

# **Assistance Programme under Community Care Fund Evaluation Report on Subsidy for Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Recipients Living in Rented Private Housing**

## **Background**

Community Care Fund (CCF) has been established since early 2011 to provide assistance to people facing economic difficulties, in particular those who fall outside the social safety net or those within the safety net but have special circumstances that are not covered. In addition, the CCF can take forward measures on a pilot basis to help the Government identify those that could be considered for incorporation into the Government's regular assistance and service programmes.

2. Ex-Steering Committee on the CCF endorsed at its meeting on 20 April 2011 to launch this assistance programme in 2011-12 with a view to providing a one-off subsidy to Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) households living in rented private housing and paying a monthly rent which exceeds the maximum rent allowance (MRA) under the CSSA Scheme as at 1 July 2011, so as to relieve their financial burden as a result of the periodic increase of rent.

3. The programme, with budget of \$36.12 million (including administrative cost of \$1.61 million), is administered by the Social Welfare Department (SWD) and estimated to benefit about 23 000 households<sup>1</sup>.

## **Implementation of Assistance Programme**

4. SWD announced the details of the programme and arranged publicity<sup>2</sup> in October 2011, and identified eligible CSSA households based on the information from the Computerised Social Security System (CSSS). Eligible one-person and two-or-more-person CSSA households were subsequently provided with a one-off subsidy of \$1,000 and \$2,000 respectively. A total subsidy of about \$32.08 million has been released so far.

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<sup>1</sup> Including about 13 500 one-person households and about 9 500 two-or-more-person households.

<sup>2</sup> Besides distributing the programme leaflets via District Social Welfare Offices and the Home Affairs Department, SWD has uploaded all relevant information onto SWD website.

## **Result of Analysis**

5. SWD has analysed the collected information and data for the evaluation as follows.

### **(a) Statistical Data on Beneficiaries**

6. Based on the record from CSSS, SWD had primarily identified a total of 22 614 CSSA households meeting the eligibility criteria at the specified date of 1 July 2011<sup>3</sup>, among which 22 605 households whose eligibility were verified had been granted the subsidy, while 9 households had left the CSSA net after 1 July 2011. After further follow-up, two of the households declined the subsidy as they required no assistance, and the remaining seven households had not been provided with the subsidy as all of their contact information had been changed and thus could not be contacted for eligibility verification. The majority of beneficiaries were one-person households, which amounted to 13 125 households (at approximately 58.1%), followed by 4 822 two-person households (at approximately 21.3%). Eligible one-person CSSA households have been provided with a total of about \$13.12 million, and two-or-more-person CSSA households have been provided with a total of about \$18.96 million under the programme, totalling about \$32.08 million. Please refer to Appendix I for relevant statistics.

### **(b) Survey on Beneficiaries**

7. SWD conducted an opinion survey on the programme among 200 randomly-selected CSSA household beneficiaries (about 1% of the overall household beneficiaries). 198 survey respondents agreed that the programme could relieve their burden on housing expenses, and 199 respondents were satisfied with the operational arrangements. Besides, the respondents mainly used the subsidy to meet their daily expenses (87%), followed by rental expenses (21%). Please refer to Appendix II(a) and II(b) for relevant information.

### **(c) Public Enquiries**

8. Along with the implementation of the programme, SWD had set up a telephone hotline to provide support and information to individuals concerned. Since November 2011, SWD has received a total

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<sup>3</sup> CSSA household beneficiaries should be tenants of private housing and the monthly rent payable exceeds the MRA under the CSSA Scheme as at 1 July 2011.

of about 560 enquiries regarding the programme, most of which were about eligibility criteria and payment arrangements. Please refer to Appendix III for details.

## **Conclusion**

9. Based on the data collected from the survey, the respondents in general agree that the programme is effective in relieving their burden on housing expenses to a certain extent. In fact, they mainly use the subsidy to meet their daily and rental expenses. The programme has thus met its objective, and is in line with one of the objectives of CCF, which is to provide assistance to those within the social safety net but who have special circumstances that are not covered.

10. The MRA under the CSSA Scheme is adjusted annually in accordance with the movement of rent index for private housing under the Consumer Price Index (A). Based on the index, compiled by the Census and Statistics Department on a monthly basis and used to measure the rental movements of private housing among non-CSSA households with relatively low expenditure, the MRA for CSSA households is adjusted for them to meet their rental expenses. The programme should be able to provide a buffer against the periodic increase of rent, relieving the financial pressure faced by the beneficiaries prior to the MRA adjustment.

