

Social Welfare

The government is committed to assisting individuals and families in need. The scope and extent of Hong Kong's welfare services have steadily evolved over the years, with total recurrent government expenditure on social welfare increasing by around 60 per cent in the past decade.

The Labour and Welfare Bureau (LWB) is responsible for formulating social welfare policies and overseeing their implementation by the Social Welfare Department (SWD). The Social Welfare Advisory Committee, the Elderly Commission, the Rehabilitation Advisory Committee and the Women's Commission advise the government on welfare policies.

In 2013-14, the SWD's total recurrent expenditure was \$51 billion, of which \$36.1 billion (70.8 per cent) was for financial assistance payments, \$10.9 billion (21.4 per cent) for recurrent subventions to non-governmental organisations (NGOs), \$1.2 billion (2.3 per cent) for other payments for welfare services, and the remaining \$2.8 billion (5.5 per cent) for departmental expenditure.

Major Social Welfare Initiatives

Relief Measures

To help those in need, in August the SWD provided one additional month's standard rate payment for recipients of Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) and one additional month's allowance for recipients of Old Age Living Allowance (OALA), Old Age Allowance (OAA) and Disability Allowance (DA).

Low-income Working Family Allowance

The 2014 Policy Address announced plans to introduce the Low-income Working Family Allowance to relieve the financial burden of low-income working families not receiving CSSA (especially those with children), and to promote self-reliance and upward social mobility. It is expected that the scheme will be implemented 15 to 18 months after the Legislative Council Finance Committee's funding approval is obtained.

Improving the CSSA Scheme

With effect from 1 April, the SWD provides rent allowance to CSSA recipients who have been Tenants Purchase Scheme flat owner-occupiers under the Housing Authority for more than five years. From the same date, the SWD includes post-secondary students of CSSA families in the calculation of rent allowance so a family's entitlement will not be affected if it has members receiving post-secondary education.

In the school year 2014-15, the SWD increased by \$1,000 the grant for school-related expenses for primary and secondary students of CSSA families, in addition to the annual price adjustment according to the established mechanism.

Pilot Residential Care Services Scheme in Guangdong

The Pilot Residential Care Services Scheme in Guangdong, launched in June, provides eligible elderly persons on the Central Waiting List for subsidised care-and-attention places with an option to live in the two elderly homes in Shenzhen and Zhaoqing which are run by Hong Kong NGOs.

Pilot Scheme on Living Allowance for Carers of the Elderly Persons from Low Income Families

The two-year Pilot Scheme on Living Allowance for Carers of the Elderly Persons from Low Income Families under the Community Care Fund (CCF) rolled out in June aims to provide such carers with a living allowance to help supplement their living expenses so that elderly persons in need of long term care services may, with their carers' help, receive proper care to enable them to remain in the community.

Bought Place Scheme for Private Residential Care Homes for Persons with Disabilities

The Bought Place Scheme (BPS) was made permanent in October on completion of a four-year pilot scheme. By year-end, the government had purchased 365 places in seven private Residential Care Homes for Persons with Disabilities under the BPS to increase the supply of subsidised residential care places for persons with disabilities and to provide them with more options.

Lump Sum Grant Subvention System

Enhancements to the Lump Sum Grant (LSG) Subvention System in 2014 included implementing the 'Best Practice Manual' from July for 164 NGOs subvented under the LSG system, allowing NGOs greater flexibility in using the Provident Fund reserve, and providing NGOs with additional recurrent subvention of \$470 million from 2014-15 onwards.

Social Welfare Programmes

Family and Child Welfare

SWD and NGOs provide a variety of family and child welfare services.

Family Services

Services for families in need are provided at three levels. At the primary level, attempts are made through early identification, public education, publicity and empowerment to prevent family

problems. In 2014, SWD's publicity included two series of short animations and a new set of television and radio Announcements in the Public Interest. SWD also operates a departmental hotline to provide service information, counselling and other forms of assistance.

At the secondary level, 65 Integrated Family Service Centres and two Integrated Services Centres provide a spectrum of preventive, supportive and remedial family services.

At the tertiary level, specialised services, including crisis intervention, are provided for cases of domestic or sexual violence, family crisis or custody dispute.

