

**The Second Meeting of the Home Affairs Sub-committee on
the Community Care Fund
2 March 2011**

Summary of Discussion

The Home Affairs Sub-committee on the Community Care Fund (CCF) held its second meeting on 2 March 2011. A summary of discussion is as follows:

1. Members noted the views on the CCF from district personalities expressed at a focus group meeting and at the meeting with the chairmen and vice-chairmen of the 18 District Councils in February 2011.
2. Members suggested launching an assistance programme to provide a one-off cash allowance for new arrivals (NAs) from low-income families entering Hong Kong for settlement as short-term subsidy for them to adapt to local life and facilitate their integration into the local community. Members also suggested that “low-income families” be defined as those families which had passed the means tests and were recipients of existing assistance schemes. The vetting procedures should be as simple as possible and there should not be restrictions on the use of the allowance.
3. Members suggested that the sustainability of the programme be considered. For the definition of “low-income families”, it should cover as far as possible those families which had passed the means tests and were recipients of existing assistance schemes. Possible assistance schemes for consideration included Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme, student financial assistance schemes and waiving mechanism of public hospitals and clinics etc.
4. Some Members expressed that to better serve the Fund’s purpose as a supplementary measure, consideration should be given to including those families which had economic difficulties but were not recipients of existing Government assistance schemes in the proposed programme. This would benefit more people “outside the net”. In this connection, some Members suggested that consideration might be given to allowing the applicants to make self-declaration and statement on their financial conditions.

5. Some Members expressed that in defining “economic difficulties” or “low-income families”, the Sub-committee should consider whether to adopt the same definition used by other Sub-committees. Some Members noted that different assistance programmes had different specific target beneficiaries, the adoption of a uniform definition for “economic difficulties” or “low-income families” might not be appropriate.
6. Members discussed how to assist ethnic minorities (EMs) and NAs who had difficulties in meeting their needs in daily life and securing employment due to language barriers. The proposed programmes to be launched were as follows:
 - (a) Sponsoring EMs and NAs from the Mainland entering Hong Kong for settlement who would take specific language-related examinations, such as Examination of Chinese Language of the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) and International English Language Testing System (IELTS), etc. as “non-school attending” candidates.
 - (b) Providing language courses for adult or “non-school attending” EMs and NAs from the Mainland entering Hong Kong for settlement to further enhance their language proficiency for daily use and employment.

Members agreed that a means test mechanism should be established to ensure that assistance programmes were supporting EMs and NAs who were most in need of assistance; the scope of beneficiaries should be defined more clearly and no restrictions should be imposed on people from developed countries in applying for the assistance. Other views and suggestions were as follows:

- (a) Regarding the means test mechanism, reference might be made to the mechanisms of the existing assistance programmes or the applicants might be allowed to make self-declaration and statement on their financial conditions.
- (b) To prevent abuse and to benefit more people in need, consideration should be given to setting a ceiling on the total amount of examination fee assistance for each beneficiary, a limit on the

number of times for taking the same public examination and specified examination results to be obtained for assistance to be granted.

In the light of Members' views and suggestions, the Home Affairs Department would work out concrete operation and implementation details for the Sub-committee's further consideration.