

Community Care Fund - Public Consultation Sessions

Summary of Views and Suggestions

The Community Care Fund (CCF) held two public consultation sessions on 7 and 13 February 2015 respectively to gauge public views on the existing assistance programmes and formulation of new programmes. Summary of views and suggestions from participants are as follows:

Existing Assistance Programmes

1. Medical Assistance Programme (First Phase)

- (1) To relax the specified clinical criteria for subsidised medicines for colorectal cancer treatment so that other colorectal cancer patients with cancer cells spreading to body parts other than the liver can be benefited under this programme.
- (2) To enhance the transparency of the selection mechanism for self-financed cancer drugs to be supported by the programme so that the public can understand the reasons for incorporating various drugs into the programme, and put forward views on the inclusion of individual drugs in the list of subsidised medicines under the programme.

2. Special Care Subsidy for the Severely Disabled

- (1) The extension of this programme was welcomed. However, the Government should consider incorporating the programme into the Government's regular assistance programme to meet the needs of the severely disabled.
- (2) To expand the scope of target beneficiaries under the programme to include severely disabled students who are receiving residential care services for 5 days a week, as they also need constant care and live in the community for about half of their time.
- (3) To disburse the allowance at a uniform amount to beneficiaries, instead of dividing it into three tiers subject to the income of benefited households.

3. After-school Care Pilot Scheme (the Scheme)

- (1) To continue the implementation of the Scheme or incorporate it into the Government's regular assistance programme as it can effectively satisfy the service needs of working parents.
- (2) To consider extending the service hours of after-school care, increasing the quotas for such services and providing the same services during school holidays to meet the demand and work in line with the Government's policy objective of promoting women employment.
- (3) To consider expanding the Scheme by allowing collaborations between non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and other groups in the community, setting up more accessible service points for beneficiaries and providing other relevant services to follow up with the welfare needs of those families.

4. One-off Living Subsidy for Low-income Households Not Living in Public Housing and Not Receiving CSSA

- (1) Even if the Government will launch the Low-income Working Family Allowance Scheme (LIFA) soon, this Programme should be continued to help reduce the rental expenses of low-income families in sub-divided units.
- (2) As both the eligibility criteria and the target beneficiaries of the LIFA are quite different from that of this Programme, the Government should incorporate the latter into its regular assistance programme in order to relieve effectively the financial burden of the "n have-nots".

Proposals for New Assistance Programmes

1. Assistance for persons with disabilities, chronic patients and their carers

- (1) To subsidise persons with severe disabilities to pay online service fees so as to help them access online information and integrate into the community.
- (2) To subsidise carers of persons with severe disabilities, especially those who are the carers of persons with disabilities living in the community but waiting for subvented residential care places, with a view to alleviating their financial burden.

2. Youths, Students and Children

- (1) It was announced in the Policy Address that the CCF would be invited to consider providing a one-off special subsidy for primary and secondary students on full grant under the School Textbook Assistance Scheme. In this connection, it is proposed that the scope of the target beneficiaries be extended to cover primary and secondary students receiving half-rate grant as well as kindergarten children so as to avoid some of the working families eligible for LIFA being unable to benefit from the subsidy.
- (2) It was announced in the Policy Address that the CCF would be invited to consider providing a one-off grant for schools with relatively more students with special educational needs (SEN) and financial needs so that a designated teacher could be deployed to co-ordinate matters relating to SEN support. In light of this, it is suggested that the initiative should not have any means test on income/assets since the financial situation of a family should not be counted as one of the eligibility criteria for granting support to students with SEN. Moreover, teachers designated to co-ordinate matters regarding SEN support should be provided with professional training.
- (3) To provide a maximum grant of \$26,000 on a reimbursement basis in each school year for tertiary students with SEN to cover their academic expenses, and exempt them from the requirement of passing a means test on income/assets.
- (4) To provide students from low-income families with subsidy to meet the expenses on extra-curricular activities, online service fees and other learning expenses.
- (5) To provide secondary students from low-income families with lunch subsidy.
- (6) To provide children from low-income families with health care vouchers so that they can receive suitable private health care services, thus reducing the health care expenses of these families.
- (7) Since it is hard for parents to find suitable child-minding services for their children with SEN, some of them who are from the grassroots have to take care of their children themselves and are unable to work away from home. The CCF should therefore provide subsidy to carers of children with SEN to relieve their financial

burden.

- (8) Programmes should be introduced to help young people seek employment.

3. Low-income families

- (1) To provide energy charges subsidy for low-income families residing in rented sub-divided units to meet their expenses on water and electricity consumption.
- (2) To provide low-income families residing in rented sub-divided units with relocation allowance.
- (3) To help the grassroots make a living by giving them a subsidy to receive training to develop special skills (such as street performance). The beneficiaries may in return contribute part of their income to the CCF.

Other views

- (1) To finance “district-based” poverty alleviation programmes.
- (2) To avoid imposing an eligibility requirement that is based on whether beneficiaries are receiving/waiting for a particular service before a “specified date” when drawing up assistance programmes, otherwise some of the people in need will not be benefited.
- (3) Consultation sessions should be held in community halls so that they are more accessible for the grassroots.