Services for Children

A total of 3,676 residential places and various welfare services are provided for children and young persons who need care or protection owing to serious family, behavioural or emotional problems. The SWD also works with three NGOs accredited under the Adoption Ordinance to arrange local or overseas adoption for children abandoned by their parents or whose parents are unable to support them.

SWD also provides day child care services to support parents who cannot take care of their children temporarily because of work or other reasons. The SWD and the Education Bureau subsidise some stand-alone child care centres and some kindergarten-cum-child care centres to provide full-day service. The SWD also funds 434 Occasional Child Care Service places and 1,230 Extended Hours Service places at these centres. Furthermore, SWD subsidises the Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project, which arranges volunteers to provide flexible child care service to needy families.

Social Security

The CSSA and Social Security Allowance (SSA) schemes form the mainstay of Hong Kong's social security system, supplemented by three accident compensation schemes: the Criminal and Law Enforcement Injuries Compensation (CLEIC) scheme, the Traffic Accident Victims Assistance (TAVA) scheme and Emergency Relief. These schemes are administered by 40 Social Security Field Units and two centralised offices.

The CSSA Scheme

The non-contributory CSSA scheme is means-tested and applicants must satisfy a residence requirement. It provides cash assistance to people suffering from financial hardship to enable them to meet basic needs. At year-end, there were 253,054 CSSA cases involving 381,307 beneficiaries. In 2014, the scheme's total expenditure was \$20.6 billion, an increase of 2.6 per cent over the previous year.

The Portable CSSA scheme allows elderly people who have received CSSA continuously for at least one year to continue receiving assistance in Guangdong or Fujian Province if they choose to retire there.

Employment Assistance Programmes

The SWD's Integrated Employment Assistance Programme for Self-reliance (IEAPS) assists able-bodied unemployed CSSA recipients aged 15 to 59 and single parents and child carers on CSSA

with their youngest child aged 12 to 14 to find employment and become self-reliant. At year-end, 30,997 CSSA recipients had participated in the IEAPS. In April, the CCF launched a three-year pilot scheme to further encourage able-bodied CSSA recipients to secure employment and leave the CSSA net.

The SWD randomly selected around 2,050 recipients to participate in the scheme.

The SSA Scheme

The non-contributory SSA scheme provides elderly people and persons with severe disabilities with cash allowances to meet their special needs. It comprises OALA, OAA, Normal DA and Higher DA. OALA is also meant to supplement the living expenses of elderly people aged 65 or above who are in need of financial support. At year-end, 771,683 people were receiving SSA, with total expenditure in 2014 of \$18.5 billion, an increase of 6.8 per cent over 2013.

Accident Compensation Schemes

The CLEIC scheme (which paid out \$5.29 million in 2014) offers financial assistance on a non-means-tested basis to those injured (or to their dependants in the case of death) as a result of a crime of violence, or by a law enforcement officer using a weapon in the execution of his duty. The TAVA scheme, which paid out \$218.2 million during the year, provides financial assistance on a non-means-tested basis to people injured (or to their dependants in the case of death) in road traffic accidents, regardless of who is responsible for the accident.

Emergency Relief

Emergency relief in the form of meals or cash-in-lieu of meals and other necessities is given to victims of natural or other disasters. Grants from the Emergency Relief Fund are paid to eligible victims, or in the case of death to their dependants. Emergency relief was given to 591 victims of 18 disasters in 2014.

Social Security Appeal Board

The Social Security Appeal Board considers appeals against SWD decisions on CSSA, SSA and TAVA and ruled on 385 appeals in 2014.

Prevention of Fraud and Abuse

To preserve the integrity of the social security system and ensure the proper use of public funds, the SWD's Special Investigation Section prevents and combats fraud and abuse of social security assistance. The public can make reports via a special hotline. At year-end, 333 abusers had been jailed, bound over, ordered to perform community service, fined, or given warnings.

Services for the Elderly

The government encourages and assists elderly persons to lead active and healthy lives and various community care and support services are provided to enable them to continue living in their homes. In addition, subsidised residential care services are provided for elderly persons who have long-term care needs but cannot be adequately taken care of at home.

The SWD subsidises the Opportunities for the Elderly Project run by community organisations to make life more meaningful for elderly persons. During the year, 276 programmes were subsidised with government grants totalling \$4 million.

