

## Chapter 14

# Labour and Welfare

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Labour and welfare is crucial to the well-being of the community and affects people's livelihoods. The government implements targeted policy initiatives to safeguard the rights and benefits of employees and promote the welfare of the underprivileged.

The Labour and Welfare Bureau maps out strategies to develop a well-trained and adaptable workforce to meet the changing manpower demands of the economy and contribute to the overall competitiveness of Hong Kong. It is also committed to building a caring and cohesive community through helping the disadvantaged and elderly, care for children, support for families in need, as well as promoting self-reliance through suitable support measures.

The Labour Department formulates and implements labour policies, enforces labour legislation, provides employment and recruitment services to job-seekers and employers, promotes harmonious labour relations, safeguards employees' rights and benefits, and promotes the occupational safety and health of the workforce.

The Social Welfare Department implements social welfare policies to help individuals and families in need, while the Working Family Allowance Office of the Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency provides financial assistance to working households.

The Social Welfare Advisory Committee, Commission on Children, Elderly Commission, Rehabilitation Advisory Committee and Commission on Poverty all advise the government on welfare policies.

## Labour Market

The government improves the use of human resources and supports economic development by upgrading workers' skills and enhancing their employability, introducing employment support measures and enhancing labour market efficiency in accordance with the needs of the business environment.

In 2025, the labour force totalled 3.81 million people, of whom 49 per cent were men and 51 per cent were women. The total represented a rise of 0.1 per cent over 2024.

The majority, or 88.3 per cent, were employed in the service sectors: 31 per cent in public administration, and social and personal services; 23.4 per cent in the import/export, wholesale and retail trades, and accommodation and food services; 23 per cent in financing and insurance, real estate, and professional and business services; and 10.9 per cent in transportation, storage, postal and courier services, and information and communications. Only 2.1 per cent worked in manufacturing.

The overall unemployment rate rose from 3 per cent in 2024 to 3.7 per cent in 2025, whereas the underemployment rate increased from 1.2 per cent in 2024 to 1.5 per cent in 2025. Total employment dropped by about 21,600 to 3,672,000.

## Employment Earnings and Wages

During the year, the median monthly employment earnings of employed people rose to \$20,400 from \$20,000 in 2024. The median monthly employment earnings for higher-skilled workers, comprising managers, professionals and associate professionals, were \$37,400 in 2025, representing an increase of 4.2 per cent over the previous year, while those for lower-skilled workers were \$16,000, reflecting a rise of 6 per cent.

Wage rates as measured by the Nominal Wage Index for workers up to supervisory level increased 3.4 per cent in December 2025 over a year earlier.

## **Employment Services**

The Labour Department's 10 job centres, three recruitment centres for the catering, retail and construction industries, Telephone Employment Service Centre and Job Vacancy Processing Centre provide employment and recruitment services to job-seekers and employers. Its Interactive Employment Service website and mobile application offer round-the-clock employment services.

The department organises large-scale, district-based and thematic job fairs. It offers targeted help to job-seekers of different backgrounds through the Employment Programme for the Elderly and Middle-aged, Re-employment Allowance Pilot Scheme, Racial Diversity Employment Programme, Work Orientation and Placement Scheme for job-seekers with disabilities, Youth Employment and Training Programme, Youth Employment Start, and the Greater Bay Area Youth Employment Scheme. For major closure or retrenchment cases, it will set up a telephone hotline and special counters at job centres to provide priority job referral services for affected workers.

In 2025, the department registered 52,964 job-seekers, while nearly 110,000 job placements were secured through utilising the department's employment information. It recorded 501,714 private-sector vacancy registrations.

### ***Employment Programme for Elderly and Middle-aged***

The Employment Programme for the Elderly and Middle-aged encourages employers to hire the elderly and middle-aged and provide them with on-the-job training. Employers engaging job-seekers aged 60 or above who are unemployed or have left the workforce are offered a monthly training allowance of up to \$5,000 per employee for six to 12 months. Those who engage unemployed job-seekers aged 40 to 59 are offered an allowance of up to \$4,000 per month per employee for three to six months. There were 4,491 eligible placements under the programme in 2025.

### ***Re-employment Allowance Pilot Scheme***

The department launched the three-year Re-employment Allowance Pilot Scheme in 2024 to encourage people aged 40 or above who have not been in paid work for three consecutive months or more to rejoin the employment market. Each eligible participant who works for 12 consecutive months will receive a re-employment allowance up to \$20,000. From its launch to 31 December 2025, the scheme recorded nearly 64,000 participants and more than 36,000 placements.

### ***Racial Diversity Employment Programme***

The Racial Diversity Employment Programme provides one-stop employment support services for ethnic minority job-seekers in a case management approach. In 2025, the programme served 500 ethnic minority job-seekers and recorded 158 placements.

### ***People with Disabilities***

The department helps people with disabilities who are fit for open employment seek jobs. It provides free employment counselling and placement services to people who are formerly mentally ill or have hearing or visual impairment, physical disability, chronic illness, autism spectrum disorder, intellectual disability, specific learning difficulties or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. In 2025, the department registered 3,503 job-seekers with disabilities and secured 2,339 placements.

The Work Orientation and Placement Scheme improves employment opportunities for people with disabilities by encouraging employers to provide jobs and employment support. An employer who hires a person with disabilities having employment difficulties is entitled to an allowance of up to \$60,000 over the nine-month on-the-job training period. In 2025, the scheme made 1,172 job placements.

