

**Community Care Fund
Pilot Scheme on Relaxing the Household Income Limit of the
Fee-waiving Subsidy Scheme under the After School Care
Programme for Low-income Families and Increasing
Fee-waiving Subsidy Places
Evaluation Report**

Background

After School Care Programme (ASCP) services and fee-waiving/reduction places have been in high demand among working families. As there are families with household income above 75% but not exceeding 100% of the relevant Median Monthly Domestic Household Income (MMDHI) yet not being able to benefit from the existing “Fee-waiving Subsidy Scheme under the ASCP” of the Social Welfare Department (SWD), a three-year “Pilot Scheme on Relaxing the Household Income Limit of the Fee-waiving Subsidy Scheme under the After School Care Programme for Low-income Families and Increasing Fee-waiving Subsidy Places” (the Pilot Scheme) was launched in October 2017 by the Community Care Fund (CCF) to strengthen support for low-income families.

Implementation of the Pilot Scheme

2. The Pilot Scheme is administered by SWD. In August 2017, SWD organised a briefing session to announce the details of the Pilot Scheme and kicked off a series of publicity activities¹. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) participating in the “Fee-waiving Subsidy Scheme under the ASCP” were invited to join the Pilot Scheme. As at 31 May 2020, a total of 134 ASCP centres under 46 NGOs participated in the Pilot Scheme as ASPs. The parent/guardian of an eligible child could apply for the service during the implementation period of the Pilot Scheme by submitting a completed application form together with all necessary documents to an ASCP centre of an ASP for vetting. Payment of the fee-waiving subsidy under the ASCP will not be made directly by SWD to the parents/guardians of child beneficiaries. Applications will be vetted by ASCP centres of ASPs according to the following fee-waiving/reduction categories:

Full fee-waiving:	Families with monthly income at or below 55% of the MMDHI
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¹ Publicity activities included issuing press release, distributing the leaflets of the Pilot Scheme via District Social Welfare Offices of SWD and Home Affairs Enquiry Centres of the Home Affairs Department and uploading relevant information and application form onto SWD website and CCF website.

Half fee-reduction:	Families with monthly income above 55% but not exceeding 75% of the MMDHI
One-third fee-reduction:	Families with monthly income above 75% but not exceeding 100% of the MMDHI

3. As primary students are generally receiving full-time education, all parents have chosen to receive ASCP services under the Pilot Scheme in the late afternoon session². Most ASCP centres under the Pilot Scheme operate between 3:30 pm and 7 pm. The amount of fee-waiving subsidy for a child beneficiary under the Pilot Scheme is set with reference to the “Fee-waiving Subsidy Scheme under the ASCP” and an additional one-third fee reduction subsidy. The subsidy amount of full fee-waiving/half fee-reduction/ one-third fee-reduction is \$900/\$450/\$300 respectively.

4. As at 31 May 2020, a total subsidy amount of about \$5.44 million had been paid.

Evaluation

5. Making reference to the methodology adopted in the evaluation on the effectiveness of other CCF programmes, SWD commenced an evaluation on the effectiveness of the Pilot Scheme in December 2019 and the work was completed in March 2020. The effectiveness of the Pilot Scheme was analysed based on the feedbacks collected from parents/guardians of child beneficiaries and ASPs of the Pilot Scheme as well as the enquiries and suggestions made by the public, etc. Sources of information for the evaluation included quarterly statistical reports from ASCP centres of ASPs, questionnaire survey conducted on parents/guardians of child beneficiaries and on all ASPs, and public enquiries.

Analysis of the Evaluation Results

(a) Statistical Data on Child Beneficiaries

6. Subsidy payment is made by SWD to ASPs on a reimbursement basis according to the quarterly statistical reports from ASCP centres of ASPs. As at 31 May 2020, a total of 959 places were granted with fee waiving/reduction subsidy (including 621 full fee-waiving places, 188 half fee-reduction places, and 150 one-third fee-reduction places).

7. Among the child beneficiaries, the age group of 8 to 10 ranked the highest in number, accounting for 47%, followed by the age group of 6 to 7 and 11 to 12, accounting for 32% and 21% respectively. The child beneficiaries being eligible for fee waiving were mostly due to their parents/guardians being in

² In general, the morning session runs from 8 am to 1 pm; the afternoon session from 1 pm to 6 pm and the late afternoon session from 3 or 4 pm to 7 or 8 pm and a few to 9 pm.

employment, accounting for 85%, or their parents/guardians proactively seeking open employment, accounting for 8% or other conditions (such as social or medical factors), accounting for 11%. Regarding the household income of families of child beneficiaries, the majority was $\leq 55\%$ of the MMDHI, accounting for 65%. The child beneficiaries lived in various districts in Hong Kong Island, Kowloon and the New Territories, with Kwun Tong, Islands, Tuen Mun and Kwai Tsing each accounting for 10% or above. For details, please see **Attachment**. There is no deadline for application for the Pilot Scheme. The number of child beneficiaries is expected to increase continuously till the end of the Pilot Scheme.