About 1.56 million Senior Citizen Cards have been issued, allowing elderly persons to enjoy concessions, discounts and priority service provided by various companies, organisations and government departments.

Community Care and Support Services

At year-end, the SWD was supporting 126 service teams (including integrated home care services teams, enhanced home and community care services teams, support teams for the elderly and a home help team) and 70 day care centres or units for the elderly to provide support services for elderly persons living at home. The SWD's Pilot Scheme on Home Care Services for Frail Elders also supports elderly persons and their carers. The SWD's Pilot Scheme on Community Care Service Vouchers for the Elderly allows eligible elderly persons to use the vouchers to choose the services that suit their individual needs. The SWD's various schemes support some 40,300 frail elderly persons.

The SWD also supports 211 elderly centres (including District Elderly Community Centres, Neighbourhood Elderly Centres and Social Centres for the Elderly) and a holiday centre for the elderly. In 2012 the SWD began the Improvement Programme of Elderly Centres to enhance the physical setting and facilities of 237 elderly centres across the territory within six years. By the end of 2014, about \$349 million had been approved for 105 elderly centres and work on upgrading 46 centres had been completed.

Residential Care Services

At year-end, there were 26,317 subsidised residential care places in Hong Kong, including 67 home-for-the-aged places, 22,856 care-and-attention places (of which 7,830 were purchased from private residential care homes for the elderly (RCHEs)), and 3,394 nursing home places (of which 188 were purchased from self-financing nursing homes).

RCHEs are licensed under the Residential Care Homes (Elderly Persons) Ordinance. The SWD monitors and helps improve the services provided by RCHEs through the issue of practice guidelines and the provision of staff training to ensure that elderly residents receive proper care.

Rehabilitation Services

To help persons with disabilities integrate into society and fully develop their capabilities, government departments and NGOs provide a variety of rehabilitation services to meet their different needs. These services are co-ordinated by the Commissioner for Rehabilitation on the advice of the Rehabilitation Advisory Committee.

Services for Children with Disabilities

At year-end, there were 1,860 integrated programme places in kindergarten-cum-child care centres, 1,775 places in special child care centres (including 110 residential places), and 2,899 places in early education and training centres for children with disabilities. In addition, 64 places

in small group homes were provided for mildly mentally handicapped children who could not be adequately cared for by their families.

The Training Subsidy for Children who are on the Waiting List of Subvented Pre-school Rehabilitation Services under the CCF was incorporated into the government's regular assistance programme from October to subsidise children from low-income families in need of rehabilitation services so that they may acquire self-financing training and treatment services provided by NGOs while waiting for subvented services. The programme provided 1,422 training places in 2014.

Services for Adults with Disabilities

In 2014, the SWD provided 1,633 supported employment places for persons with disabilities to work in open settings with support and assistance, 432 places were created under the On the Job Training Programme for People with Disabilities and 311 places were made available for young persons with disabilities or early signs of mental illness under the Sunnyway – On the Job Training Programme for Young People with Disabilities. There were 5,111 places provided in sheltered workshops for those not yet ready to compete for open employment. There were also 453 places in integrated vocational training centres and 4,257 places in integrated vocational rehabilitation services centres.

By year-end, over \$75 million had been allocated to 25 NGOs under the Enhancing Employment of People with Disabilities Through Small Enterprise Project to enable them to set up 91 small businesses providing over 680 job opportunities for persons with disabilities. In tandem, the Marketing Consultancy Office (Rehabilitation) assisted vocational rehabilitation services units in developing their marketing and business strategies and employment-aided services.

The Support Programme for Employees with Disabilities provides employers of persons with disabilities with a one-off subsidy of up to \$20,000 for the procurement of assistive devices (increased in April to \$40,000 for a single assistive device and its essential accessories) and/or workplace modifications to facilitate employment and work efficiency of their employees with disabilities.

In 2014, day activity centres provided 4,909 day training places for persons with intellectual disabilities. There were 8,148 places in hostels and care homes providing residential care services for persons with disabilities who were unable to live independently in the community, or whose families could not care for them adequately. There were also 365 residential places provided under the BPS for Private RCHDs. Blind elderly persons were provided with 825 places in care homes. For discharged mental patients, 1,509 places were provided in halfway houses and 1,587 in long stay care homes.

