

## **Community Care Fund - Public Consultation Sessions**

### **Summary of Views and Suggestions**

The four Sub-committees (Education, Home Affairs, Medical and Welfare) under the Steering Committee on the Community Care Fund (CCF) held four public consultation sessions in November and December 2011 to gauge public views on the formulation of assistance programmes under their respective areas of work. Views and suggestions from participants are as follows:

#### **Views and Suggestions on Assistance Programmes that have been rolled out or under deliberation**

##### **1. School-based Fund (Cross-boundary Learning Activities)**

- (1) To provide detailed funding guidelines and to simplify administrative procedures to facilitate teachers in organising activities and selecting students. Activities should be coordinated by the Government or non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to reduce teachers' administrative workload.
- (2) To relax the restriction that students will be subsidised for only one cross-boundary learning activity within three years so that students can fully utilise the maximum subsidy of \$3,000.
- (3) As the programme will run on a pilot basis for three years only and may not benefit all eligible students, consideration should be given to subsidising local learning activities / field trips to benefit more students.
- (4) To allow students from low-income families flexibility in using the \$3,000 subsidy to meet the expenses of other extra-curricula activities.

##### **2. School Lunch Subsidy**

- (1) To expand the coverage of the programme to benefit students who receive half-grants under the Student financial assistance schemes under the Student Financial Assistance Agency, secondary students from low-income families and those who pack their own lunch to school.
- (2) To provide schools with detailed guidelines on the administrative arrangement of the programme, so that the administrative procedures adopted by schools could

be standardised.

- (3) Making reference to the School Textbook Assistance Scheme, subsidy under this programme may be deposited directly into the bank accounts of beneficiaries, instead of benefiting students with lunch provided through schools.

### **3. After-school Care Service**

To engage community carers as instructors to take care of students who participate in the community-based / school-based after-school care service.

### **4. Financial Assistance for Ethnic Minorities (EMs) and New Arrivals (NAs) from the Mainland for Taking Language-related International Public Examinations**

To tie in with this programme, subsidy should be given to low-income EMs and NAs from the Mainland for taking preparatory or training courses to enhance their abilities in coping with examinations and employment. Such training opportunities should be provided as far as practicable at the districts in which they reside to alleviate their burden of travelling expenses.

### **5. Subsidy for Non-school-attending EMs and NA from the Mainland s to enroll in language courses**

- (1) To provide language training to EM children and their parents to help them integrate into the local community.
- (2) To provide training to kindergarten teachers to enhance their understanding on EM culture.
- (3) To subsidise experienced NGOs to provide language courses to EMs to enhance their interaction with locals and expedite their integration into local culture.

### **6. Subsidy for Patients of Hospital Authority (HA) who have Economic Difficulties for Specified Self-financed Cancer Drugs**

- (1) To include expensive targeted therapy drugs with marked efficacy into the list of subsidised drugs, so that more cancer patients can benefit from better treatment.
- (2) To expand the coverage to middle-class patients so as to alleviate their financial burden on paying for expensive targeted therapy drugs.

**7. Subsidy for Needy HA Patients who Marginally Fall outside the Samaritan Fund (SF) Safety Net for the Use of SF Subsidised Drugs**

- (1) To lower the application threshold of the SF, allow for individual-based instead of household-based means-test and exclude the income and assets of parents residing with the patients from the calculating the income.
- (2) To adopt less stringent criteria than those of the SF in processing subsidy application for the use of biological agents by patients (not covered by the SF) who suffer from ankylosing spondylitis, rheumatic diseases, ulcerative colitis and Crohn's disease so as to alleviate their financial burden.

**8. Financial Assistance for Dental Services (including Dentures) for the Elderly**

- (1) Apart from dentures, filling and dental implant should also be covered under the programme for more comprehensive dental services for the elderly.
- (2) To provide financial assistance for dental services for people aged 60 or below.

**9. Subsidy for Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Recipients who are owners of Tenant Purchase Scheme Flats for Five Years or Above and not Eligible for Rent Allowance under CSSA**

The existing one-off subsidy of \$2,000 under the programme should be disbursed regularly to needy tenants as a matter of sustained support.

**Views and Suggestions on the Formulation of Assistance Programmes**

**1. Services for the Elderly**

- (1) To provide subsidy for the elderly with cataract to undergo surgery at private medical institutions so as to spare them from the long waiting time for public medical service and to obtain prompt treatment.
- (2) To subsidise elderly people aged 60 or above to live in private homes for the elderly.
- (3) To subsidise retirees with limited means to take computer and other training courses so that they can move with the times and have their communication

with their family and the community enhanced.

- (4) To subsidise retirees to join short tours.
- (5) To subsidise non-CSSA recipients aged 55 to 65 who are living with their children to support their living and to cover the expensive medical expenses.

## **2. Assistance for Persons with Disabilities and their Carers**

- (1) To provide subsidy to needy people with squint and double vision to seek private medical treatment promptly without delay.
- (2) To provide subsidy to needy children with amblyopia on receiving optometric check up, and purchasing prism-incorporated eyeglasses and visual aids to prevent deterioration of their conditions which will help reduce the medical expenditure of the Government in the long term.
- (3) To subsidise needy mental patients and non-CSSA recipients for medical expenses.
- (4) To provide subsidy for mental patients, rheumatic patients, CSSA recipients and other needy people with chronic illness on the purchase of new drugs.
- (5) To provide subsidy for the elderly with diabetes on the purchase of daily healthcare products (e.g. such as test strips).
- (6) To provide emotional support to family members and carers of the chronically ill or psychiatric patients so as to mitigate their stress, and to provide assistance to family members who take care of severely ill patients.
- (7) To enhance medical support at the district level, such as enhancing the support for the chronically ill and the promotional efforts of community health education.
- (8) To provide support for the chronically ill requiring speech therapy after suffering from stroke, and their carers or family members.
- (9) To provide subsidy on spa treatment and physiotherapy for needy spina bifida patients and on continuous spa treatment for ankylosing spondylitis patients, so as to improve their mobility and enhance the effectiveness of treatment.

