assistance programmes.
11. Members supported conducting studies on three programmes, including enhancing after-school care service, providing language courses for new arrivals from the Mainland and ethnic minorities, and providing financial assistance on dental service for the elders (including dentures). Funding was reserved for each of these programmes.
12. Members proposed further deliberation on the amount to be placed with the Hong Kong Monetary Authority in order to maximise returns and flexibility.
13. Regarding the means test mechanism for assistance programmes, members supported that:
 - (1) it was not necessary to adopt a uniform definition of “people facing economic difficulties” for all the assistance programmes under the CCF. Instead, specific criteria and mechanism for the mean tests for different assistance programmes should be formulated;
 - (2) the CCF may consider defining eligible beneficiaries as individuals or families that passed the means tests under one or more existing government subsidy/assistance scheme(s) and were current recipients of the schemes; and
 - (3) suitable criteria and mechanisms for means test should be formulated, having regard to the circumstances of individual programmes, with a view to benefiting as many people outside the safety net as possible.
14. Members agreed that should the need arise, a subsidy voucher mechanism could be further developed for the assistance programmes of the CCF.
15. Members noted the follow-up and reporting mechanism for handling of cases applying for CCF assistance by individuals.