

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 about 80 per cent in the past decade.

The Labour and Welfare Bureau formulates social welfare policies and oversees their implementation by the Social Welfare Department (SWD) and the Working Family Allowance Office of the Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency. The Social Welfare Advisory Committee, Elderly Commission, Rehabilitation Advisory Committee and Women's Commission advise the government on welfare policies.

In 2015-16, the department's total recurrent expenditure was \$57.1 billion, of which \$38.8 billion, or 67.9 per cent, was for financial assistance payments, \$13.4 billion (23.5 per cent) was for recurrent subventions to non-governmental organisations (NGOs), \$1.7 billion (3 per cent) was for other payments for welfare services, and the remaining \$3.2 billion (5.6 per cent) was for departmental expenditure.

Social Welfare Services

Services for Families

The objectives of family services are to preserve and strengthen the family as a unit, to develop caring interpersonal relationships, to enable individuals and family members to prevent personal and family problems, to support them to deal with a problem when it arises, and to provide suitable services to meet needs that cannot be met adequately from within the family.

Services for families in need are provided at three levels. At the primary level, the department tries to prevent family problems through early identification, public education, publicity and empowerment. A departmental hotline, 2343 2255, provides service information, counselling and other forms of assistance.

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

At the tertiary level, 11 Family and Child Protective Services Units render specialised services, including crisis intervention, for cases of spouse or cohabitant battering, child abuse or child custody dispute.

Services for Children

Children and young people who are assessed to be in need of out-of-home care owing to family, behavioural or emotional problems have recourse to residential care services, with 3,676 such places provided at the year end. The department also works with three NGOs accredited under the Adoption Ordinance to arrange local or overseas adoption for children whose parents have abandoned or are unable to maintain them.

The department provides day child care services to support parents who cannot take care of their children temporarily because of work or other reasons. Together with the Education Bureau, it subsidises some stand-alone child care centres and kindergarten-cum-child care centres to provide full-day services. At the year end, child care centres across the territory had about 30,600 places, of which about 7,000 were government-subsidised. The department was funding another 434 Occasional Child Care Service places at these centres and had increased by phases the number of Extended Hours Service places to 2,254 since 2015-16. As well, it subsidises the Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project, which provides at least 954 places for needy families to receive flexible child care services from volunteers. In December, the department commissioned a consultancy study to advise on the long-term development of child care services.

In March 2016, the department launched a two-year Pilot Project on Child Care Training for Grandparents funded by the Lotteries Fund. It aims at strengthening family ties between generations, enhancing child care and reinforcing support for nuclear families by enabling grandparents to become well-trained child carers in the home setting. It also promotes active ageing of grandparents through life-long learning. This pilot project offers 540 training places.

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 through a range of preventive, supportive and remedial services provided by NGOs.

Integrated Children and Youth Services Centres

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

Outreach

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

School Social Work

In 2016, 561 school social workers were provided for 465 secondary schools to help students with academic, social and emotional problems and to maximise their educational opportunities.

Juvenile Delinquents

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

Drug Treatment and Rehabilitation

The department subvents 13 residential drug treatment and rehabilitation centres and halfway houses, 11 counselling centres for psychotropic substance abusers and two centres for drug counselling. It also supervises the operation of the treatment and rehabilitation centres under the Drug Dependent Persons Treatment and Rehabilitation Centres (Licensing) Ordinance, improving their services by providing practical guidelines and professional advice on licensing requirements to ensure the well-being of the drug-dependent residents is safeguarded properly.

Paths to Adulthood: A Jockey Club Youth Enhancement Programme

The Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust funds the Positive Adolescent Training through Holistic Social Programmes to Adulthood (Paths to Adulthood): A Jockey Club Community-Based Youth Enhancement Programme to promote the holistic development of junior secondary students into responsible young adults. The department continued to execute the second batch of the programme in 2016.

District Support Scheme for Children and Youth Development

The department renders direct cash assistance via a District Support Scheme for Children and Youth Development to address the developmental needs of disadvantaged children and young people aged 24 or below in the districts.

Services for the Elderly

The government encourages elderly people to lead active and healthy lives, offering community care and support services to enable them to age in place. Subsidised residential care services are available for those who have long-term care needs but cannot receive adequate care at home.

