

Community Care Fund
“One-off Allowance for New Arrivals from Low-income Families”
Programme
Evaluation Report

Purpose

This paper aims to report on the evaluation results of the “One-off Allowance for New Arrivals from Low-income Families” Programme.

Background

2. When delivering the 2020-21 Budget, the Financial Secretary announced that a “Cash Payout Scheme” would be launched under which a sum of HK\$10,000 would be disbursed to Hong Kong permanent residents aged 18 or above. At the same time, the Financial Secretary invited the Community Care Fund (CCF) to consider implementing a programme to provide financial assistance to needy new arrivals aged 18 or above.

3. The Commission on Poverty endorsed to launch the “One-off Allowance for New Arrivals from Low-income Families” Programme (the Programme) on 27 April 2020 to provide a one-off allowance of HK\$10,000 to new arrivals from low-income families to help them adapt to and integrate into the community so as to better prepare themselves for permanent settlement in Hong Kong, and provide them with additional resources to cope with the financial pressure. The objective of the Programme is to provide assistance to new arrivals who meet the eligibility criteria, i.e. it does not aim to provide an across-the-board allowance to all new arrivals or all non-permanent residents of Hong Kong. The Programme was expected to benefit about 203 000 persons and the total funding provision was \$2,131.04 million (including \$2,030 million for subsidy and \$101.04 million for administrative fee).

Programme Implementation

4. The CCF Task Force has engaged Bank of China (Hong Kong) Limited as an agent (Agent Bank) responsible for receiving and checking applications, developing and managing an online application system, setting up a computer system to process applications, operating a hotline centre to handle enquiries, providing interactive voice response enquiry services, inputting

applicants' information into the computer system and arranging the disbursement of allowances, etc. The Programme was launched on 27 September 2020. Applications were handled in three phases according to the years of birth of applicants. The application period ended on 31 December 2020. Applicants could submit paper-form applications in person or by post to the Agent Bank or make online applications. To enable the applicants to have a better understanding of the application procedures, the Secretariat and the Agent Bank produced a tutorial video to provide some guidelines and uploaded it onto the CCF website.

5. To publicise the Programme, the Secretariat conducted a media briefing on 21 September 2020 to announce the details of the Programme. The Programme was promoted through various channels, including broadcasting Announcements in the Public Interest (APIs) on television and radio; making available application forms and publicity leaflets for public collection at the Home Affairs Enquiry Centres of the Home Affairs Department, the District Social Welfare Offices of the Social Welfare Department (SWD) and branches of Agent Bank; displaying posters at the above locations, wet markets, public libraries, post offices as well as cultural and recreational venues, etc. To cater for the needs of the ethnic minorities, the Secretariat produced posters and leaflets in several ethnic minority languages and promoted the Programme through non-governmental organisations with ethnic minorities as their service targets. Besides, the Programme was publicised through radio programmes in ethnic minority languages. Moreover, the Secretariat set up a dedicated webpage for the Programme to facilitate applicants to obtain information and download application forms and other materials of the Programme.

6. The Agent Bank conducted preliminary checking of applications received and carried out random checks on sampled applications to facilitate a comprehensive income assessment. All applications were submitted to the Secretariat for vetting and data matching with relevant Government departments¹. Each applicant with his/her eligibility² verified could receive a one-off allowance

¹ Including the Immigration Department (IMMD) and the Correctional Services Department (CSD).

² Target beneficiaries must have entered Hong Kong for settlement on or before 31 December 2020 and meet all the following criteria:

- (i) having reached the age of 18 on or before 31 March 2021, as evidenced by their Hong Kong Identity Cards; and
- (ii) having entered Hong Kong for settlement for less than 7 years as at 31 March 2021 and:
 - (1) holding a Permit for Proceeding to Hong Kong and Macao (commonly known as "One-way permit"); or
 - (2) with the right to land or on unconditional stay in Hong Kong; or
 - (3) staying in Hong Kong as a dependant (and his/her sponsor being a Hong Kong permanent resident or a non-permanent resident with the right to land or on unconditional stay in Hong Kong); and
- (iii) from low-income families, i.e. either item (1) or (2) as stipulated below:
 - (1) the applicant or a household member residing with the applicant has received assistance since January 2020 / is receiving assistance under one of the following specified assistance schemes:

of HK\$10,000.