(b) Questionnaire Survey on Parents/Guardians of Child Beneficiaries

8. In January 2020, SWD conducted a telephone survey on 100 randomly selected parents/guardians of child beneficiaries (about 10% of the total) to collect information on their financial conditions, family needs, and their feedback on the Pilot Scheme. Among the parents/guardians of child beneficiaries interviewed, 86% agreed that the child beneficiaries were under proper care under the Pilot Scheme which facilitated them in engaging in work, seeking open employment, participating in employment retraining courses/job attachment, etc; 90% agreed that the Pilot Scheme could relieve the families/relatives' financial burden in respect of ASCP-related expenses; and 93% agreed that the Pilot Scheme could provide appropriate support to the child beneficiaries in areas of skills learning/social activities. Most of the interviewees were satisfied with the overall arrangement of the Pilot Scheme, accounting for 96%. Besides, 42% of the interviewees reflected their opinions on the Pilot Scheme. These include relaxing the eligibility requirement, increasing the number of ASCP places, increasing the amount of subsidy and streamlining the application/vetting procedures and arrangement of ASCP centres, such as matching their operating hours with after-school hours, extending their operating hours on weekday evenings, Saturdays and Sundays, etc.

9. Among the interviewees, 30% of the child beneficiaries/families indicated that they had special needs, with the majority coming from single-parent families, accounting for 50% of those families with special needs, followed by child beneficiaries with intellectual/health problems, child beneficiaries having siblings with less than satisfactory intellectual/ health/mental conditions and child beneficiaries with special education needs, accounting for 20%, 17% and 7% respectively. The survey also collected statistics on the economic conditions and service needs of the child beneficiaries before receiving subsidy from the Pilot Scheme. Overall speaking, 70% of the interviewees indicated that they had to bear the fees of the ASCP before receiving subsidy from the Pilot Scheme, 5% revealed that the fees were paid by family members living together, while 27% of the child beneficiaries had not received services of ASCP before receiving subsidy under the Pilot Scheme.

10. After receiving subsidy under the Pilot Scheme, 52% of the interviewees, who were granted full fee-waiving, still have to pay the remaining

fees for the ASCP services. Among them, the interviewees having to pay the remaining fees of \$400 to \$600 and over \$600 accounted for 27% and 31% respectively. Among the interviewees under full fee-waiving/fee reduction having to pay the remaining fees of the ASCP, 42% expressed that the amount of subsidy was not enough while 6% had no opinion on the amount.

(c) Questionnaire Survey on ASPs

11. SWD conducted a questionnaire survey on the 46 ASPs under the Pilot Scheme and all of them completed the questionnaires. Among them, 91% agreed that the Pilot Scheme, with additional fee-reduction places, was able to benefit more children with appropriate care and support, so that their parents/guardians could continue with their employment, job-seeking or participating in employment re-training courses/job-attachment, etc.; 78% agreed that relaxing the household income limit could relieve the financial burden of low-income families with household income marginally above 75% but not exceeding 100% of the relevant MMDHI; while 74% agreed that relaxing the household income limit under the Pilot Scheme could encourage the above mentioned low-income families to make use of ASCP services. Besides, 57% of the interviewed ASPs indicated that the overall arrangement by SWD (including the briefing session, service specifications, application and notification of approval as ASPs, etc.) was proper, whereas 41% had no views. Some opinions given by the ASPs included streamlining the application/vetting procedures, streamlining the administrative procedures and relaxing the eligibility criteria, etc. Overall speaking, most interviewed ASPs, accounting for 61%, were satisfied with the operation of the Pilot Scheme; 24% had no views and 76% expressed their wish to take part in similar programmes.

12. The survey also collected statistics of the service provision of ASCP centres operated by the ASPs for child beneficiaries with special education needs. Overall speaking, 85% of ASPs being interviewed indicated their ASCP centres had provided ASCP services for child beneficiaries with special education needs. 33% of them provided ASCP services for children with special education needs, constituting about 20% to 30% of the total number of child beneficiaries, followed by 26% of interviewed ASPs providing ASCP services with 10% to 20% children having special education needs out of the total number of child beneficiaries.

