

**Community Care Fund Programme**  
**One-off living subsidy for low-income households**  
**not living in public housing and not receiving CSSA**  
**Evaluation Report**

## **Background**

The “One-off living subsidy for low-income households not living in public housing and not receiving CSSA” programme (the Programme) under the Community Care Fund (CCF), as implemented by the CCF Secretariat (the Secretariat) with the assistance of 247 service units, commenced on 2 December 2013 to relieve the financial pressure of low-income households. The application period ended on 29 August 2014. As at 30 June 2014, the Secretariat has received around 44 000 applications, and disbursed about \$280.18 million subsidy to 38 546 eligible households (91 471 persons).

2. The amount of subsidy under the Programme is \$3,500 for one-person households, \$7,000 for two-person households, and a uniform \$10,000 for three-or-more-person households. The beneficiaries of the two CCF programmes rolled out earlier, namely the “Subsidy for Low-income Elderly Tenants in Private Housing” (the elderly tenants programme) and the “Subsidy for Low-income Persons who are Inadequately Housed” (the inadequately housed programme), were also included as targeted beneficiaries of the Programme.

3. Application for the Programme adopted a phasing arrangement. The Secretariat first verified in December 2013 the eligibility of households that had benefited under the elderly tenants programme and the inadequately housed programme (old application households). The Programme then started to accept new applications in phases according to the household size from January 2014 onwards.

## **Evaluation Results Analysis**

### ***(A) Application Statistics***

4. The Secretariat received around 44 000 applications, of which 39 005 have been vetted. Among these vetted applications, 38 546 households have been disbursed with the subsidy, while 445 applications have been considered ineligible and 14 applications withdrawn. The following analysis is based on the information of the 38 546 households (91 471 persons) who have been disbursed with the subsidy.

#### **(a) Information of households**

5. Application households came from various districts across the territory.

In terms of district of residence, Sham Shui Po (8 287 applications/around 22%), Yau Tsim Mong (6 201 applications/around 16%) and Kowloon City (3 717 applications/around 10%) had the largest numbers of application households. Among the beneficiary households, one-person households accounted for the largest share at around 30% (11 671 households), while two-person and three-person households accounted for around 26% (9 807 households) and 25% (9 737 households) respectively. The remaining share of some 19% (7 331 households) were four-or-more-person households.

6. As for the types of accommodation, most beneficiary households resided in rented private housing (33 199 households/around 86%) and temporary housing (4 424 households/around 12%). The rest accounted for around 2% of the beneficiary households, including those living on board vessels (4 households), renting unit in industrial buildings (152 households) and commercial buildings (114 households), renting bedspaces offered under the Home Affairs Department's Singleton Hostel Programme (139 households) and homeless persons (514 households). Among the 33 199 beneficiary households renting private housing, a majority resided in rented sub-divided units (around 59%) and rented independent units (around 22%), and the remaining 19% or so resided in rented rooms (cubicles/solid-partitioned cubicles) or bedspaces/cocklofts. As for the 4 424 beneficiary households residing in temporary housing, a majority resided in squatter structures (around 65%) and roof-top structures (around 17%), and the rest were residents of other temporary housing (around 10%) and licensed structures (around 8%). Among the 514 homeless households, most were street sleepers (around 84%) and the rest resided in temporary shelters (around 16%).

7. In terms of income level, the average income of households from one-person to six-or-more-person amounted to about 55% to 66% of the relevant income limits, of which four-person households accounted for the largest proportion. Among the 33 465 households paying rent for accommodation (including beneficiary households in private housing, industrial buildings or commercial buildings), the average rents paid by one-person and two-person households were higher as a proportion of the relevant rental limits (about 58% and 49% respectively), while the corresponding figures for three-person to six-or-more-person households were about 40% to 46%. As for the rental level of various regions, generally speaking, the average rent was higher on Hong Kong Island<sup>2</sup> and the average rent paid by households represented about 31% to 53% of the average income (of which the proportion for one-person households was the highest).