### ***Continuing Education Fund***

The Continuing Education Fund subsidises adults with learning aspirations to pursue continuing education and training. About 63,000 reimbursement claims were approved and subsidies totalling about \$541 million were paid out in the year.

### ***Youth Employment and Training Programme***

The Youth Employment and Training Programme offers pre-employment and on-the-job training to young people who have up to sub-degree education to enhance their employability. Employers engaging eligible young people and providing them with on-the-job training may get a training allowance of up to \$5,000 per month per trainee for six to 12 months. Since 2025, the age limit for enrolment has been relaxed from 15-24 to 15-29, and the Greater Bay Area Work Experience Attachment Programme has been launched, giving trainees aged 18 or above opportunities to undergo one-month workplace attachments. In 2024-25, 4,059 young people applied to the programme.

### ***Youth Employment Start***

People aged between 15 and 29 may make use of one-stop career advisory and support services at two youth employment resource centres called Youth Employment Start to improve their employment opportunities. In 2025, services were provided to young people 63,908 times.

### ***Greater Bay Area Youth Employment Scheme***

The Greater Bay Area Youth Employment Scheme encourages enterprises with businesses in both Hong Kong and the Mainland cities of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) to employ Hong Kong young persons with educational attainments at sub-degree level or above to work in the Mainland cities of the GBA, so as to foster their career development and the exchange of talent in the GBA. The government provides enterprises with an allowance of 60 per cent of the young persons' salaries, capped at \$12,000 per month, for each employed young person for up to 18 months.

In 2025, the department received 2,721 job vacancies from 338 enterprises, and 607 allowance applications from enterprises after young persons had commenced employment.

### Working Holiday Scheme

Hong Kong has implemented Working Holiday Schemes with 13 countries, namely Australia, Austria, Canada, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Japan, Korea, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Sweden and the United Kingdom. Through the scheme, Hong Kong youths aged 18 to 30 may experience different cultures and broaden their horizons through living and working temporarily while holidaying overseas. The scheme also allows youths from the partner countries to learn about Hong Kong.

A majority of the partner countries allow Hong Kong youths to stay for up to 12 months. They can take up short-term employment to support their travel expenses and/or study short-term courses (except for Ireland) while holidaying.

As at end-2025, more than 108,000 Hong Kong young people participated in the scheme, while about 18,000 from the partner countries came to Hong Kong under the scheme.

### Employees Retraining Board

The Employees Retraining Board is a statutory body that provides market-driven training and support to help people aged 15 or above to enter the labour market and continuously upgrade their skills through training. It offers 800 courses across 28 industries through more than 80 appointed training bodies, providing over 100,000 training places annually. The training and support also cater for the needs of different social groups, including young people, new arrivals, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities and people recovered from work injuries, rehabilitated drug abusers and former offenders. The board is undertaking a reform in phases and will be upgraded as Upskill Hong Kong to enhance its role and positioning to devising skill-based training programmes and strategies for the entire workforce.

### Labour Advisory Board

The Labour Advisory Board, a representative tripartite consultative body, advises the Commissioner for Labour on matters including legislation and International Labour Organization conventions and recommendations. Chaired by the commissioner, it has six members representing employers and six representing employees.

### Labour Relations

The Labour Department provides a voluntary conciliation service to help employers and employees outside the government resolve employment disputes and claims. It also publicises the Employment Ordinance and promotes good human resource management practices.

The department runs 10 industry-based tripartite committees to foster industry-level dialogue and cooperation among employers, employees and the government. These committees – covering catering, cement and concrete, construction, hotel and tourism, logistics, printing, property management, retail, theatre and digital platforms – allow members to discuss issues of common concern to their industries.

Through 18 human resources managers' clubs, the department encourages their members to maintain effective employer-employee communication and adopt good human resource management, as well as implement family-friendly employment practices, in their organisations and sectors.

In 2025, the department handled 127 trade disputes and 14,342 employment claims. In cases where the department provided a conciliation service, more than 70 per cent were settled.

### **Trade Unions**

The Registry of Trade Unions administers the Trade Unions Ordinance and promotes good and responsible trade union management. Once registered, a trade union becomes a body corporate and enjoys immunity from certain civil suits.

During the year, five new unions were registered. The number of registered trade unions stood at 1,408, comprising 1,331 employee unions, 11 employer associations, 49 mixed organisations of employees and employers, and 17 trade union federations. The yearly average of the declared membership of employee unions over the five years from 2020 to 2024 was about 870,000. During the same period, the trade union participation rate (the proportion of the total declared membership of employee unions to the total number of salaried employees and wage earners) was about 25 per cent.

In July, the government completed amendments to the Trade Unions Ordinance. The new requirements, which better safeguard national security and improve the trade union regulatory regime, will take effect on 5 January 2026.

### **Labour Tribunal**

The Labour Tribunal is part of the Judiciary. It is a quick, simple and inexpensive channel for adjudicating labour disputes that are not within the exclusive jurisdiction of the Minor Employment Claims Adjudication Board. During the year, 5,180 cases were filed with the tribunal, of which 5,140 were initiated by employees and 40 by employers.