Residential Care Homes for Persons with Disabilities

The SWD monitors the operation of residential care homes for persons with disabilities (RCHDs) under the Residential Care Homes (Persons with Disabilities) Ordinance. Complementary measures such as the Financial Assistance Scheme for Private RCHDs and Bought Place Scheme for Private RCHDs encourage private RCHDs to upgrade their service standards and provide more service options for persons with disabilities.

Professional Back-up and Support Services

Support services provided by clinical psychologists, occupational therapists and physiotherapists are available to persons with disabilities in rehabilitation day centres and hostels. Speech therapy is available to children attending pre-school rehabilitation centres.

A range of community support services is available to persons with disabilities and their families/carers including ex-mentally ill persons living in the community. These include district support centres for persons with disabilities, home care services for persons with severe disabilities, community rehabilitation day centres, integrated community centres for mental wellness, day care services for persons with severe disabilities, and rehabilitation services for persons with visceral disability or chronic illnesses.

Day and residential respite services for persons with disabilities, occasional child care service for pre-schoolers with disabilities and parents/relatives resource centres are also available. In addition, there are social and recreational centres for persons with disabilities to encourage them to participate in community leisure activities.

Medical Social Services

Medical social workers are stationed in public hospitals and some specialist clinics to provide assistance and services for patients and/or their families with welfare needs, helping them recover and reintegrate into society. SWD medical social workers dealt with about 178,703 cases in 2014.

Services for Offenders

The SWD performs a number of statutory functions and provides community-based and residential services to help people who have committed crimes reintegrate into the community and become law-abiding citizens.

The probation service helped 4,037 offenders during the year and arrangements were made for 2,437 offenders placed on Community Service Orders (CSOs) to perform unpaid community work under supervision. Probation officers assess and report to the courts on offenders' suitability for probation orders and/or CSOs, and supervise those under the orders. The officers also prepare reports on long-term prisoners and petitioners being considered for early release.

In 2014, SWD continued to provide on a pilot basis treatment programmes for convicted young drug offenders aged below 21 under probation supervision that are more focused, structured and intensive.

The Tuen Mun Children and Juvenile Home, with 388 places, provides educational, pre-vocational and character training for juvenile offenders as well as children and young persons with behavioural and/or family problems.

The Correctional Services Department and the SWD jointly run the Young Offender Assessment Panel, providing the courts with professional views on sentencing options for offenders aged 14 to below 25, and the Post-Release Supervision of Prisoners Scheme, which assisted 776

discharged prisoners to rehabilitate and reintegrate into the community during the year. The SWD funds an NGO to offer hostel and supportive services to ex-offenders.

Services for Young People

The objective of welfare services for young people is to help those aged between six and 24 become mature, responsible and contributing members of society. NGOs provide a range of preventive, supportive and remedial services to achieve this goal.

Integrated Children and Youth Services Centres

At year-end, there were 138 Integrated Children and Youth Services Centres (ICYSCs), providing centre-based services, outreach services and school social work services to address young persons' developmental needs.

Outreaching Services

The 19 youth outreaching teams provide services for high-risk youths and deal with juvenile gang issues. Eighteen designated ICYSCs provide outreaching services at night to help youths who loiter at neighbourhood black-spots get back on the right track.

Services for Juvenile Delinquents

Five Community Support Service Scheme teams operated by NGOs assist young persons who are subject to the Police Superintendent's Discretion Scheme (PSDS). The Family Conference Scheme, run jointly by the SWD and the police, assists juveniles cautioned under the PSDS for the second time or in need of the services of three or more parties. Social workers, police officers, teachers and the young persons' parents work together to decide what is best for them.

Drug Treatment and Rehabilitation Services

At year-end, the SWD was subventing 13 residential drug treatment and rehabilitation centres and halfway houses, 11 counselling centres for psychotropic substance abusers and two centres for drug counselling. In 2014, 24 licences and 15 certificates of exemption for residential drug treatment and rehabilitation centres and halfway houses were issued or renewed under the Drug Dependent Persons Treatment and Rehabilitation Centres (Licensing) Ordinance.