8. Meanwhile, among the 445 ineligible applications, the primary reasons were that applicants and the household members (if applicable) were Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) recipients (127 applications), owned property in Hong Kong (74 applications), and the rent (83 applications) or

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<sup>2</sup> The rental level in the New Territories was the highest for six-or-more-person households.

income (70 applications) exceeding the specified limits.

(b) Information of applicants and household members

9. Among the 38 546 beneficiary households, there were a total of 91 471 applicants and household members altogether, of which permanent residents and non-permanent residents accounted for 58 077 (about 63%) and 33 394 (about 37%) respectively. There were 65 642 persons aged 18 or above (about 72%) and the remaining 25 829 persons (about 28%) were household members aged under 18, which included 16 812 persons aged under 11. About 13 persons were mentally incapacitated household members aged between 18 and 51.

10. Among the 445 ineligible applications, there were a total of 801 applicants and household members altogether, of which permanent residents and non-permanent residents accounted for 590 (about 74%) and 211 (about 26%) respectively. There were 615 persons aged 18 or above (about 77%) and 186 persons (about 23%) aged under 18, which included 117 persons aged under 11.

***(B) Views of the Programme Stakeholders***

(a) Beneficiaries

11. The Secretariat and service units conducted a questionnaire survey with 2 977 beneficiary households (about 7.7%) by random sampling to understand their views on the subsidy amount, eligibility criteria, application procedures, publicity effort, implementation arrangements of the Programme and services provided by the service units.

12. About 87% of the respondents agreed that the subsidy provided by the Programme could relieve their financial pressure, but some respondents hoped that the level of the subsidy could be raised and the subsidy could be disbursed on a continuous basis. As regards the four-or-more-person households, respondents suggested that the amount of subsidy should be granted in proportion to the number of eligible household members. A vast majority of the respondents considered the eligibility criteria reasonable (about 93%) and application procedures of the Programme simple and convenient (about 96%). Most of them agreed that exempting the beneficiary households under the elderly tenants programme and the inadequately housed programme from re-submitting applications could streamline the application procedures. Some respondents suggested that the income and rental limits of the Programme should be raised, the Programme should cover households receiving CSSA and those living in public housing and the income test should be replaced by the asset test. They also hoped that application forms could be submitted to the Secretariat by mail directly, or that collection boxes could be placed at the Public Enquiry Service Centres of the Home Affairs Department. About 90% of the respondents considered that the publicity efforts for the Programme were adequate. However,

some said there should be more publicity channels, such as mobile apps, emails and outdoor publicity activities, and the Programme should be more clearly promoted through television, e.g. the application methods and venues should be provided in the announcements of public interest.

13. On the implementation of the Programme, about 97% of the respondents were satisfied with the arrangement, but a few applicants said the requirement that supplementary information should be submitted by the applicant in person was not flexible. About 98% of the respondents found the services provided by service units satisfactory, commending the staff for providing good services and being helpful in explaining the application details and offering necessary assistance. Nevertheless, some respondents pointed out that the locations of a few service units were too remote, and hoped that more service units be set up in each district and clearer guidelines on the application procedures be provided to avoid confusion.

(b) Unsuccessful applicants

14. The Secretariat also tried to reach 40 unsuccessful application households (around 9%) for telephone questionnaire survey to collect their views on the Programme. However, only 23 applicants were reached and were willing to take the survey and complete the questionnaire. The respondents generally considered that the subsidy amount (about 31%), the income limit (about 17%) and the rental limit (about 26%) of the Programme should be raised. Some took the view that the subsidy should be granted regularly to those in need. About 22% of the respondents considered that the types of accommodation covered under the Programme were inadequate, and that households living in public housing were more needy and should also be covered. Some respondents said that it was unfair to reject their applications for the reason that their household members owned a property, and suggested that the applications should be individual-based instead of household-based.