In 2016, the government merged the Opportunities for the Elderly Project and the Neighbourhood Active Ageing Project into a new Opportunities for the Elderly Project to encourage elderly people to participate actively in community affairs and to build an age-friendly community. It subsidised 324 programmes with government grants totalling \$6.7 million.

About 1.7 million Senior Citizen Cards have been issued, allowing the elderly to enjoy concessions, discounts and priority service provided by companies, organisations and government departments.

Community Care and Support

Various schemes under the department lend help to some 43,100 frail elderly people. Subsidies are granted to 136 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 to 73 day care centres and units for the elderly to provide support services for those living at home. A Pilot Scheme on Community Care Service Vouchers for the Elderly offers 3,000 vouchers allowing eligible elderly people to choose the services that suit their individual needs. The two-year second phase of the scheme was launched in October, serving all 18 districts.

The department also subvents 210 elderly centres, including District Elderly Community Centres and Neighbourhood Elderly Centres, and a holiday centre for the elderly. Its Improvement Programme of Elderly Centres, launched in 2012, seeks to enhance the physical settings and facilities of 237 elderly centres within six years. By the end of 2016, about \$651 million had been approved under the Lotteries Fund for 175 elderly centres. Upgrading works on 99 centres had been completed and these had reopened for service with a new look.

Residential Care

At the year end, there were 27,114 subsidised residential care places, including 67 at homes for the aged; 23,222 care-and-attention places, of which 8,064 were purchased from private residential care homes for the elderly (RCHes); and 3,825 at nursing homes, of which 315 were purchased from self-financing nursing homes.

RCHes are licensed under the Residential Care Homes (Elderly Persons) Ordinance. The department monitors and helps improve their services by formulating practice guidelines and providing staff training to ensure elderly residents receive proper care.

Residential Care in Guangdong

A Pilot Residential Care Services Scheme in Guangdong gives eligible elderly people on Hong Kong's central waiting list for subsidised care-and-attention places the option of living in two elderly homes in Shenzhen and Zhaoqing run by Hong Kong NGOs. At the year end, 138 elderly people chose to live in these two homes.

Carers of Elderly from Low-income Families

A Pilot Scheme on Living Allowance for Carers of the Elderly Persons from Low Income Families, managed under the Community Care Fund, provides 2,000 such carers with a living allowance to supplement their expenses so elderly people in need of long-term care may, with their carers' help, receive proper care and remain living in the community. It will eventually benefit 4,000 carers. The two-year phase 2 of the scheme started in October.

Services for Persons with Disabilities

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.

Children with Special Needs

At the year end, there were 1,980 integrated programme places in kindergarten-cum-child care centres; 1,799 places in special child care centres, including 110 residential places; and 3,124 places in early education and training centres for children with special needs. Small group homes provided 64 places for mildly mentally handicapped children who could not receive adequate care from their families.

Children with special needs who are on the waiting list of SWD-subsented pre-school rehabilitation services may apply for a means-tested Training Subsidy Programme to acquire self-financing training services provided by NGOs while awaiting the subsented services. The programme provided 1,422 training places in 2016.

Those who are on the waiting list may also apply for on-site pre-school rehabilitation service under a Pilot Scheme on On-site Pre-school Rehabilitation Services, launched through the Lotteries Fund in 2015. Inter-disciplinary service teams from 16 NGOs offer about 3,000 service places for children studying in over 480 participating kindergartens and kindergarten-cum-child care centres who are on the list. The scheme also provides professional advice to kindergarten teachers and child care workers at the participating kindergartens and centres to help them work with children with special needs, and renders support to parents in fostering a positive attitude and developing effective skills in raising their children with special needs.

Adults with Disabilities

In 2016, day activity centres offered 5,198 day training places for persons with intellectual disabilities. The department provided 1,633 supported employment places for persons with disabilities to work in open settings with support and assistance, 432 places under an On the Job Training Programme for People with Disabilities, and 311 places 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 5,276 places available in sheltered workshops and 4,482 places in integrated vocational rehabilitation services centres for those not yet ready to compete for open employment. Integrated vocational training centres offered another 453 places.