### **Minor Employment Claims Adjudication Board**

This board adjudicates claims arising from disputes of statutory or contractual rights of employment involving not more than 10 claimants in each case with the claim amount for each claimant not exceeding \$15,000. In 2025, it dealt with 1,068 claims and granted awards amounting to \$4.92 million.

### **Employees' Rights and Benefits**

The Labour Department protects employees' rights and benefits through enforcement of labour legislation, supplemented by administrative measures. In 2025, the department secured 4,809 convictions, resulting in fines totalling more than \$32 million.

The Employment Ordinance provides for employment-related benefits and entitlements to employees. The government improves employees' benefits and protection at a pace commensurate with Hong Kong's overall socio-economic development, taking into account

both employees' interests and employers' ability to afford the benefits. Apart from the statutory requirements, employers and employees may negotiate the terms and conditions of employment.

The Legislative Council passed the proposed amendments to continuous contract requirement under the Employment Ordinance in June, making it easier for employees to enjoy comprehensive employment rights and benefits. The new requirement will be applicable from 18 January 2026.

### **Legal Protection**

In general, children under 15 are prohibited by law from taking up employment. Children aged 13 and 14 may work in non-industrial establishments under strict rules, while young people aged 15 to 17 may work in industrial establishments, subject to restrictions on their working hours.

Labour inspectors ensure employers comply with laws that safeguard workers' rights and benefits. The inspectors also check employees' proof of identity and work with the police and Immigration Department to combat illegal employment. In 2025, the three departments carried out 44 joint operations.

### **Enforcement against Wage Offences**

The Labour Department takes active steps to prevent wage defaults. It also pursues vigorous enforcement action against employers who fail to pay wages due to their employees, and against employers who wilfully and without reasonable excuse fail to pay sums awarded by the Labour Tribunal or Minor Employment Claims Adjudication Board.

In 2025, the department secured 663 convictions for wage offences and 75 convictions for failure to pay sums awarded by the tribunal or the board.

### **Protection of Wages on Insolvency Fund**

The Protection of Wages on Insolvency Fund provides relief in the form of ex gratia payments covering outstanding wages, wages in lieu of notice, severance payment, pay for untaken annual leave and pay for untaken statutory holidays to employees affected by their insolvent employers. It is financed mainly by a levy on business registration. In 2025, the fund paid about \$267 million to 5,533 applicants.

### **Employees' Compensation**

The employees' compensation regime follows the 'no-fault' compensation principle, meaning compensation is paid even if the injury, occupational disease or death is the employee's fault. The Employees' Compensation Ordinance covers injury or death caused by accidents arising out of and in the course of employment, or by prescribed occupational diseases. Employers must have a valid employees' compensation insurance policy to cover liabilities and labour inspectors conduct workplace inspections to ensure employers are complying.

The department helps injured employees and the families of deceased employees get compensation and it helps employees and employers better understand their rights and obligations under the ordinance through talks and publicity.

The Employees Compensation Assistance Fund provides assistance payments to injured employees or family members of deceased employees who fail to receive the entitled compensation after exhausting all legally and financially viable means of recovery. The Occupational Deafness Compensation Fund provides compensation for people employed in specified noisy occupations who suffer hearing loss as a result of prolonged exposure to excessive noise at work, and financial assistance for hearing assistive devices. Both funds are financed mainly by a levy imposed on all employees' compensation insurance policies taken out by employers.

Pneumoconiosis and/or mesothelioma sufferers are eligible for compensation administered by the Pneumoconiosis Compensation Fund Board under the Pneumoconiosis and Mesothelioma (Compensation) Ordinance. The fund is financed by a levy imposed on the construction and quarrying industries.

The Employees' Compensation Ordinance, the Pneumoconiosis and Mesothelioma (Compensation) Ordinance and the Occupational Deafness (Compensation) Ordinance were amended in 2025 to increase the amounts of 18 compensation items payable in cases involving work accidents or prescribed occupational diseases with effect from 17 April.

### **Statutory Minimum Wage**

The statutory minimum wage rate increased by 5.3 per cent to \$42.10 per hour from 1 May. The department publicises the Minimum Wage Ordinance widely and labour inspectors visit businesses to ensure employers' compliance with the law.

The Minimum Wage Commission reviewed the statutory minimum wage rate under a new annual review mechanism, adopting a formula to derive the recommended rate. The rate derived under the new mechanism is expected to take effect on 1 May 2026.

### **Regulation of Employment Agencies**

The Labour Department enforces Part XII of the Employment Ordinance, the Employment Agency Regulations and the Code of Practice for Employment Agencies through issuing licences, conducting inspections, investigating complaints and prosecuting offenders. In 2025, the department conducted 2,090 inspections of employment agencies, prosecuted five non-compliant agencies successfully, issued or renewed 4,051 licences, and refused to renew one licence.

### **Retirement Protection**

All employees, except those who are not required by law to join a local retirement scheme, receive retirement protection under the Mandatory Provident Fund (MPF) Schemes Ordinance, Occupational Retirement Schemes Ordinance or other statutory pension plans.

The abolition of using the accrued benefits of employers' mandatory MPF contributions and vested benefits of other retirement fund contributions to offset employees' severance and long service payments took effect on 1 May. To assist employers, especially micro, small and medium enterprises, to adapt to the policy change, the government launched the 25-year Subsidy Scheme for Abolition of MPF Offsetting Arrangement on the same day to share out employers' severance payment and long service payment expenses after the abolition. By December, the subsidy scheme had received 12,787 applications and disbursed about \$16 million of subsidies.