15. In terms of application procedures, about 87% of the respondents agreed that they were simple and convenient, but some respondents thought that they should be further streamlined, the processing time should be reduced and the number of service units should be increased. About 78% of the respondents agreed that the publicity efforts for the Programme were sufficient, but a small portion of the respondents considered that the publicity was insufficient and suggested that the publicity channels of the Programme should be increased (e.g. distributing leaflets) for better understanding of the application procedures and the eligibility criteria. About 79% of the respondents were satisfied with the Secretariat's arrangement for implementing the Programme, and 83% of the respondents found that the service provided by the service units satisfactory. On the whole, they hoped that the CCF could continue to implement this Programme, so as to relieve the financial pressure of low-income families.

(c) Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)/ service units which assist in the implementation/staff of the implementation team under the Secretariat

16. The Secretariat held an evaluation meeting on 9 June 2014 to collect views from NGOs/service units on the implementation arrangements and eligibility criteria of the Programme with a view to evaluating the Programme. NGOs/service units which attended the meeting commented on the Programme in terms of subsidy amount, income and rental limits, types of accommodation, publicity efforts, prevention of abuse, application arrangements, streamlining of procedures and administrative duties, etc..

17. The NGOs/service units generally agreed that the subsidy provided by the Programme could relieve the financial pressure faced by the low-income households. They also considered that relaxing the eligibility criteria to cover people living in sub-divided units with individual entrance doors and industrial/commercial buildings could benefit more persons in need. They suggested that the Programme should also cover those who rented accommodations in Home Ownership Scheme (HOS)/Tenants Purchase Scheme (TPS) flats which were subject to the alienation restriction, as well as guesthouses. Taking account of the rapid increase of rent, some NGOs/service units suggested that the income and rental limits and the subsidy amount under the Programme should be raised, and an additional level of subsidy should be provided for four-or-more-person households, and the amount of subsidy should be increased across all levels.

18. Regarding publicity, most NGOs/service units indicated that they had promoted the Programme through the established channels of communication with the targeted clients, set up street stations, distribute promotional leaflets, conducted door-to-door visits, and sent staff to explain the application procedures and helped registration at squatter areas. They considered that promotion of the Programme to people residing in remote areas and ethnic minorities should be strengthened, and wordings of “squatter” should be mentioned on publicity materials. In addition, they suggested that the number of service units allocated with additional publicity fees should be increased.

19. Most NGOs/service units agreed that the phasing arrangement of submitting applications could effectively regulate the flow of applicants, so as to keep them from crowding in the service units for making applications at the same time. In view of the large number of applications made by eligible three-or-more-person households, it was suggested that a four-phase application streaming arrangement should be adopted, that is, an additional phase to accept applications from four-or-more-person households.

20. In order to prevent abuse of the Programme, some NGOs/service units considered that only requiring applicants to declare their household income in the application form was too lenient. They suggested that a condition should be

included in the form to require applicants to submit income proof together with the form for verification. If the Programme is to be re-launched, the Secretariat should conduct matching of the data of old application households with those at the Social Welfare Department (SWD) and the Land Registry to ensure that the households were not CSSA recipients or property owners, with a view to preventing abuse of the Programme.

21. Some NGOs/service units also raised other suggestions to enhance the application procedures, including inputting basic information of applicants on the application form referred by service units into the computer system as soon as possible to facilitate any enquiry about the progress by applicants. It was also suggested that choices like “Re-entry Permit”, “One Way Permit” and “Document of Identity” should be added under the column “Type of Identity Proof” in the application form to be completed by those children who do not have an identity card/a birth certificate but with the relevant identify proof documents. The requirement in relation to the submission of rental receipt copies and the information to be included in the receipts should be relaxed. On the whole, NGOs/service units were satisfied with the operational arrangement of the Programme and agreed that the Programme could help the needy low-income persons and allow follow-up action to be taken in response to their other welfare needs.