11. Since the implementation of this programme in 2011, the MRA had been increased by 5.7% under the existing mechanism in February 2012, and further increased by 7.8% in February 2013, further relieving the rental pressure of CSSA recipients living in private housing.

12. In addition, individuals who have pressing housing needs due to financial hardships or various reasons may approach Integrated Family Service Centres of SWD or non-governmental organisations for assistance. Social workers would provide them with appropriate services in light of the circumstances of individual cases, including short-term financial assistance to meet rental and removal expenses, arrangement for admission to urban hostels for single persons, and recommendation for allocation of public rental housing flats under the Compassionate Rehousing (CR) Scheme. For CSSA households living in private housing and on the waiting list either for CR or admission to a subsidised residential care home for the elderly, the Director of Social Welfare may also exercise discretion to approve a rent allowance higher than the applicable MRA (up to two times of the MRA) to cover the actual rent paid. In 2010 and 2011, there were 200 and 283 CSSA cases

respectively having benefited under such an arrangement.

13. In conclusion, the above measures have achieved their objectives, being able to provide a buffer for relieving the rental pressure faced by the beneficiaries prior to the adjustment of CSSA rent allowance. The rent allowance has also been increased twice by a total of about 14% in accordance with the existing mechanism. SWD will continue to monitor the movement of rent index and adjust the MRA in accordance with the existing mechanism.

Social Welfare Department  
February 2013

**Number of Household Beneficiaries and Amount of Subsidy Granted**

<b>Number of household members</b>	<b>Number of households</b>	<b>Percentage of the total number</b>	<b>Amount of subsidy for each household</b>	<b>Total amount</b>
1 person	13 125	58.06%	\$1,000	\$13,125,000
2 persons	4 822	21.33%	\$2,000	\$9,644,000
3 persons	2 830	12.52%	\$2,000	\$5,660,000
4 persons	1 211	5.36%	\$2,000	\$2,422,000
5 persons	418	1.85%	\$2,000	\$836,000
6 persons or above	199	0.88%	\$2,000	\$398,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>22 605</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$32,085,000</b>

**Survey of Beneficiaries****(a) Respondents' satisfaction and opinions on the programme**

<b>Survey item and opinion</b>	<b>Number of respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1. Do you agree that this programme has relieved the burden of housing expenses on you/the beneficiary(s)?		
- Agree	198	99.00%
- Disagree	2	1.00%
2. On the whole, are you satisfied with the arrangement of the programme?		
- Yes	199	99.50%
- No	1	0.50%
3. Do you have any views on the programme? ( <u>may choose more than one item</u> ; Note 1)		
- No opinion	166	83.00%
- Amount of subsidy	15	7.50%
- increase the amount of subsidy (15)		
- Publicity and release of information	9	4.50%
- notification prior to the payment (9)		
- Others	14	7.00%
- hope that the subsidy may continue (12)		
- the subsidy is helpful to the beneficiaries (2)		

Note 1: The percentage of various choices shown in the above table has been calculated based on the overall number of respondents (i.e. 200). As some respondents have given more than one answer, the total of percentage does not add up to 100%.

**(b) Beneficiaries' use of subsidy**

<b>Survey item and opinion</b>	<b>Number of respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1. How is the subsidy being used? ( <u>may choose more than one item</u> ; Note 1)		
- Daily expenses	174	87.00%
- Rental expenses	42	21.00%
- Others	0	0.00%

Note 1: The percentage of various choices shown in the above table has been calculated based on the overall number of respondents (i.e. 200). As some respondents have given more than one answer, the total of percentage does not add up to 100%.

**Number and Nature of Enquiries on the Programme (Note 1)**

<b>Nature of enquiries</b>	<b>Number of cases</b>
Eligibility criteria	272
Application procedures	50
Payment arrangement	222
Acknowledgement of subsidy received	50
Others	13
- information update (8)	
- whether there would be a new round of assistance (3)	
- enquiries on the programme operation from other departments (2)	

Note 1: For a single enquiry involving multiple questions, each question would be categorised and calculated.