By the year end, more than \$104 million had been allocated to 30 NGOs under an Enhancing Employment of People with Disabilities Through Small Enterprise Project, enabling them to set up 110 small businesses providing about 807 job opportunities for persons with disabilities. In tandem, the Marketing Consultancy Office (Rehabilitation) helped NGOs set up those small businesses and promoted products and services provided by persons with disabilities under the brand, Let Them Shine.

A Support Programme for Employees with Disabilities provides employers with a one-off subsidy of up to \$20,000 per employee with disabilities to procure assistive devices and workplace modifications to facilitate the employment and work efficiency of those employees. The programme also offers a maximum grant of \$40,000 for a single assistive device that costs more than \$20,000 and its essential accessories.

In 2016, there were 8,496 places in hostels and care homes providing residential care for persons with disabilities who were unable to live independently in the community, or whose families could not care for them adequately. Another 450 residential places were provided under a Bought Place Scheme (BPS) for Private Residential Care Homes for Persons with Disabilities (RCHDs). Care-and-attention homes for the aged blind had 825 places, while halfway houses and long-stay care homes had 1,509 and 1,587 places respectively for discharged mental patients.

Residential Care Homes for Persons with Disabilities

The department monitors the operation of RCHDs under the Residential Care Homes (Persons with Disabilities) Ordinance and helps improve their services by providing practice guidelines and staff training. Complementary measures such as the Financial Assistance Scheme for Private RCHDs and BPS for Private RCHDs encourage private RCHDs to upgrade their service standards and provide more service options for persons with disabilities.

Professional Support

Clinical psychologists, occupational therapists and physiotherapists render support services to persons with disabilities in rehabilitation day centres and hostels. The department provides speech therapy to children attending pre-school rehabilitation centres.

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

Day and residential respite services for persons with disabilities, occasional child care services for pre-schoolers with disabilities and resource centres for parents and other relatives are also available. Social and recreational centres encourage persons with disabilities to take part in community leisure activities.

Through the Lotteries Fund, the department launched a two-year Pilot Project on Peer Support Service in Community Psychiatric Service Units in March and a 30-month Pilot Project on Strengthening Support for Persons with Autism and their Parents/Carers in April to enhance support for ex-mentally ill persons and autistic persons respectively.

Low-income Carers of Persons with Disabilities

A new Pilot Scheme on Living Allowance for Low-income Carers of Persons with Disabilities aims to provide 2,000 such carers with a living allowance to supplement their expenses so persons with disabilities in need of long-term care may, with their carers' help, receive proper care and remain living in the community. The scheme was rolled out under the Community Care Fund in October.

Recipients with Disabilities under Comprehensive Social Security Assistance

A new Pilot Scheme on Raising the Maximum Level of Disregarded Earnings for Recipients with Disabilities under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme encourages persons with disabilities to secure and stay in employment by raising the maximum level of disregarded earnings applicable to them under the CSSA Scheme. The scheme was launched under the Community Care Fund in October, raising the ceiling of disregarded earnings by 60 per cent from \$2,500 to \$4,000. It will last for three years and is expected to benefit about 3,000 people.

Higher Disability Allowance Recipients in Paid Employment

A new Pilot Scheme on Providing Subsidy for Higher Disability Allowance Recipients in Paid Employment to Hire Carers gives \$5,000 a month to each eligible Higher Disability Allowance recipient engaged in paid employment to hire a carer to help with the commute and with the person's activities in the workplace. The scheme was introduced under the Community Care Fund in October. It will last for three years and is expected to benefit about 100 people.

Services for Offenders

The department performs a number of statutory functions and helps offenders reintegrate into the community and become law-abiding citizens through community-based and residential services.

During the year, the department helped 3,148 offenders through a probation service and arranged for 2,395 offenders placed on community service orders to perform unpaid community work under supervision. Probation officers assess and report to the courts on offenders' suitability for probation orders and/or community service orders, and supervise those under the orders. The officers also prepare reports on long-term prisoners and petitioners being considered for early release.

The Enhanced Probation Service adopts a more focused, structured and intensive approach to help convicted young drug offenders aged below 21.

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

The Correctional Services Department and the SWD jointly run a Young Offender Assessment Panel, providing the courts with professional views on sentencing options for offenders aged 14 to 25, and a Post-Release Supervision of Prisoners Scheme, which helped 850 discharged

prisoners rehabilitate and reintegrate into the community during the year. The SWD also funds an NGO to offer hostel and support services to former offenders.