22. CSSA recipients are not eligible for the Programme. Some NGOs/service units suggested that the subsidy granted under the Programme should be excluded in the calculation of the amount of household income for CSSA applications. Others learnt that some applicants made applications for both CSSA and the Programme almost at the same time. They suggested that the Secretariat should coordinate with SWD to avoid any corresponding deduction of CSSA allowance paid to applicants who had been granted subsidy from the Programme but were required to refund the Secretariat as they had been granted CSSA eventually.

23. The views given at the evaluation meeting by NGOs/service units that assisted in implementing the Programme are set out in the Summary of Discussion of Evaluation Meeting as attached.

24. Furthermore, staff of the implementation team under the Secretariat agreed that the arrangement of processing old applications first and then new ones by phases could effectively speed up the application procedures and avoid confusion. With this arrangement, the Secretariat could process a large number of applications within a reasonable time period and allow application households to receive subsidy in time. Staff of the implementation team considered that under the existing mode of operation, applicants could submit their applications to the service units near their accommodations. This not only allowed service units to help handle their applications and enquiries with professional experience, but also made it easier for the staff to identify ineligible applicants through home visits. Also, the mode of collaboration between the implementation team and service

units was smooth.

**(C) *Public Enquiries and Views***

25. During the implementation period of the Programme, the Secretariat had set up an enquiry hotline to provide necessary support and information to the public and staff of service units. Public response to the Programme was positive, with the Programme hotline/the CCF's standing hotlines receiving over 10 000 enquiries during the first two weeks. In particular, over 1 500 enquiries were received each day during the first three days since the Programme was launched. As at the end of June, the Secretariat had received 54 824 enquiries about the Programme, among which 51 545 came from the public and were mostly about the Programme's eligibility criteria, application arrangements and progress. 3 279 enquiry calls came from staff of service units and were mostly about the Programme's application arrangements, eligibility criteria and administrative arrangements, etc.. In addition, the Secretariat received 25 written views/enquiries from the public/stakeholders.

26. The public and NGOs/service units had offered their views on a number of issues. Regarding Programme eligibility, low-income persons who did not fully meet the eligibility criteria might be given a half-amount subsidy; relaxing the eligibility to cover Hong Kong residents renting Mainland China housing, senior retirees or low-income persons who owned properties; covering persons who were temporarily residing in relatives' home without paying any rent; excluding alimony expenses from household income, etc.. As regards application arrangements, the Secretariat should also accept applications by mail as well; an acknowledgement of receipt of application should be provided upon receiving the reply slips from old application households; stepping up efforts to prevent abuses, etc.. As for the administrative arrangements, it was recommended that the Hong Kong resident status vetting should be scrapped and replaced by requiring applicants to submit documentary proof of Hong Kong resident status along with the application. On the whole, the views received were positive; respondents found the application procedures and the arrangements for application processing satisfactory, and they would like to see the continued disbursement of the subsidy.

**Conclusion**

**(a) Number of beneficiary households/persons**

27. As at the end of June, the Secretariat had received about 44 000 applications, among which some 20 700 were replies from old application households and around 23 300 were new applications. As for the 7 300 or so old application households which had yet to reply, around 2 900 households had informed the Secretariat that they were ineligible for the Programme. We were unable to contact some 450 households, and the relevant service units were

following up with the remaining 3 950 old application households which had yet to reply.

28. The original estimated number of beneficiary households of the Programme was some 78 700 (over 210 000 persons). Although there are still two months to go before the close of application, on the basis of the current progress, we can expect that the final number of applications to be received will be lower than the estimated number. The number of applications submitted by boat dwellers, households living in industrial and commercial buildings, residents of the “Singleton Hostel Programme” and households living in temporary housing will be lower than the respective estimated number by more than 50%. Details are shown in the table below:

Type of accommodation	Original estimated number of beneficiary households (a)	Number of households disbursed with the subsidy (b)	Percentage of the number of households disbursed with the subsidy as compared with the original estimated number (c=b/a)
Private housing	59 000	33 198	56%
Industrial and commercial buildings	5 000	266	5%
Temporary housing	13 200	4 424	34%
Vessels	159	4	3%
Bedspaces under the Singleton Hostel Programme	493	140	29%
Homeless persons	856	514	60%
<b>Total</b>	<b>78 708</b>	<b>38 546</b>	<b>Not applicable</b>

29. The number of beneficiary households was estimated by the Secretariat with reference to the largest possible number of beneficiaries (i.e. according to the figures provided by the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) and other related departments/organisations). However, there was no information on the economic conditions of those households, such as whether they owned a property in Hong Kong or not. Moreover, not all eligible households would submit applications for the Programme. Therefore, it was difficult to make an accurate estimate on the number of applications. If the Programme is to be re-launched, the latest statistics and the implementation experience of the current Programme



can be referred to for estimating the number of beneficiary households.

(b) Types of accommodation

30. Representatives of the NGOs/service units unanimously agreed that the relaxation of eligibility criteria of the Programme, for example, covering households living in sub-divided units with individual entrance doors and in industrial/commercial buildings, could benefit more needy people.

31. Some NGOs/service units considered that the Programme should cover tenants of guesthouses as well. At present, applicants of the Programme must be renting/residing in one of the accommodation types specified under the Programme. Yet, such accommodations do not include collective living quarters (i.e. psychiatric hospitals, convalescent hospitals, infirmaries, penal institutions, elderly homes, boys' and girls' homes, hotels, hostels and dormitories (such as those for university students)). Noting that the low-income persons may have a chance to rent and live in hotels, guesthouses, hostels or serviced apartments, the Secretariat would consider including households living in those types of accommodation under the Programme.

32. In addition, some NGOs/service units noted that the Programme already covered tenants living in industrial and commercial buildings, and suggested that the Programme should also cover tenants living in flats which were still subject to alienation restrictions under the HOS and the TPS because those households were not benefited from the housing assistance. However, since the Programme aims to provide support to households not living in public housing and the types of accommodation above fall within the category of "public housing" as defined by C&SD, this issue will require careful consideration.

(c) Household income and rental limits

33. As for the eligibility criteria, while some respondents said that the income limit should be raised, the average income of the beneficiary households only represented some 55% to 66% of the income limits. There were also views that reference could be made to the updated income limit for applying public rental housing to revise the income limit under the Programme. If the Programme is to be re-launched, the Secretariat will consider the latest data concerned.

34. There were also views that the Programme's rental limit should be raised and revised according to the changes in rental level. When the CCF Task Force endorsed the Programme, the statistics provided by C&SD showed that in 2012, households meeting the Programme's income limit and renting private housing in Hong Kong had a median rent-to-income ratio of about 39%. As such, the Programme's rental limit, which was 50% of the household size's respective income limit (e.g. \$4,400 for one-person household), should be appropriate. From the analysis of the application statistics, the average rent paid by the

beneficiary households (from one-person to six-or-more-person households) represented 40% to 58% of the respective rental limits, and 31% to 53%<sup>3</sup> of the average household income. Therefore, the rent paid by most households was still considerably below the respective rental limit under the Programme.

(d) Prevention of abuse

35. There were views that exempting applicants from submitting applications with income proof was too lenient. Besides, since some cases were not selected for home visits/income tests, abuses might be resulted. Moreover, some old application households who were receiving CSSA had confirmed their eligibility for the Programme because they did not have a clear understanding of the eligibility criteria. The Secretariat will consider the vetting procedures to avoid abuses. However, requiring applicants to submit their application with income proof may increase the vetting workload or cause inconvenience to the applicants. The Secretariat will need to strike a balance between streamlining administrative arrangements and preventing abuses.

