

Social Welfare

The government helps 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 95 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 2016-17, the department's total recurrent expenditure was \$61.5 billion, of which \$41.7 billion, or 67.8 per cent, was for financial assistance payments, \$14.5 billion (23.6 per cent) was for recurrent subventions to non-governmental organisations (NGOs), \$1.9 billion (3.1 per cent) was for other payments for welfare services, and the remaining \$3.4 billion (5.5 per cent) was for departmental expenditure.

Social Welfare Services

Services for Families

Family services help preserve and strengthen the family as a unit, improve relationships among family members, enable individuals to prevent and deal with personal and family problems, and assist families by providing suitable services to meet their own needs.

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 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, with 3,781 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 child care. At the year end, child care centres had about 33,000 places, of which about 7,000 were government-subsidised. The department was funding another 434 Occasional Child Care Service places and 2,254 Extended Hours Service places at these centres. It also subsidises the Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project, which provides at least 954 places for needy families to receive flexible child care services from volunteers. The department is conducting a consultancy study to advise within 2018 on the long-term development of child care services.

The department's two-year Pilot Project on Child Care Training for Grandparents, launched in 2016 with funding from the Lotteries Fund, seeks to strengthen family ties between generations, enhance child care and reinforce support for nuclear families by enabling grandparents to become well-trained child carers at home. It also promotes active ageing of grandparents through life-long learning. The 27 training courses, with a total enrolment of 589 trainees, were completed in 2017.

Services for Young People

The department subsidises NGOs to provide young people aged between six and 24, including those at risk, with preventive, supportive and remedial services.

Integrated Children and Youth Services Centres

There are 139 integrated children and youth services centres (ICYSCs), providing centre-based, outreach and school social work services to address young people's developmental needs.

Outreach

Nineteen youth outreach teams serve 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 2017, 560 school social workers were provided for 464 secondary schools to help students with academic, social and emotional problems.

Juvenile Delinquents

Five NGO-operated Community Support Service Scheme teams help young people who are subject to a Police Superintendent's Discretion Scheme (PSDS). The Family Conference Scheme, run jointly by the SWD and the police, helps juveniles who have been 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 treatment and rehabilitation centres under the Drug Dependent Persons Treatment and Rehabilitation Centres (Licensing) Ordinance, and provides practical guidelines and professional advice on licensing requirements to safeguard the well-being of the drug-dependent residents.

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, and offers community support to help them age in place. The department provides subsidised residential care for those who have long-term care needs but cannot receive adequate care at home.

Through the Opportunities for the Elderly Project, the department encourages elderly people to take part actively in community affairs and in building an age-friendly community. It subsidised 548 programmes with government grants totalling about \$13.4 million in the 2016-18 phase.

Senior Citizen Cards allow their holders to enjoy concessions, discounts and priority service provided by public and private organisations and government departments. There were 1.16 million cardholders as at end-2017.

Community Care and Support

Various schemes under the department lend help to about 45,000 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 75 day care centres and units for the elderly to support those living at home. The second phase of the Pilot Scheme on Community Care Service Vouchers for the Elderly, serving all 18 districts, offers 5,000 vouchers allowing eligible elderly people to choose the services that suit their individual needs.

The department also subvents 211 elderly centres and a holiday centre for the elderly. Its six-year Improvement Programme of Elderly Centres, launched in 2012 through the Lotteries Fund,

has been enhancing the physical settings and facilities of 237 elderly centres. By end-2017, about \$816 million had been approved under the Lotteries Fund for 215 elderly centres. Upgrading works on 143 of the centres had been completed and these had reopened for service with a new look.

Residential Care

At the year end, there were 27,378 subsidised residential care places at residential care homes for the elderly (RCHes). A Pilot Scheme on Residential Care Service Voucher for the Elderly was launched in March to offer elderly people an additional choice and provide an incentive for RCHes to enhance their services. A total of 3,000 vouchers will be issued in batches from 2017 to 2019 under the pilot scheme.

RCHes are licensed under the Residential Care Homes (Elderly Persons) Ordinance. The department provides practice guidelines and staff training on the proper care of elderly residents. It set up a working group in June to review the Residential Care Homes (Elderly Persons) Ordinance, Residential Care Homes (Persons with Disabilities) Ordinance and related Codes of Practice.

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 eligible carers with a living allowance to supplement their expenses so elderly people with long-term care needs may, with their carers' help, receive proper care and remain living in the community. The whole scheme will apply to 4,000 carers.

Dementia Community Support Scheme

In February, the Food and Health Bureau, the SWD and the Hospital Authority launched a two-year pilot Dementia Community Support Scheme. The scheme provides services for elderly people with mild or moderate dementia and their carers through 20 district elderly community centres via a medical-social collaboration model and is expected to cover 2,000 people.