### ***Reimbursement of Maternity Leave Pay Scheme***

The Reimbursement of Maternity Leave Pay Scheme fully reimburses employers for the additional four weeks' statutory maternity leave pay, following the extension of statutory maternity leave from 10 weeks to 14 weeks, subject to a cap of \$80,000 per employee.

In 2025, the scheme received 7,531 applications and disbursed reimbursement of \$207 million.

## **Entry of Non-locals for Employment**

### ***Talent Admission Schemes***

Global talent is welcomed to Hong Kong through various admission schemes. In 2025, about 147,000 applications were received, with about 124,000 approved, and around 84,000 people arriving in the city.

The Top Talent Pass Scheme targets high-income talent and full-time bachelor's degree graduates from the world's top universities. A successful applicant is issued a two or three-year pass to explore opportunities in Hong Kong without being required to secure a local employment offer. In 2025, about 32,000 applications were approved.

Under the Quality Migrant Admission Scheme, highly skilled or talented people are encouraged to settle in Hong Kong to enhance the city's economic competitiveness. Successful applicants need not secure an offer of local employment before relocating. During the year, around 7,000 applications were approved.

Under the General Employment Policy and the Admission Scheme for Mainland Talents and Professionals, people with special skills, knowledge or experience of value to and not readily available in Hong Kong may apply to take up employment. Entrepreneurs who can contribute substantially to the economy are also welcome to apply to come to establish or join a business. A new channel under these schemes was introduced on 30 June to allow eligible non-degree professionals to apply for entry into Hong Kong to join eight skilled trades facing acute manpower shortage. During the year, around 58,000 professionals and entrepreneurs were admitted under these schemes.

### ***Enhanced Supplementary Labour Scheme***

The Labour Department launched the Enhanced Supplementary Labour Scheme in 2023 to enhance the coverage and operation of the Supplementary Labour Scheme, including suspending the general exclusion of 26 job categories, as well as unskilled/low-skilled posts.

Employers may apply to import workers to fill vacancies at technician level or below. All applications are considered on a case-by-case basis. To ensure employment priority for local workers, employers must undertake open recruitment for each application. As at December, 44,990 imported workers were working in Hong Kong under these schemes.

### ***Foreign Domestic Helpers***

Foreign domestic helpers may be admitted to work in Hong Kong if they and their employers satisfy the eligibility criteria, subject to immigration control. Employers must offer their helpers the terms of employment stipulated in the government-prescribed standard employment contract, including free and suitable accommodation with reasonable privacy at the employer's residence, free food or food allowance in lieu, wages not lower than the minimum allowable wage set by the government, free passage from and to the helper's place of origin, and free medical treatment.

As at December, Hong Kong had 378,830 foreign domestic helpers, with Filipino and Indonesian helpers accounting for 54 per cent and 43 per cent respectively.

### ***Support for Incoming Talent***

Hong Kong Talent Engage promotes the city's dual roles as an international talent hub and the country's gateway for talent; and provides comprehensive one-stop support services for incoming talent. In 2025, this support included 58 themed seminars, Cantonese classes, and 12 job fairs organised or co-organised by Hong Kong Talent Engage with the participation of more than 1,000 employers and attendance of over 200,000.

In addition, Hong Kong Talent Engage conducted over 40 outreach visits to the Chinese Mainland, including to Beijing, Shanghai, Hangzhou and GBA cities, and overseas regions, including the UK, Canada, Germany, France, Switzerland, Australia, Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Vietnam, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, to promote Hong Kong's advantages and talent admission schemes and attract more talent to the city.

## **Occupational Safety and Health**

The Labour Department improves occupational safety and health standards in workplaces through inspection and enforcement, promotion and education, and applying technology.

In 2025, there were 26,365 occupational injuries, a drop of 26.3 per cent from the 35,768 cases a decade ago. Over the same period, the number of industrial accidents fell 40.4 per cent from 10,883 to 6,486. There were 332 cases of occupational diseases and gas poisoning confirmed in the year.

### ***Inspection and Enforcement***

The department monitors the occupational safety and health risk levels of various industries and adopts a risk-based approach to inspect workplaces, particularly targeting high-risk activities such as work-at-height and organisations with poor safety records, to ensure compliance with laws across various industries and organisations. The department launches

special enforcement operations on workplaces and industries that are more risk-prone such as construction sites. Inspection with respect to heat stress control is strengthened in the summer.

In 2025, the department served 5,373 improvement notices on companies and other organisations, urging them to improve safety conditions promptly. It also served 347 suspension notices to stop work activities or the use of plant or substances that posed imminent risks of death or serious bodily injury to employees. The department secured 2,505 convictions, resulting in penalties totalling \$26.15 million.

### **Promotion and Education**

The Labour Department organises promotional activities and training courses to raise awareness of occupational safety and health and relevant laws among employers and employees in different industries. It produces animated videos to help the industry understand how some accidents happened and the work safety measures that can be taken to prevent recurrence. In 2025, the department held 2,273 courses, lectures and talks for 128,387 employees.

In March, the department published a revised version of *Guidance Notes on Prevention of Trapping Hazard of Tail Lifts* to provide more detail about tripping devices. A compliance timetable for the installation of tripping devices began on 1 June to assist the industry to install tripping devices on goods vehicles fitted with tail lifts.