(e) Enhancing publicity and promotion

36. Some respondents said the Secretariat should step up promotion of the Programme to people living in the squatter areas or the ethnic minorities, suggested that the Support Service Centres for Ethnic Minorities should be invited to assist in the implementation of the Programme. In implementing the Programme, posters in six ethnic minority languages were prepared (for distribution to ethnic minority students in primary and secondary schools) and announcements of public interest were prepared for broadcast on television and radio. Also, each service unit of the Neighbourhood Level Community Development Project (NLCDP) which assisted in the implementation of the Programme (17 in total) was provided with additional publicity fees of \$10,000 for enhancing the publicity work in the district and covering the related manpower expenditure. The Secretariat consulted the concerned NLCDP units on whether the additional publicity fees could help promote the Programme. Nine of them (about 53%) had responded and they unanimously agreed that the

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<sup>3</sup> The percentage for one-person households was 53%. The figure was relatively higher possibly because 13% of the one-person households were elderly households who had no income or generally lower income (for one-person households, the average rent paid by elderly households was 91% of the respective average household income and the average rent paid by non-elderly households was 47% of the respective average household income).

<u>Number of household members</u>	<u>Percentage of average rent over average household income (%)</u>
1	53
2	41
3	36
4	32
5	32
6 or more	31

publicity fees could enhance the promotion of the Programme. Some hoped that the amount of fees could be increased.

37. When launching the Programme in December 2013, the Secretariat made use of a variety of promotion channels, including broadcasting on television and radio, uploading information to the Internet, printing posters, application forms and programme briefs, holding press briefings, and issuing press release, etc.. The Secretariat placed posters at the Public Enquiry Service Centres of the Home Affairs Department, the District Social Welfare Offices of SWD as well as the Support Service Centres for Ethnic Minorities for information of applicants. An enquiry hotline was also set up by the Secretariat for applicants or other members of the public to seek information and make enquiries.

38. In view of the above comments on the Programme's publicity efforts, the Secretariat can consider increasing the number of service units receiving additional publicity fees and inviting the Support Service Centres for Ethnic Minorities to assist in the implementation of the Programme. The Secretariat also welcomes service units and members of the community to give advice on the promotion channels.

(f) Streamlining the procedures and administrative arrangements

39. On enhancing the administrative arrangements, some service units suggested that upon receipt of the application forms referred by the service units, the Secretariat should input the basic information of the applicants provided on the forms into the computer system as soon as possible, so as to facilitate the applicants to enquire about their application progress and avoid duplication of applications. Other service units hoped that more service units could assist in the more densely populated districts and the support to units that had to handle a relatively larger number of applications could be strengthened. If the Programme is to be re-launched, the Secretariat can consider enhancing the handling procedures, inviting other NGOs' service units to assist in implementing the Programme, and continuing to provide additional manpower support to service units that have to handle more applications.

(g) Other views

40. There were views suggesting that the Programme might spur rental rates and in the end property owners would be the beneficiaries. In this regard, the CCF had commissioned the University of Hong Kong (HKU) to analyse the distribution of households<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> HKU assisted in converting the benefited households' addresses into "geographic coordinates" to analyse their distribution. Moreover, the Secretariat would contact some of the beneficiary households immediately after subsidy disbursement and six months later to understand their rental payment status, as well as comparing and analysing such rental rate changes (if any) against territory-wide rental data (provided by the Rating and Valuation Department), at that time so as to see if the Programme's subsidy had affected the rental rates paid by the beneficiary households.

41. Regarding the coordination between applications under the Programme and CSSA applications, the Secretariat would liaise with SWD to make appropriate arrangements. As regards views that the Secretariat and SWD should discuss the arrangement of including the Programme's subsidy as household income while processing CSSA applications so that applicants' entitled CSSA payment would not be reduced, the Secretariat had already consulted SWD. As the subsidy disbursed under the Programme and CSSA were similar in nature in the sense that both were subsistence subsidies for beneficiary households, SWD decided that while beneficiaries of the Programme should not receive CSSA at the same time, subsidy received under the Programme by such households, should be included as their household income for CSSA applications.