- (10) To provide drugs with patents just expired (prices of which would normally plummet) to patients so that they may receive better treatment.
- (11) To provide hospice care education for family members of the terminally ill.
- (12) To provide subsidy on prostheses for persons with disabilities.
- (13) To provide special medical allowance for the severely disabled to purchase on a reimbursement basis wheelchairs and other aid equipments.
- (14) To provide support for disabled youths who are employable but unable to find jobs.

### **3. Assistance for the Mentally Handicapped**

- (1) To provide subsidy on dental treatment for the mentally handicapped.
- (2) To provide training for healthcare workers to cope with the long-term demand for dental services from the mentally handicapped and patients of Alzheimer's disease.
- (3) To provide subsidy for the mentally handicapped on the purchase of equipment such as electric toothbrushes, so as to improve their orthodontic health.
- (4) To provide subsidy on further appropriate training for those mentally handicapped aged 16 to 18 who have left hostels.
- (5) To provide transportation support for the mentally handicapped to resolve their difficulties in going out.
- (6) To enhance support for physically or mentally handicapped students to participate in extra-curricular learning, cultural and recreational activities (e.g. engaging instructors to provide training activities and providing travel allowance).

### **4. Assistance for Students with Special Educational Needs**

- (1) To provide subsidy on speech therapy with private speech training centres for children with speech problems.

- (2) To provide subsidy on intelligence and learning aptitude assessments and after-school training for students with special educational needs (e.g. those with hyperactivity or Asperger syndrome), so as to help them adapt to the life in ordinary schools.
- (3) To enhance support for students with special educational needs (or their parents) to join pre-school education programmes and for such students to receive occupational training.
- (4) To enhance support for students with special educational needs currently enrolled in mainstream schools, such as providing subsidy on travel expenses.
- (5) To purchase equipment/learning materials for students with moderate visual impairments for their study.
- (6) To provide lunch subsidy for students of special schools (including secondary students).
- (7) To enhance educational support for gifted students, such as providing them with scholarships (including programme fees and travel expenses) for attending gifted education programmes.

## **5. Assistance for Students from Low-income Families**

- (1) To provide tutorial support and subsidy on extra-curricular activities for students from low-income families.
- (2) To provide subsidy for students to participate in exchange and a diverse range of activities, so as to fully utilise their school time. Students from different schools in the same district may join activities in a single centre/campus.
- (3) Not all eligible students may become beneficiaries as schools may screen students before offering them subsidy on extra-curricular activities. CCF should disburse a cash allowance to parents of all eligible students.
- (4) To provide subsidy for students from low-income families to receive university education, in particular for disciplines not available at local institutions or courses for which scholarships are not available.
- (5) On top of the existing assistance schemes offered by the Student Financial Assistance Agency for tertiary students, assistance should also be provided for

university students from “n-nothing” families.

- (6) To provide travel subsidies for students who reside and study in different districts.
- (7) To provide subsidy on adult education for working students.
- (8) To provide financial assistance or support for talented students to participate in international competitions (e.g. learning piano, taking piano exams, etc).
- (9) To provide cross-boundary travel allowance, extra-curricular activity allowance, textbook allowance, etc for students from Hong Kong families residing in Shenzhen.

## **6. Assistance for EMs and NAs**

- (1) To help EMs (e.g. Pakistanis) to integrate into the community, such as providing subsidy for ethnic minority students to take Chinese courses (e.g. those arranged by organisations in the community).
- (2) To use vacant campuses to arrange courses on local culture, occupational training, English enhancement, etc for NAs, and to provide them with subsidy to participate in popular art and cultural activities.

## **7. Assistance for the Underprivileged**

- (1) To cooperate with NGOs to visit street sleepers, give them hampers and meal assistance, brief them and help them obtain existing medical and educational assistance provided by the Government.
- (2) To provide short-term (about 2 months) jobless allowance for those unemployed with financial difficulties to cope with urgent needs.
- (3) To assist children whose parents are not permanent Hong Kong residents, such as providing them with subsistence allowance or providing subsidy for those with chronic illnesses.
- (4) To provide additional allowance for recipients of CSSA rental allowance living in private housing.

- (5) To collaborate with public organisations to provide temporary residences for the needy as a matter of priority.
- (6) To provide subsidy for individuals who have been waiting for public rental housing for 3 or more years and residents of sub-divided units. The subsidy amount could be the difference between the rents of private and public housing.

## **8. Other Suggestions**

- (1) To provide technical and maintenance support for owners' corporations of buildings so as to raise the standard of property management.
- (2) To provide subsidy for building barrier-free passages at residential buildings.
- (3) To provide assistance to pregnant Mainland women whose husbands are Hong Kong residents for delivery in Hong Kong.
- (4) To allocate funding to the District Councils to offer emergency grants to low-income families affected by contingencies (e.g. natural disasters).
- (5) To accept individual applications for assistance, so that needy individuals could have access to financial assistance.
- (6) Should monitor and review assistance programmes regularly, and consider how pilot schemes may be incorporated into future Government policies.
- (7) To provide care allowance for full-time housewives with insufficient social and economic support.
- (8) To provide subsidy on basic living expenses such as rent, meals and telephone charges for discharged prisoners who are yet to be CSSA recipients, so as to help them seek employment and reintegrate into society.
- (9) To provide subsistence allowance for children born in Hong Kong but residing in the Mainland.