In October, the department, in collaboration with ethnic minority leaders and the Occupational Safety and Health Council, co-organised the first occupational safety seminar cum exhibition at the Kowloon Masjid and Islamic Centre to enhance occupational safety and health awareness among ethnic minorities.

In December, the department published the *Guidance Notes on Prevention of Carbon Monoxide Poisoning in Workplaces* to provide practical information for employers, employees and relevant duty holders to safeguard employees from carbon monoxide poisoning in workplaces.

### **Applying Technology**

The Labour Department encourages the industry to use innovative technology to improve occupational safety and health and provides advice on legislation for technology products developed by industries to facilitate the introduction and application of such products. These include the Remote-control Tower Crane System and Remote Control System for Excavator Technology, which reduce workers' exposure to high-risk work and eliminate or control risks at source.

The department also uses technology to make the enforcement of frontline officers more effective. Since October, small unmanned aircraft have been used to allow officers to conduct remote site surveillance and carry out inspections at remote or inaccessible workplaces.

### **Occupational Health Clinics**

The Labour Department provides occupational health services for workers at its occupational health clinics in Kwun Tong and Fanling. The two clinics held 13,808 clinical consultations with workers in 2025.

### **Pilot Rehabilitation Programme for Employees Injured at Work**

The three-year Pilot Rehabilitation Programme for Employees Injured at Work adopts a case-management approach to provide timely private outpatient rehabilitation treatment services to participating injured employees from the construction industry, the catering and hotel industry, as well as the transportation and logistics industry. The pilot programme concluded on 22 September as scheduled, and a total of 2,437 injured employees participated.

### **Occupational Safety and Health Council**

The Occupational Safety and Health Council promotes workplace safety and health awareness among employers, employees and the public through training, promotional activities, consultancy, research and information services. In 2025, the council conducted more than 2,500 online and physical courses and seminars, reaching nearly 120,000 participants. In collaboration with various government departments, the council launched the Mental Health Workplace Charter and the Heart Caring Campaign to enhance physical and mental health awareness among the working population.

The council also supports small and medium enterprises (SMEs) engaged in high-risk operations by helping them improve their safety performance through different funding schemes, which provide assistance for safety training, consultancy services, and the purchase of appropriate safety equipment. In addition, the council and Labour Department launched a sponsorship scheme to subsidise SMEs in high-risk industries to purchase cooling vests and solar-powered fans, offering employers and employees more options for preventing heat stress.

### **International Labour Affairs**

Hong Kong applies 31 International Labour Conventions and takes part in International Labour Organization activities to keep abreast of international labour issues. In 2025, representatives of employers, employees and the government, as part of the People's Republic of China delegation, attended the 113th Session of the International Labour Conference.

### **Social Welfare Services**

In 2024-25, the Social Welfare Department's total recurrent expenditure was \$109.8 billion, of which \$72 billion, or 65.6 per cent, went towards financial assistance payments, \$26.3 billion (24 per cent) went into recurrent subventions to NGOs and \$6.3 billion (5.7 per cent) was spent on other payments for welfare services.

### **Services for Families**

Family services help preserve and strengthen the solidarity of families, improve family relationships, enable people to prevent and deal with personal and family problems, and provide suitable services to meet their welfare needs.

The department provides services for families in need at three levels. The primary level is to prevent family problems through early identification and public education. A telephone consultation hotline is available for providing service information, brief counselling and service referrals.

At the secondary level, 65 integrated family service centres and two integrated services centres, operated by the department and NGOs, offer preventive, supportive and remedial services. There are also 50 social work teams providing services for 743 pre-primary institutions to support pre-primary children and families, and take care of their welfare needs through early intervention.

At the tertiary level, 11 family and child protective services units provide specialised services for cases of domestic violence and child abuse, as well as child custody and guardianship disputes.

### **Services for Children**

At the year end, the department provided 4,248 places in residential child care services for children and young people in need of out-of-home care owing to family, behavioural or emotional problems. It also works with three NGOs accredited under the Adoption Ordinance to arrange local or intercountry adoption for children whose parents have abandoned or are unable to maintain them.

The department provides day child care services for parents who cannot take care of their children temporarily, and subsidises some standalone child care centres and child care centres attached to kindergartens to provide full-day child care services. At the year end, there were about 43,000 service places available at child care centres, of which 8,700 were government-subsidised. The department also funded another 462 occasional child care service places and 2,409 extended-hours service places at these centres. In addition, it subsidises the Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project, providing 2,116 places for families to receive flexible day child care services from home-based child carers. Fee-waiving or fee-reduction subsidies are also provided for primary school students from low-income families to attend after-school care services, while 1,176 subsidised after-school care service places are provided for pre-primary children.

The Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse Ordinance will come into operation in January 2026. It requires specified professionals in the social welfare, education, and healthcare sectors to report suspected serious child abuse cases, creating a wide and effective protection web for children. To complement the commencement of the ordinance, the government has provided training for mandated reporters, formulated the *Guide for Mandated Reporters*, increased emergency places for residential child care, and enhanced professional support for child abuse victims and their families.