(h) Overall effectiveness

42. As far as the overall effectiveness of the Programme is concerned, the beneficiaries, NGOs/service units, or the staff of the implementation team under the Secretariat all agreed that the Programme helped to relieve the financial pressure of low-income persons who are not living in public housing and not receiving CSSA and hoped that the CCF could re-launch the Programme. Most beneficiaries were positive about the service provided by the service units and the Secretariat and agreed that the application procedures were simple and convenient.

43. A consolidated analysis of the information and data collected showed that the stakeholders were positive about the Programme and were generally satisfied with the existing operation arrangement. They supported to re-launch the Programme so as to help more needy low-income persons. They also suggested that the CCF should consider relaxing the eligibility criteria, increasing publicity channels and enhancing the support to the service units.

44. In the light of the Budget's various short-term relief measures, the Programme was launched to utilise the CCF's effective identification mechanism to provide a one-off subsidy to the "n have-nots" who could not benefit from those relief measures, so as to plug the gaps in the existing system. The Government has no plan to incorporate the Programme into the regular assistance programme and service, but the experience in implementing the Programme would facilitate the Government's consideration of more comprehensive poverty alleviation arrangements.

**Community Care Fund**  
**One-off living subsidy for low-income households**  
**not living in public housing and not receiving CSSA**

**Evaluation Meeting**

**Summary of Discussion**

The CCF Secretariat (the Secretariat) held an evaluation meeting for the “One-off living subsidy for low-income households not living in public housing and not receiving CSSA” (the Programme) on 9 June 2014. For the purpose of evaluating the Programme, the meeting collected the views of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and service units on aspects such as the implementation arrangement and eligibility criteria of the Programme. Views and recommendations from the participants are summarised below:

**Types of Accommodation**

- The relaxation of eligibility criteria (e.g. to cover households living in sub-divided units with individual entrance doors and in industrial/commercial buildings) could benefit more needy people.
- It was recommended that the Programme should cover tenants living in flats which were still subject to alienation restrictions under the Home Ownership Scheme (HOS) and the Tenants Purchase Scheme (TPS) because these households were not benefited from housing assistance.
- It was recommended that the Programme should cover tenants of guesthouses.

**Income and Rental Limits**

- As rental rates continued to soar (e.g. in Kwai Chung and Kwun Tong), some applicants (especially one-person households) failed to benefit from the Programme as their monthly rent exceeded the Programme’s rental limit. It was recommended that the rental limits should be raised.
- The income limits for the Waiting List for Public Rental Housing were adjusted every April. It was recommended that the income and rental limits of the Programme should be adjusted accordingly after the

Programme was launched.

### **Subsidy Amount**

- For large families (e.g. ethnic minorities families) with a large number of household members, the subsidy amount was inadequate to meet the expenses. It was recommended that a further level of subsidy should be added for households with four-or-more persons and that the subsidy amount of each level should be raised.

### **Publicity**

- It was recommended that there should be more channels and time spent on publicity, such that the Programme's information might reach more needy households.
- Promotion of the Programme to ethnic minorities who did not understand Chinese or English should be strengthened. It was recommended that promotional leaflets should be delivered to the service units as soon as possible before the Programme's implementation, such that more time would be available to publicise the Programme.
- It was recommended that the Support Service Centres for Ethnic Minorities should be invited to assist in implementing the Programme.
- Publicity of the Programmes at squatter areas and remote areas should be strengthened. It was recommended that the term "squatter" should be highlighted in promotional materials and announcements of public interest.
- It was recommended that the number of service units receiving additional publicity fees should be increased. For example, certain units in the New Territories with expansive service coverage, which had established solid community network, would facilitate the publicity efforts at the community level.

### **Application Arrangements**

- It was agreed that the phasing arrangement of submitting applications could effectively regulate the flow of applicants, so as to keep them from crowding in the service units for making applications at the same time and avoid chaos.