School Social Work Services

At year-end, 564 school social workers were provided for 468 secondary schools to help students with academic, social and emotional problems and to maximise their educational opportunities.

PATHS to Adulthood: A Jockey Club Youth Enhancement Scheme

The second batch of the Positive Adolescent Training through Holistic Social Programmes to Adulthood (PATHS to Adulthood): A Jockey Club Community-Based Youth Enhancement Programme, a three-year project funded by the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust launched in August, promotes the holistic development of junior secondary students into responsible young adults.

District Support Scheme for Children and Youth Development

The SWD allocates \$15 million annually to provide direct cash assistance and implement projects through NGOs under the District Support Scheme for Children and Youth Development, addressing the developmental needs of disadvantaged children and young persons which cannot be met by their families or the mainstream education system.

Child Development Fund

The Child Development Fund provides children from disadvantaged backgrounds with personal development opportunities. Through the fund's projects, participants draw up and implement their own development plans and learn to accumulate savings and intangible assets (such as a positive attitude, personal resilience and capacity and social networks), thus helping their long-term development. In 2014, 21 projects operated by NGOs and seven school-based pilots operated by schools were launched, benefiting almost 2,700 children aged between 10 and 16. The 2014 Policy Address earmarked an additional \$300 million to ensure the fund's sustainability.

Clinical Psychological Services

In 2014, 73 clinical psychologists in the SWD and NGOs provided 2,723 psychological assessments and 17,114 treatment sessions for 3,472 cases presenting psychological or psychiatric disorders.

Funding and funds

Subventions and Service Monitoring

Recurrent subventions were given to 170 NGOs to provide social welfare services in accordance with government policies. Capital grants from the Lotteries Fund were allocated to NGOs on the advice of the Lotteries Fund Advisory Committee to meet NGOs' non-recurrent commitments. The Service Performance Monitoring System keeps track of the output, outcome and service quality of subvented units, according to 16 well-defined service quality standards and specific funding and service agreements, through regular self-assessment reports submitted by NGOs and review/surprise visits conducted by the SWD.

The Lump Sum Grant Independent Complaints Handling Committee handles complaints related to subvented NGOs receiving Lump Sum Grant that cannot be satisfactorily addressed at the NGO level.

Social Welfare Development Fund

The Social Welfare Development Fund supports all subvented NGOs to carry out training and professional development programmes, business system upgrading projects and service delivery enhancement studies. In 2014, about \$80 million was approved for 99 applications.

Partnership Fund for the Disadvantaged

The Partnership Fund for the Disadvantaged promotes tripartite partnership among the welfare sector, the business community and the government in helping the disadvantaged. Donations in money and in kind from the business sector are matched dollar-for-dollar by the government

to enable welfare NGOs to carry out social welfare projects. In 2014, 51 welfare NGOs obtained matching grants totalling over \$62 million to implement 108 welfare projects.

Community Investment and Inclusion Fund

The Community Investment and Inclusion Fund (CIIF) is aiming to implement diversified social capital development projects in the community, promote trust and reciprocity between the public and different sectors, and build a cross-sectoral collaborative platform and mutual help network so as to build a caring Hong Kong. In 2014, the CIIF allocated around \$28 million to 13 new projects, and about 122,000 project participants (including about 19,000 volunteers) and about 1,000 collaboration partners building about 400 mutual support networks were recruited by existing CIIF-funded projects.

Community Care Fund

The Community Care Fund (CCF) was established in 2011 to assist people facing economic difficulties, especially those who fall outside the social safety net or who are within the safety net but have special circumstances that are not covered. It has been integrated into the work of the Commission on Poverty (CoP) since 2013. The CCF has launched 27 assistance programmes which have benefited over 870,000 people, involving a total commitment of over \$4.757 billion. In addition, the CCF introduces programmes on a pilot basis to help the government identify those suitable for incorporation into the government's regular assistance programme. Ten programmes have been incorporated into the regular assistance programme so far.

Taking into account the views of the public and stakeholders, the CCF will, in collaboration with other task forces under the CoP, draw up more programmes to help the underprivileged and low-income families.