### **Services for Young People**

The department subsidises NGOs to provide people aged between six and 24 with preventive, developmental, supportive and remedial services. These services include 139 integrated children and youth services centres providing centre-based, outreach, and school social work services to address their developmental needs. Eighteen of these centres offer outreach

services at night to those who loiter at neighbourhood black spots to prevent them from going astray, and 19 youth outreach teams serve youths at risk and deal with juvenile gang issues. Five cyber youth support teams provide professional social work intervention through various means, including a 24-hour online counselling platform, to address the needs of at-risk and hidden youths.

In 2025, a total of 912 school social workers were provided for 456 secondary schools to help students with academic, social and emotional problems.

### *Juvenile Delinquents*

The NGO-operated Community Support Service Scheme provides support services for young people who have been arrested by the police and/or cautioned under the Police Superintendent's Discretion Scheme (PSDS), as well as their peers.

The Family Conference Scheme, run by the department and police, helps juveniles who have been cautioned under the PSDS for a 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 assist the juveniles in rectifying deviant and unlawful behaviour and rejoining schools or work.

### *District Support for Children and Youth*

The department provides financial assistance via the District Support Scheme for Children and Youth Development to address the developmental needs of disadvantaged children and people aged 24 or below.

### *Services for Elderly*

The government's policy direction in elderly services is 'ageing in place as the core, with institutional care as backup'. Elderly people are encouraged to lead active and healthy lives, and the government provides subsidised community care and support services to assist frail elderly people in living in their homes. The government also provides subsidised residential care services for elderly people who have long-term care needs but cannot receive adequate care at home.

The Opportunities for the Elderly Project encourages active ageing. It subsidised 660 programmes with government grants totalling around \$22.55 million in the 2024-26 phase.

Senior Citizen Cards allow holders to enjoy concessions, discounts and priority services provided by public and private organisations and government departments. There were about 1.62 million cardholders as at end-2025.

### *Community Care and Support*

The department subsidises 92 home care and support services teams and 102 day care centres/units for the elderly, and there are 324 recognised service providers offering home-based services and/or centre-based services under the Community Care Service Voucher Scheme for the Elderly. These subsidised services help over 60,000 elderly persons in need of care or support to live in their homes each year.

### *Residential Care*

There are about 79,400 residential care service places, of which about 39,000 are subsidised by the government, including 6,000 available to voucher users under the Residential Care Service Voucher Scheme for the Elderly. The Residential Care Homes Legislation (Miscellaneous Amendments) Ordinance 2023 has come into operation in phases since June 2024 to enhance the quality of residential care homes. The department also implements the Residential Care Services Scheme in Guangdong to provide more choice for eligible elderly people to receive cross-boundary subsidised residential care services. Under the scheme, there were 24 participating residential care homes for the elderly located across eight GBA Mainland cities by year end.

### *Services for Persons with Disabilities*

The department provides subventions to NGOs to operate rehabilitation services to meet the different needs of persons with disabilities, and to help them develop their capabilities and integrate into society.

### *Pre-school Children with Special Needs*

At the year end, the department provided 2,580 places in special child care centres, including 122 residential places; 4,677 places in early education and training centres; and 1,974 integrated programme places in kindergarten-cum-child care centres.

Children on the waiting list of subvented pre-school rehabilitation services may apply for subsidised training provided by NGOs under the Training Subsidy Programme, which provided about 3,100 training places in 2025.

On-site pre-school rehabilitation services cover about 900 kindergartens and kindergarten-cum-child care centres, providing comprehensive and timely support to pre-school children with different levels of special needs through a school-based approach. Since 2024-25, children who need these services have been able to access them with no waiting time.

Small group homes provide 128 places for children with mild intellectual disabilities who cannot receive adequate care from their families.

### *Day Training and Vocational Rehabilitation*

In 2025, day activity centres provided 6,351 training places for persons with intellectual disabilities. The department also provided 2,376 supported employment training places for persons with disabilities to work in a supportive environment with assistance. The department implemented enhancement measures for vocational rehabilitation services in July and upgraded all sheltered workshops to integrated vocational rehabilitation services centres in October, providing 11,287 places in integrated vocational rehabilitation services centres and 453 places in integrated vocational training centres for persons with disabilities who are not yet ready for open employment.

At year end, the Enhancing Employment of People with Disabilities through Small Enterprise Project had allocated more than \$185 million to nearly 40 NGOs for setting up more than 145 small businesses, providing over 1,000 job opportunities for persons with disabilities.

The Support Programme for Employees with Disabilities provides employers with up to \$40,000 per employee with disabilities to procure assistive devices and modify the workplace.

### *Residential Care Homes for Persons with Disabilities*

In 2025, the department provided 15,297 subvented residential care service places to persons with disabilities. Another 1,656 residential places were provided under the Bought Place Scheme for Private Residential Care Homes for Persons with Disabilities.

The Professional Outreaching Team for Private Residential Care Homes for Persons with Disabilities Scheme provides continuous multi-disciplinary outreach services, including clinical psychological services, social work services, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy and nursing support, serving about 4,000 residents of private residential care homes for persons with disabilities.

### *Community Support*

The department provides support services for persons with disabilities living in the community, including those in mental recovery, and their families and carers.

These services include district support centres and designated teams for special school leavers, day and residential respite services, and social and recreational centres for persons with disabilities; occasional child care services for children with disabilities; parents/relatives resource centres; home care services, integrated support services and day care services for persons with severe disabilities; a transitional care and support centre for tetraplegic patients; community rehabilitation day centres; integrated community centres for mental wellness; support centres for persons with autism; and community rehabilitation networks providing support services for persons with chronic illnesses. The Special Needs Trust Scheme provides reliable and affordable trust services for managing the assets of deceased parents to meet the long-term daily needs of their children with special needs.