- In view of the large number of applications made by eligible three-or-more-person households, it was suggested that a four-phase application arrangement should be adopted, i.e. an additional phase to accept applications from four-or-more-person households should be arranged.
- To minimise the inconvenience caused to applicants and service units, it was suggested that old application households, who had already moved to another district, could submit applications through other service units in the district concerned.
- It was suggested that application households should be required to submit the application forms in person to service units which assist in implementing the Programme, so as to minimise the submissions of applications by community bodies or organisations on behalf of the application households.

### **Prevention of Abuse**

- There was a view that only requiring applicants to declare their household income in the application form was too lenient. It was suggested that a condition should be included in the form to require applicants to submit income proof together with the form for verification.
- It was hoped that the Secretariat would provide reference materials on the types of identity proof, so as to facilitate service units to verify the eligibility of applicants and their household members for the Programme when checking their identity documents.
- If it was found after the home visit that an applicant was not living in the stated address on the date of application but only moved in after the application was made, such application should be turned down because applicants were required to meet the eligibility criteria of the Programme on the date of application.
- It was found that some old application households who were receiving CSSA confirmed their eligibility for the Programme in the reply slip to the Secretariat. For the sake of preventing any abuse, it was suggested that if the Programme was to be re-launched, the Secretariat should match data with SWD and the Land Registry for the old application households to ensure that the households were not CSSA recipients or property owners.

## **Streamlining Procedures and Administrative Arrangements**

- Upon receipt of application forms referred by service units, the Secretariat should input the basic information of applicants into the computer system as soon as possible. This was meant to facilitate applicants to enquire about the progress of their applications and avoid duplication of applications.
- If applicants were tenants of flats under the HOS or the TPS, it was difficult for service units to ascertain if the alienation restrictions imposed on those flats had been lifted.
- A reply slip should be provided for service units to report to the Secretariat about the follow-up results on old application households who had yet to reply to the Secretariat.
- Choices like “Re-entry Permit”, “One Way Permit” and “Document of Identity” should be added under the column “Type of Identity Proof” in the application form for those children who did not have an identity card/a birth certificate but held the relevant identify proof documents.
- The Secretariat should relax the requirement of information to be included in the copies of rental receipts submitted so as to minimize the inconvenience caused to application households and service units.

## **Other Views**

- It is hoped that the Programme’s subsidy should not be counted as the household income for CSSA applications.
- At present, some applicants made applications for both CSSA and the Programme almost at the same time. The eligibility of an applicant for the subsidy under the Programme would depend on the “application date”. The Secretariat should coordinate with SWD to avoid any corresponding deduction of CSSA allowance paid to applicants who had been granted subsidy under the Programme but were required to refund the Secretariat as they had been granted CSSA eventually.
- The Secretariat should discuss with SWD to avoid the inclusion of Programme subsidy into household income at the time of submitting CSSA application, leading to a corresponding deduction of CSSA allowance.



- The Secretariat should provide information about the application details and distribution of households with young people, so that youth service units can have a better understanding of the situation of households with young people who had made the application.
- More service units of NGOs should be invited to assist in implementing the Programme in more densely populated districts (such as Tseung Kwan O), where not many service units participated in the Programme comparatively.
- It was agreed that the approach of providing additional manpower support by the Secretariat to service units that had to handle more applications was an effective way to share out the caseload of service units.
- The CCF should give an analysis on the household information collected under the Programme to find out if there was any rise in rental which benefited the landowners as a result of the provision of subsidy under the Programme.
- An evaluation should be conducted as soon as possible and the results be released for service units to have a better understanding of the situation of the “n have-nots”.
- Regularisation of the Programme should be considered in the light of inflation and escalating rental rates in order to relieve the financial pressure faced by low-income households. In the long run, the Government should impose rent control and provide rent allowance to those households.
- Since one-person households and the non-working elderly were not covered in the “Low Income Working Family Allowance”, it was hoped that the Programme could provide subsidy to the needy “n have-nots” under the Programme in a sustainable manner.