Medical Social Services

Medical social workers are stationed in public hospitals and some specialist clinics to assist patients and their families with welfare needs, helping them recover and reintegrate into society. SWD medical social workers dealt with about 187,460 cases in 2016.

Clinical Psychological Services

In 2016, 55 clinical psychologists from the SWD and NGOs provided 3,450 psychological assessments and 29,976 treatment sessions for 2,528 service users with psychological problems.

Social Welfare Financial Assistance

Low-income Working Family Allowance

The Low-income Working Family Allowance Scheme, operated by the Working Family Allowance Office, aims to relieve the financial burden of low-income working families, especially those with children, to encourage self-reliance and to ease inter-generational poverty. A family of two or more members that meets the income and asset limits and working hour requirements may apply for a Basic Allowance or a Higher Allowance. Each eligible child may also receive a Child Allowance. The scheme opened for applications in May and had approved more than 33,100 applications by the year end out of 52,100 received, granting allowances totalling \$391 million to about 28,800 families and 104,100 individuals, including around 46,300 children and youths.

Social Security

The CSSA Scheme and Social Security Allowance (SSA) Scheme 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 41 Social Security Field Units and two centralised offices.

Comprehensive Social Security Assistance

The non-contributory CSSA scheme is means-tested and applicants must satisfy a residence requirement. People in financial hardship receive cash assistance to meet basic needs. At the year end, there were 237,056 CSSA cases involving 348,431 beneficiaries. The scheme's total expenditure was \$21.4 billion in 2016, a decrease of 4.3 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 retire there.

Employment Assistance

An Integrated Employment Assistance Programme for Self-reliance under the department helps unemployed able-bodied 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 the year end, 76,743 CSSA recipients took part in the programme. The Community Care Fund was implementing a pilot Incentive Scheme to Further Encourage CSSA Recipients of the Integrated Employment Assistance Programme for Self-reliance to Secure Employment that would continue until March 2017.

Social Security Allowance

The non-contributory SSA scheme comprises Old Age Living Allowance (OALA), Old Age Allowance (OAA) and Disability Allowance (DA), which includes Normal DA and Higher DA. OALA supplements the living expenses of people aged 65 or above who need financial support. OAA and DA provide elderly people aged 70 or above and people with severe disabilities respectively with non-means-tested cash allowances to meet their special needs. There were 835,262 SSA recipients as at end-2016, with a total expenditure of \$22.2 billion during the year, a 2.3 per cent increase over 2015.

The government is progressively implementing improvement measures as recommended by an Inter-departmental Working Group on Review of the Disability Allowance coordinated by the Labour and Welfare Bureau.

Relief Measure

In June, the government provided one additional month's standard-rate payment to CSSA recipients and one additional month's allowance to recipients of OALA, OAA and DA.

Accident Compensation

The non-means-tested Cleic scheme offers financial help 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. It paid out \$5.75 million in 2016. The non-means-tested Tava scheme provides financial assistance to people injured in road traffic accidents or to their dependants in the case of death, regardless of who is responsible for the accident. It paid out \$245.6 million during the year.

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 126 victims of 11 disasters in 2016.

Social Security Appeal Board

The board considers appeals against the SWD's decisions on CSSA, SSA and Tava. It ruled on 429 appeals in 2016.

Prevention of Fraud and Abuse

To preserve the integrity of the social security system and ensure the proper use of public funds, the department's Special Investigation Section prevents and combats fraud and abuse of social security payment. It receives reports from the public via the hotline 2332 0101. In 2016,

170 abusers were jailed, bound over, ordered to perform community service, fined, or given warnings.

Funding

Subventions and Service Monitoring

Through the Lump Sum Grant Subvention System, 170 NGOs received recurrent subventions to provide social welfare services according to government policies. NGOs may also seek grants from the Lotteries Fund to meet their 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 department. The Lump Sum Grant Independent Complaints Handling Committee handles complaints related to NGOs receiving lump-sum grants that cannot be addressed satisfactorily 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 2016, about \$142 million was approved for 68 NGOs to implement such projects.