Evaluation

7. The Secretariat had conducted a review on the Programme and assessed its effectiveness in respect of the following aspects -

- (a) number of beneficiaries;
- (b) views of beneficiaries;
- (c) performance of the Agent Bank; and
- (d) enquiries and views from the public.

(a) Number of beneficiaries

8. The Secretariat has received a total of 208 871 applications, of which 198 928 applications were valid. The remaining 9 943 applications were invalid mainly because applicants had submitted multiple applications or failed to provide a valid Hong Kong Identity Card number. As at 31 March 2022, 175 137 applicants were found eligible with allowance disbursed.

9. The Programme accepted both online and paper-form applications. Of which, 99 876 persons (50%) made online applications through the specified website, 92 490 persons (47%) submitted application forms at one of the 168 branches of the Agent Bank, 6 510 persons (3%) submitted applications by post. In addition, 52 persons submitted paper-form applications to the Secretariat directly. These were applicants who were incapable of managing their own affairs or mentally incapacitated or holding a Certificate of Exemption. Special arrangements were made for these applicants.

10. The majority of the beneficiaries were holding a Permit for Proceeding to Hong Kong and Macao (168 086 persons); followed by those staying in Hong Kong as a dependant and their sponsors being Hong Kong permanent residents or non-permanent residents with the right to land or on unconditional stay in Hong Kong (6 888 persons); and the rest were those with the right to land or were on unconditional stay in Hong Kong (163 persons). As

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- Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme;
 - Normal Old Age Living Allowance / Higher Old Age Living Allowance;
 - Working Family Allowance Scheme;
 - Various means-tested student financial assistance schemes;
 - Medical fee waiver mechanism under the Hospital Authority (HA) (applicable to the waiver with a 12-month validity period); or
- (2) the average monthly household income in the past three months should not exceed the specified monthly household income limit applicable to the relevant household size.

regards the age profiles of the beneficiaries, the largest group of beneficiaries were aged between 36 and 45 (47 474 persons) and the second largest aged between 46 and 55 (38 412 persons).

11. In terms of income eligibility declared by the beneficiaries, 131 558 persons claimed that their average monthly household incomes in the three months prior to the month of submission of application had not exceeded the specified monthly household income limit³. The remaining 43 579 persons reported that they or a household member residing with them had benefitted from specified assistance schemes⁴ since January 2020. Among them, 24 365 persons received various means-tested student financial assistance; 9 598 persons received Comprehensive Social Security Assistance and 7 607 persons received Working Family Allowance, etc.

12. A total of 23 490 applications were unsuccessful for reasons including having entered Hong Kong for settlement for 7 years or more as at 31 March 2021, having an average monthly household income exceeded the specified income limit applicable to the relevant household size, failing to provide the required documents / information, etc. In addition, 301 applicants withdrew their applications.

13. Details of the above statistics are set out at **Appendix**.

(b) Views of beneficiaries

14. The Secretariat conducted a telephone questionnaire survey with 10 007 beneficiaries (accounting for about 6% of the total number of beneficiaries under the Programme) by random sampling. The survey aimed to seek the beneficiaries’ feedback on the eligibility criteria, application procedures, publicity work and implementation arrangements of the Programme.

15. About 95% of the respondents were satisfied with the overall implementation arrangements of the Programme. The respondents generally

³ The specified monthly household income limits are as follows:

Household Size (persons)	Specified Monthly Household Income Limit (\$)
1	15,100
2	22,000
3	26,800
4	33,500
5	36,900
6 or above	40,800

⁴ Specified assistance schemes included the CSSA Scheme; Normal / Higher Old Age Living Allowance; Working Family Allowance Scheme; various means-tested student financial assistance schemes and the HA’s medical fee waiver mechanism (applicable to the waiver with a 12-month validity period).

agreed that the eligibility criteria of the Programme were reasonable (about 94%), and the application procedures were simple (about 92%). However, certain individual respondents expressed that many supporting documents were required. They suggested to streamline the application procedures and set up a helpdesk to assist the needy in completing the application forms. The Programme made use of the existing network of the Agent Bank as a platform to collect application forms and disburse allowance. About 94% of the respondents were satisfied with the arrangements and services on the distribution and collection of application forms. Besides, about 96% of the respondents who submitted applications online found the online application arrangements satisfactory. About 92% of the respondents were satisfied with services provided by the Agent Bank and the Secretariat in following up their applications. Applicants could opt to collect the allowance by way of bank transfer or order cheques. A vast majority of the respondents (about 96%) were satisfied with the disbursement arrangements.