In August and September, the department regularised the operation of two integrated community rehabilitation centres that participated in the pilot project. The centres provide persons with disabilities requiring medium- to high-level care with flexible and integrated community support services through a case management approach, and use advanced rehabilitation equipment and technology.

In 2024, the District Services and Community Care Teams – Scheme on Supporting Elderly and Carers was piloted in Tsuen Wan and Southern districts to provide support to singleton and doubleton elderly households, as well as carers of elderly persons or persons with disabilities. The project was extended to all 18 districts in April 2025.

### **Services for Offenders**

The department helps offenders reintegrate into the community and become law-abiding citizens through community-based and residential services. Probation officers assess and report to the courts the offenders' suitability for probation orders and/or community service orders, and supervise those under these orders. They also prepare reports on long-term prisoners and petitioners being considered for early release.

In 2025, the department helped 1,726 offenders through probation services and arranged for 2,355 offenders placed on community service orders to perform unpaid community work under supervision.

The Enhanced Probation Service adopts a more focused, structured and intensive approach to help convicted young drug offenders aged 25 or below. Tuen Mun Children and Juvenile Home, with 388 places, offers educational, vocational and character training for juvenile offenders and for children and young people with behavioural and family problems.

The Social Welfare Department and Correctional Services Department jointly run the Young Offender Assessment Panel, providing the courts with professional views on sentencing options for offenders aged 14 to 25, and the Post-Release Supervision of Prisoners Scheme, which helped 1,059 discharged prisoners rehabilitate and reintegrate into society in 2025. The Social Welfare Department also subsidises an NGO to provide hostel and support services for offenders.

### **Medical Social Services**

Medical social workers stationed in public hospitals and some specialist clinics provide support to patients and their families with welfare needs, to facilitate their recovery and reintegration into society. The department's medical social workers handled about 237,396 cases in 2025.

### **Clinical Psychological Services**

During the year, 45 clinical psychologists from the department provided 2,728 psychological assessments and 21,505 treatment sessions. Eight clinical psychologists of the Central Psychological Support Service (Pre-school Service) made 1,088 consultation visits to pre-school rehabilitation centres. Six clinical psychologists of the Central Psychological Support Service (Adult Service) made 980 consultation visits to adult rehabilitation centres.

## **Social Welfare Financial Assistance**

### **Working Family Allowance Scheme**

The Working Family Allowance Scheme aims to alleviate the financial burden of low-income working households, especially those with children. In 2025, around 95,300 applications were approved, granting allowances of about \$1.87 billion to more than 53,700 households or over 181,200 individuals, including about 74,400 children or youths.

### **Social Security**

The Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme and Social Security Allowance (SSA) Scheme form the mainstay of Hong Kong's non-contributory social security system.

### *Comprehensive Social Security Assistance*

The CSSA Scheme gives cash assistance to people in financial hardship to meet their basic needs. It is means-tested and applicants must satisfy residence requirements. As at end-2025, there were 193,850 CSSA cases involving 256,518 recipients. Total expenditure of the CSSA Scheme in 2025 was about \$22.9 billion, an increase of 1 per cent from the previous year.

Elderly recipients who have received CSSA continuously for at least one year in Hong Kong and choose to retire in Guangdong or Fujian provinces may join the Portable CSSA Scheme and continue to receive CSSA.

### *Social Security Allowance*

The SSA Scheme comprises Old Age Living Allowance; Old Age Allowance; Disability Allowance – consisting of Normal and Higher Disability Allowance – and the Guangdong Scheme and the Fujian Scheme.

The means-tested Old Age Living Allowance aims to supplement the living expenses of elderly people aged 65 or above who have financial needs. The non-means-tested Old Age Allowance and Disability Allowance provide cash allowances to elderly people aged 70 or above and people with severe disabilities respectively. The Guangdong Scheme and Fujian Scheme provide Old Age Allowance and Old Age Living Allowance to eligible elderly people who choose to retire in Guangdong or Fujian provinces respectively.

The SSA Scheme recorded 1,384,824 recipients as at end-2025. Total expenditure was about \$54.7 billion during the year, a 6 per cent increase from the previous year.

### *Relief Measures*

As announced in the 2025-26 Budget, the government provided a one-off extra allowance equal to one half of the monthly rate or allowance to eligible recipients of social security payments, including the recipients of the standard rate of CSSA, Old Age Allowance, Old Age Living Allowance and Disability Allowance. Similar arrangements applied to households in receipt of the Working Family Allowance.

### *Accident Compensation*

The non-means-tested Criminal and Law Enforcement Injuries Compensation 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 \$4.22 million in 2025.

The non-means-tested Traffic Accident Victims Assistance 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 \$400.85 million in 2025.

### *Social Security Appeal Board*

The Social Security Appeal Board considers individual appeals against the Social Welfare Department's decisions on CSSA, SSA and Traffic Accident Victims Assistance Scheme. It made decisions on 262 appeals in 2025.

### *Emergency Relief*

Food or a cash grant in lieu of food and other necessities are 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 4,701 victims of 10 disasters in 2025.