Advisory Bodies

Elderly Commission

The Elderly Commission advises the government on policy and services for the elderly. It places emphasis on promoting 'active ageing' and advising on the means to enhance further long-term care services for the elderly. The commission is currently studying the feasibility of introducing a residential care service voucher scheme and formulating an Elderly Services Programme plan.

In the 2014-15 school year, 121 academies were operating under the Elder Academy Scheme (jointly launched by the commission and the government), with 114 in schools and the rest in tertiary education institutions.

At the community level, the Neighbourhood Active Ageing Project encourages care and love for elderly persons and reaches out to elderly people who are unfamiliar with the existing network of community support. From 2014 to 2016, 86 district projects are being carried out to encourage elderly people to participate in community activities and enhance neighbourhood support networks.

Women's Commission

The Women's Commission promotes the well-being and interests of women in Hong Kong. It advises the government on policies related to women to ensure that women's perspectives are taken into account in the formulation of government policies.

The commission comprises 24 members, chaired by a non-official. Through the provision of an enabling environment, empowerment of women, and public education, the commission aims to enable women in Hong Kong to fully realise their due status, rights and opportunities in all aspects of life.

On the commission's advice, the government has introduced gender mainstreaming to provide an enabling environment. A Gender Mainstreaming Checklist has been adopted to help civil servants take a systematic approach in assessing the needs and perspectives of both sexes when formulating government policies. Gender-related training has also been provided to over 8,000 government staff since 2001. All bureaus and departments have their own Gender Focal Points through which matters concerning gender mainstreaming can be channelled.

The commission's initiatives to help women realise their potential include the Capacity Building Mileage Programme (CBMP) which is aimed at enhancing women's self-confidence, learning abilities and life skills. The CBMP is carried out in collaboration with the Open University of Hong Kong, a radio station and over 80 women's groups and NGOs. By the end of 2014, the CBMP enrolments had exceeded 75,000, in addition to the large audience reached through relevant radio programmes.

The Funding Scheme for Women's Development provides annual funding of around \$2 million for women's groups and NGOs providing women's services to organise relevant programmes and activities at regional and district levels.

Rehabilitation Advisory Committee

The Rehabilitation Advisory Committee (RAC) is the principal advisory body to the government on the well-being of persons with disabilities and the development and implementation of rehabilitation policies and services in Hong Kong. RAC sub-committees look into specific areas of concern, such as access, employment and public education.

The RAC and its sub-committees are chaired by non-officials, and all RAC members are appointed in their personal capacity by the Chief Executive. To ensure that the interests of persons with disabilities are represented, the RAC's membership includes persons with different disabilities, parents of persons with disabilities, representatives of self-help organisations for persons with disabilities and NGOs providing rehabilitation services, as well as academics, community and business leaders, professionals and other persons who have an interest in the well-being of persons with disabilities. Representatives of relevant government bureaus and departments also serve as ex-officio members to provide the necessary support to the RAC and follow up on issues it raises.

Through its sub-committee on public education, the RAC co-ordinates the implementation of various public education programmes on rehabilitation. In 2014, 35 public education

programmes were organised by the government and NGOs to promote the spirit of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and cross-sectoral collaboration in building an equal and inclusive society. World Mental Health Day and the International Day of Disabled Persons were also publicised.

The RAC collaborates with, among others, the District Councils and the business and welfare sectors to promote the working capabilities of persons with disabilities and the employment support services provided by government departments and rehabilitation organisations for such persons. The RAC also assists the government in promoting and monitoring the implementation in Hong Kong of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Steering Committee on Promotion of Volunteer Service

The Steering Committee on Promotion of Volunteer Service promotes sustained volunteering and encourages volunteers to integrate the core values and spirit of voluntary work into their daily lives. By year-end, over 2,650 organisations and more than 1.23 million individuals had registered for voluntary service at SWD's 'Volunteer Movement' website.

Websites

Child Development Fund: www.cdf.gov.hk

Community Care Fund: www.communitycarefund.hk

Community Investment and Inclusion Fund: www.ciif.gov.hk

Elderly Commission: www.elderlycommission.gov.hk

Labour and Welfare Bureau: www.lwb.gov.hk

Social Welfare Department: www.swd.gov.hk

Volunteer Movement: www.volunteering-hk.org

Women's Commission: www.women.gov.hk