

## Community Care Fund to roll out assistance programmes in phases

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The Steering Committee on the Community Care Fund announced today (April 20) that 10 assistance programmes will be rolled out by phases in 2011-12 to help needy people who have economic difficulties. Funds have also been set aside for three other programmes which are being considered and implementation details being formulated.

The Chief Secretary for Administration and Chairman of the Steering Committee on the Community Care Fund, Mr Henry Tang, said after the second committee meeting that the assistance programmes covered various target groups and the first 10 programmes would benefit some 300 000 people, the full-year estimated expenditure would be around \$730 million.

Mr Tang said, “The Steering Committee has listened to the views from various sectors extensively and conducted many rounds of discussion before drawing up the programmes, having regard to factors such as types of assistance and persons currently not covered by the social security system, implementing programmes on a pilot basis, low administrative costs and the feasibility of implementation within a short period of time, etc. We hope that by adopting the approach of 'dealing with the simple issues before tackling the difficult ones', we can kick off the Fund as soon as practicable to provide swift and direct assistance to needy persons.”

The first 10 assistance programmes are:

- (1) Setting up a new school-based fund to subsidise primary and secondary school students from low-income families who are studying in Government, Aided, Caput and Direct Subsidy Scheme schools to participate in learning activities outside Hong Kong which are organised or recognised by the schools. It is estimated that about 240 000 students will benefit from the three-year programme.
- (2) Providing financial assistance for low-income and non-school attending ethnic minorities and new arrivals from the Mainland for taking language-related international public examinations to assist them in pursuing further studies or seeking employment. The estimated number of beneficiaries of this two-year programme is about 3 000 applications.
- (3) Providing subsidy for specified self-financed cancer drugs which have not yet been brought into the Samaritan Fund safety net to assist Hospital Authority's patients

who are using the specified self-financed cancer drugs and having economic difficulties. It is estimated that around 300 to 500 patients will benefit from the programme the first year.

(4) Providing subsidy to needy patients falling outside the Samaritan Fund safety net for the use of Samaritan Fund subsidised drugs, in order to benefit those who are not eligible for the Samaritan Fund as their economic capability slightly exceed the requirement, or those who only receive partial subsidy. It is estimated that a few hundred patients will benefit from the programme per year.

(5) Providing a monthly subsidy at a maximum rate of \$480 for low-income elders aged 65 or above to hire urgent household cleaning and escorting services, so that they can immediately improve their home environment and attend medical appointments as scheduled. It is estimated that about 4 000 people will benefit from the programme.

(6) Providing a monthly subsidy of \$2,000 for low-income people with severe disabilities who are aged below 60 to alleviate their burden from health care expenses. It is estimated that about 3 800 people will benefit from the one-year programme.

(7) Providing a monthly subsidy of \$2,500 to children from low-income families who are on the waiting list for places of subvented pre-school rehabilitation services. The subsidy will enable these children to receive appropriate training and treatment directly from special child care workers, psychologists, occupational therapists, physiologists and speech therapists while waiting for the subvented services. It is estimated that about 4 200 people will benefit from the one-year programme.

(8) Providing a one-off subsidy of \$2,000 for Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) recipients who are Tenant Purchase Scheme flat owners for five years or above to lessen their financial burden. It is estimated that around 1 300 households will benefit from the programme.

(9) Providing a one-off subsidy of \$1,000 (for one-person households) or \$2,000 (for families with a household size of two or above) for CSSA recipients living in private housing to ease their burden arising from cyclical rental increase. It is estimated that around 23 000 households will benefit from the programme.

(10) Providing a subsidy to meet lunch expenses for full-time primary students from

low-income families for one academic year. It will assist these students in obtaining adequate food at school and enabling the children's families to utilise financial resources for other purpose, thereby easing their financial burden. It is estimated that around 51 000 people will benefit from the programme.

The other three programmes of which details are being worked out are related to the provision of after-school care services, financial assistance on dental services for the elderly including dentures, as well as language courses for new arrivals from the Mainland and ethnic minorities.

The Steering Committee plans to seek funding approval from the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council on May 6 for the \$5 billion injection into the Fund.

Mr Tang said that the programmes announced today were only the beginning of a series of assistance programmes. For the other programmes which have not been included at this stage, the Fund will continue to study them with the benefit of views from various sectors, with a view to enhancing the programmes.

Details of the assistance programmes are available on the website of the Community Care Fund ([www.communitycarefund.hk](http://www.communitycarefund.hk)).

Ends/Wednesday, April 20, 2011

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