(d) Public Enquiries and Suggestions

13. SWD has set up a hotline during the implementation of the Pilot Scheme with a view to providing required information and support to the public. As at 31 May 2020, a total of 327 enquiries were received on the Pilot Scheme and the main concerns were about the eligibility criteria, followed by matters related to the completion of application forms /documents required and application procedures. Some enquirers also provided their feedbacks on increasing the amount of fee-waiving subsidy and streamlining the application/vetting procedures, etc.

Conclusion

14. Based on the findings of the survey, both the parents/guardians of child beneficiaries and ASPs agreed that the Pilot Scheme was effective. The survey also revealed that many families of child beneficiaries had special needs, such as being single-parent families, child beneficiaries having special education needs/being in poor health condition or child beneficiaries with siblings having intellectual/health and mental concerns, etc. Therefore, ASCP services not only provided proper care for the child beneficiaries, but also gave support for families with special needs and relieved their financial burden, especially for those having children with special education needs.

15. It was announced in the 2019 Policy Address that the Government would implement a host of enhancement measures. These include adding 2 500 full fee-waiving places, relaxing application eligibility, increasing subsidy level, providing extra subsidy for children with special education needs and streamlining means-test procedures, etc. in order to enhance the ASCP. At the same time, the Pilot Scheme will also be regularised. SWD plans to implement the above measures in the third quarter of 2020-21. As the period of subsidy for child beneficiaries under the Pilot Scheme will end by September 2020, the level of fee-waiving/reduction for the last quarter of the Pilot Scheme is recommended to be maintained during the transition period to the related new measures, so that eligible children may continue to receive subsidy until their first application for the enhanced service is approved. This is to ensure their continued receipt of ASCP services during the transition period.

16. The views of some parents/guardians over the increase of the amount of subsidy and streamlining of administrative and vetting procedures may have reference value in the formulation of the implementation details of the regularised scheme. They will also be beneficial to the enhanced ASCP services and the strengthening of support to needy families.

Social Welfare Department
August 2020

Attachment

Pilot Scheme on Relaxing the Household Income Limit of the Fee-waiving Subsidy Scheme under the After School Care Programme for Low-income Families and Increasing Fee-waiving Subsidy Places

Statistical Data on Child Beneficiaries and Profile of Approved Service Providers (as at 31 May 2020)

(a) Household Income Condition (Note 1)

Household Income	Number of Beneficiaries	Percentage (%)
Families with monthly income $\leq 55\%$ of the MMDHI	621	65%
Families with monthly income $>55\%$ to 75% of the MMDHI	187	19%
Families with monthly income $>75\%$ to 100% of the MMDHI	151	16%

Note 1: Based on the MMDHI category of the families of child beneficiaries according to the latest result of vetting/review made by ASCP centres.

(b) Age Profile of the Child Beneficiaries (Note 2)

Age Group	Number of Beneficiaries	Percentage (%)
6-7	304	32%
8-10	453	47%
11-12	202	21%

Note 2: The age of the children is based on the time when they are receiving/last received ASCP services.

(c) Criteria for Fee-waiving/reduction

Criteria Met by Parents/Guardians of Children Receiving ASCP Services (more than one option can be chosen) (Note 3)	Number of Beneficiaries	Percentage (%)
engaged in employment	814	85%
participating in employment retraining courses	6	1%
participating in the Special Job Attachment Scheme	0	0%
proactively seeking open employment	77	8%
others (e.g. social or medical factor, etc.)	108	11%

Note 3: As more than one option can be chosen for the reasons of child beneficiaries to receive ASCP services, the total percentage may not be equal to 100%.

(d) Session of ASCP services Joined by the Child Beneficiaries

Session of Services	Number of Beneficiaries	Percentage (%)
Morning session	0	0%
Afternoon session	0	0%
Late Afternoon session	959	100%

(e) Meal service

Meal service	Number of Beneficiaries	Percentage (%)
Meal service included	26	3%
Meal services excluded	933	97%

(f) Utilisation of Fee-waiving/Reduction Subsidy By District

District	Number of Beneficiaries	Percentage (%)
Central & Western	8	1%
Southern	59	6%
Islands	125	13%
Eastern	29	3%
Wan Chai	1	0%
Kowloon City	30	3%
Yau Tsim Mong	30	3%
Sham Shui Po	47	5%
Kwun Tong	154	16%
Wong Tai Sin	45	5%
Sai Kung	4	0%
Sha Tin	64	7%
Tai Po	40	4%
North	12	1%
Yuen Long	79	8%
Tsuen Wan	35	4%
Kwai Tsing	97	10%
Tuen Mun	100	11%