Partnership Fund for the Disadvantaged

The Partnership Fund for the Disadvantaged promotes cross-sectoral collaboration in helping the disadvantaged through social welfare projects by providing grants that match donations made by business organisations. A portion of the fund has been dedicated since 2015 to providing matching grants to implement more after-school learning and support programmes for primary and secondary students from grassroots families. In 2016, this fund allocated about \$92 million for 76 welfare NGOs and schools to implement 90 welfare projects.

Community Investment and Inclusion Fund

The Community Investment and Inclusion Fund finances diversified social capital development projects, promotes trust and reciprocity among the public and different sectors, and builds a cross-sectoral collaborative platform and mutual help networks for a caring Hong Kong. In 2016, it allocated about \$36.53 million to 16 new projects. Ongoing projects under the fund recorded about 168,000 participants, including about 18,400 volunteers, and about 1,550 collaboration partners. Together, they built about 180 mutual help networks.

Community Care Fund

The Community Care Fund helps people with financial difficulties, especially those who fall outside the social safety net or who are within the safety net but still have special circumstances that are not covered. Established in 2011, it was integrated into the work of the Commission on Poverty in 2013. It has launched 36 assistance programmes with a total commitment of over \$7 billion, benefiting about 1.49 million people. The fund may consider introducing pilot

programmes to help the government identify measures that can be considered for incorporation into its regular assistance and service programmes. Eleven programmes have been incorporated into the government's regular assistance programmes so far.

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

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 social networks, thus helping their long-term development. The projects are operated by either NGOs or schools. In 2016, there were 48 ongoing NGO-run projects and 30 school-based projects, of which 13 school-based projects were launched in the year, benefiting more than 700 new participants.

Advisory Bodies

Social Welfare Advisory Committee

The Social Welfare Advisory Committee reviews social welfare services from time to time and advises the government on all matters of social welfare policy. In 2016, the committee offered advice on social welfare initiatives announced in the Policy Address and on suggestions about welfare priority in 2017-18, made by the social welfare sector and other advisory bodies.

Elderly Commission

The Elderly Commission advises the government on policy and services for the elderly. It emphasises promoting active ageing and advises on ways to enhance long-term care services.

The commission is studying the feasibility of introducing a residential care service voucher scheme and formulating an Elderly Services Programme Plan. In the 2016-17 school year, about 130 elder academies in primary, secondary and tertiary institutions were operating under an Elder Academy Scheme conducted jointly by the commission and the government.

Women's Commission

The Women's Commission aims to enable women in Hong Kong to fully realise their due status, rights and opportunities in all aspects of life through the provision of an enabling environment, empowerment of women, and public education. It advises the government on women-related policies to ensure their perspectives are taken into account in formulating government policies.

The commission and the government provide a pilot scheme to encourage social welfare NGOs to refer to the Gender Mainstreaming Checklist adopted by the government and apply gender mainstreaming when formulating policies and programmes. At the end of 2016, a Gender Focal Point network was established among listed companies to raise awareness of gender-related issues in the business community, following the formation of a similar network among government bureaus and departments, District Councils and social welfare NGOs.

The commission's Capacity Building Mileage Programme aims at enhancing women's self-confidence, learning abilities and life skills. Its Funding Scheme for Women's Development provides funding for women's groups and NGOs to organise activities at regional and district levels.

Rehabilitation Advisory Committee

The Rehabilitation Advisory Committee is the principal advisory body to the government on the well-being of persons with disabilities and on the development and implementation of rehabilitation policies and services.

The committee helps the government promote and monitor the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. It also works with 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 committee coordinates the implementation of public education programmes on rehabilitation. In 2016, 45 public education programmes were organised by the government and NGOs to promote the spirit of the UN convention and cross-sectoral collaboration in building an equal and inclusive society. The committee also promoted World Mental Health Day and International Day of Disabled Persons.

Steering Committee on Promotion of Volunteer Service

This steering committee promotes sustained volunteering and encourages volunteers to integrate the core values and spirit of voluntary work into their daily lives. By the year end, over 2,930 organisations and more than 1.27 million individuals had registered for voluntary service at the 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

Low-income Working Family Allowance: www.lifa.gov.hk

Social Welfare Department: www.swd.gov.hk

Volunteer Movement: www.volunteering-hk.org

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

Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency: www.wfsfaa.gov.hk