## **Funding**

### *Subventions*

As at end-2025, the Social Welfare Department provided recurrent subventions to 179 NGOs for operating social welfare services as stipulated in the Funding and Service Agreements. NGOs may also seek grants from the Lotteries Fund to meet their non-recurrent commitments.

### *Partnership Fund for Disadvantaged*

The Partnership Fund for the Disadvantaged promotes cross-sectoral collaboration in social welfare projects by providing grants that match donations made by businesses. A portion of the fund is dedicated to providing matching grants to implement more after-school learning and support programmes for primary and secondary students from grassroots families. In 2025, about \$20 million was allocated for 28 welfare NGOs and schools to implement 36 welfare projects.

### *Child Development Fund*

The Child Development Fund provides children from disadvantaged backgrounds with personal development opportunities. Through the fund's projects, participating children draw up and implement their own development plans under guidance, learn to accumulate savings and cultivate intangible assets, such as a positive attitude, personal resilience and social networks, thus helping their long-term development. In 2025, there were 64 ongoing NGO-led projects and 34 school-based projects.

### *Innovation and Technology Fund for Application in Elderly and Rehabilitation Care*

The Innovation and Technology Fund for Application in Elderly and Rehabilitation Care subsidises eligible elderly and rehabilitation service units to procure, rent and trial technology products to improve the quality of life of service users, and reduce the burden and pressure of care staff and carers. On top of the initial \$1 billion funding, an additional \$1 billion was injected into the fund in 2024-25 and its scope has been expanded to cover gerontechnology products suitable for household use. By end-2025, the fund had allocated a total of about \$910 million, subsidising about 2,100 elderly and rehabilitation service units to procure or rent over 27,000 technology products.

### *Arts Development Fund for Persons with Disabilities*

The Arts Development Fund for Persons with Disabilities subsidises eligible organisations to organise arts activities and training programmes to enhance the arts knowledge of persons with disabilities, cultivate their interest in the arts and develop their potential. As at 2024-25, grants totalling about \$95 million had been approved for 47 organisations to implement 168 arts projects.

### ***Dedicated Fund***

The government set up a dedicated fund of \$500 million in 2024 to help NGOs operating subvented welfare services meet their development needs for staff training and system enhancement, particularly in enhancing professional knowledge of their staff and strengthening awareness of inter-disciplinary collaboration, as well as encouraging and promoting the application of information technology. By end-2025, around 450 projects were approved, with a total funding allocation of about \$80 million.

### **Advisory Bodies**

#### ***Social Welfare Advisory Committee***

The Social Welfare Advisory Committee reviews social welfare services and advises the government on all matters of social welfare policy. In 2025, the committee advised the government on social welfare initiatives announced in the Policy Address and on suggestions about 2026-27 welfare priorities offered by the social welfare sector and other advisory bodies.

#### ***Commission on Children***

The Commission on Children provides overall steer on children initiatives; sets policy directions, strategies and priorities related to the development and advancement of children; and oversees their implementation. In 2025, the commission launched the Child Protection Campaign comprising a series of public engagement activities and publicity initiatives to complement the commencement of the Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse Ordinance and promote the message of child protection. The commission's Funding Scheme for Children's Well-being and Development has so far funded 180 promotional and educational projects, involving a total approved funding amount of about \$55 million.

#### ***Elderly Commission***

The Elderly Commission advises the government on policies for the elderly. Its recommendations, set out in the Elderly Services Programme Plan, are being implemented by the government. The commission and the government jointly launched the Elder Academy Scheme. In 2025-26, about 200 elder academies in primary and secondary schools and post-secondary institutions were operating under the scheme.

#### ***Rehabilitation Advisory Committee***

The Rehabilitation Advisory Committee is the principal government advisory body on the well-being of persons with disabilities and 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 collaborates with different sectors in promoting an inclusive culture.

#### ***Commission on Poverty***

The Commission on Poverty advises the government on matters of targeted poverty alleviation and promotes cross-sector collaboration to address poverty in a targeted manner. It oversees the operation of the Community Care Fund and the Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship

Development Fund to plug the gaps in the existing system and promote social innovation to tackle poverty.

### Websites

Child Development Fund: [www.cdf.gov.hk](http://www.cdf.gov.hk)

Commission on Children: [www.coc.gov.hk](http://www.coc.gov.hk)

Commission on Poverty: [www.commissiononpoverty.gov.hk](http://www.commissiononpoverty.gov.hk)

Continuing Education Fund: [www.wfsfaa.gov.hk/en/ce/cef/overview.php](http://www.wfsfaa.gov.hk/en/ce/cef/overview.php)

Elderly Commission: [www.elderlycommission.gov.hk](http://www.elderlycommission.gov.hk)

Employees Retraining Board: [www.erb.org](http://www.erb.org)

Interactive Employment Service: [www.jobs.gov.hk](http://www.jobs.gov.hk)

Labour and Welfare Bureau: [www.lwb.gov.hk](http://www.lwb.gov.hk)

Labour Department: [www.labour.gov.hk](http://www.labour.gov.hk)

Occupational Safety and Health Council: [www.oshc.org.hk](http://www.oshc.org.hk)

Social Welfare Department: [www.swd.gov.hk](http://www.swd.gov.hk)

Working Family Allowance Scheme: [www.wfa.gov.hk](http://www.wfa.gov.hk)