16. Regarding the enquiry hotline services, the respondents (about 89%) found that the staff maintained a good attitude and were willing to explain the application details and offer assistance. As for the publicity work, the majority of the respondents (about 90%) agreed that the promotion of the Programme was adequate. Nevertheless, some indicated that they were not aware of the APIs and suggested the Secretariat to strengthen its promotion efforts.

17. According to the survey results, the majority of the respondents agreed that the allowance under the Programme was able to help them adapt to and integrate into the community to better prepare themselves for permanent settlement in Hong Kong (about 88%) and relieve their financial pressure (about 85%).

(c) Performance of Agent Bank

18. The Secretariat continuously monitored the performance of the Agent Bank through vetting applications. Despite the large number of applications, the Agent Bank could complete processing them on time according to the instructions of the Secretariat. The results of preliminary checking also met the related criteria. When the Secretariat noticed any areas for improvement, the Agent Bank responded quickly, such as updating the content of telephone messages to provide clearer information to applicants.

(d) Public enquiries and views

19. The Agent Bank and the Secretariat set up designated hotlines for the Programme to deal with enquiries from applicants. The Agent Bank's hotline was mainly used for general enquiry purposes. Applicants could also obtain

basic information of the Programme and their application status through an interactive voice response system. The Secretariat's hotline was mainly used to follow up with the applicants on the submission of supplementary information and documents, amendment of personal particulars, and disbursement of allowance, etc. In addition, applicants could make enquiries or suggestions to the Secretariat by emails and letters.

20. As at 31 March 2022, the Secretariat and the Agent Bank received some 225 000 telephone enquiries and about 13 000 written enquiries, mainly about the eligibility criteria, application procedures, completion of application forms / submission of documents, application status, etc. Besides, the Secretariat received nine written suggestions from the public about streamlining of application procedures, relaxation of eligibility criteria and adjustment of the amount of allowance, etc.

Conclusion

21. Generally speaking, the Programme was welcomed by eligible new arrivals. Relevant stakeholders generally responded positively to the Programme and were satisfied with its operational arrangements. The Programme provided beneficiaries with a one-off financial assistance and achieved its desired objectives.

Community Care Fund Secretariat
May 2022

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**Statistics of Beneficiaries
(as at 31 March 2022)**

1. Settlement status of beneficiaries

Settlement status	No. of beneficiaries	Percentage
Settlement in Hong Kong with a Permit for Proceeding to Hong Kong and Macao	168 086	96.0%
Settlement in Hong Kong with a dependent's visa / entry permit	6 888	3.9%
With the right to land or on unconditional stay in Hong Kong	163	0.1%
Total	175 137	100.0%

2. Age distribution of beneficiaries

Age group	No. of beneficiaries	Percentage
18-25	30 336	17.3%
26-35	36 187	20.7%
36-45	47 474	27.1%
46-55	38 412	21.9%
56-64	13 486	7.7%
Aged 65 or above	9 242	5.3%
Total	175 137	100.0%

3. Income eligibility

(a) Beneficiaries who met income eligibility by means of receiving assistance under specified assistance schemes – distribution by schemes

Specified assistance schemes	No. of beneficiaries	Percentage
Various means-tested student financial assistance schemes	24 365	55.9%
Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme	9 598	22.0%
Working Family Allowance Scheme	7 607	17.5%
Normal Old Age Living Allowance/ Higher Old Age Living Allowance	1 932	4.4%
Medical fee waiver mechanism	77	0.2%
Total	43 579	100.0%

(b) Beneficiaries who met income eligibility by means of household income – distribution by household size

Household size (persons)	No. of beneficiaries	Percentage
1	29 326	22.3%
2	33 552	25.5%
3	34 466	26.2%
4	22 913	17.4%
5	7 712	5.9%
6 or above	3 589	2.7%
Total	131 558	100.0%