Services for Persons with Disabilities

Rehabilitation services are provided by government departments and NGOs to meet the different needs of people with disabilities, develop their capabilities and help them integrate into society.

Children with Special Needs

At the year end, there were 1,980 integrated programme places in kindergarten-cum-child care centres; 1,834 places in special child care centres, including 110 residential places; and 3,304 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 Training Subsidy Programme to acquire self-financing

training provided by NGOs while awaiting the subvented services. From 1 October, the means test has been waived for eligible children on the special child care centre waiting list who are applying for a subsidy. The programme provided 2,947 training places in 2017.

Those on the waiting list may also apply for a Pilot Scheme on On-site Pre-school Rehabilitation Services, which is supported by the Lotteries Fund. 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 these 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. Upon completion, the scheme will be regularised from the 2018-19 school year in phases. The government has commissioned a consulting team headed by the Department of Applied Social Sciences at the City University of Hong Kong to evaluate the scheme so as to make recommendations on the regularised services.

Adults with Disabilities

In 2017, day activity centres offered 5,198 day training places for people with intellectual disabilities. The department provided 1,633 supported employment places for people with disabilities to work in open settings with assistance, 432 places under an On the Job Training Programme for People with Disabilities, and 311 places for young people 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 4,507 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.

As at the year end, more than \$111 million had been allocated to 33 NGOs under an Enhancing Employment of People with Disabilities through Small Enterprise Project, enabling them to set up 115 small businesses providing about 844 job opportunities for people with disabilities. In tandem, the Marketing Consultancy Office (Rehabilitation) helps NGOs set up those small businesses and promotes products and services provided by people with disabilities under the brand, 'Let Them Shine'.

A Support Programme for Employees with Disabilities gives employers a one-off subsidy of up to \$20,000 per employee with disabilities to pay for 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 2017, there were 8,527 places in hostels and care homes providing residential care for people with disabilities who were unable to live independently in the community, or whose families could not care for them adequately. Another 600 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 people with disabilities.

Professional Support

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

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

Day and residential respite services for people with disabilities, occasional child care for pre-schoolers with disabilities and resource centres for parents and other relatives are also available. Social and recreational centres for the disabled encourage people with disabilities to join community leisure activities.

Through the Lotteries Fund, the department is running a two-year Pilot Project on Peer Support Service in Community Psychiatric Service Units and a 30-month Pilot Project on Strengthening Support for Persons with Autism and their Parents/Carers, both launched in 2016.

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 3,118 offenders through a probation service and arranged for 2,433 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, 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 835 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 192,340 cases in 2017.

Clinical Psychological Services

In 2017, 55 clinical psychologists from the department and NGOs provided 2,928 psychological assessments and 23,069 treatment sessions for 2,573 people.

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 households, especially those with children, to encourage self-reliance and to ease inter-generational poverty. A household of two or more members that meets the working hour requirement and the income and asset limits may apply for the allowance. Each eligible child may also receive a Child Allowance. The scheme opened for applications in 2016. In 2017, more than 45,800 applications were approved out of about 56,800 received, granting allowances totalling around \$529 million to about 31,400 households and 114,800 individuals, including around 50,800 children and youths.

The government completed a policy review of the scheme in 2017. It expects to start implementing on 1 April 2018 a series of enhancements, which include extending the scheme to one-person households, relaxing the income limits and working hour requirements and increasing the allowance. The scheme will be renamed the Working Family Allowance Scheme.

Social Security

The Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (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 Scheme, Traffic Accident Victims Assistance Scheme and Emergency Relief Fund. 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. As at end-2017, there were 232,134 CSSA cases involving 336,681 beneficiaries. Total expenditure was about \$21.7 billion in 2017, an increase of 1 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. Up till end-2017, 87,131 CSSA recipients had taken part in the programme.

Social Security Allowance

The non-contributory SSA Scheme comprises the Old Age Allowance (OAA); Disability Allowance (DA), consisting of Normal DA and Higher DA; Old Age Living Allowance (OALA) and the Guangdong Scheme. OAA and DA provide non-means-tested cash allowances to elderly people aged 70 or above and people with severe disabilities respectively. OALA supplements the living expenses of elderly people aged 65 or above who have financial needs. The Guangdong Scheme provides monthly OAA to elderly people aged 65 or above who choose to live in Guangdong.

The government announced four new initiatives in January: relaxing the OALA asset limits from 1 May to benefit more elderly people with financial needs; rolling out a Higher OALA in 2018 for elderly people with greater financial needs; for one year from 1 July, repeating a special arrangement under the Guangdong Scheme that exempts elderly people residing in Guangdong from the requirement of having lived in Hong Kong continuously for at least one year before applying for the scheme; and introducing a Fujian Scheme in 2018 to provide monthly OAA for elderly people who choose to live in Fujian.

There were 883,000 SSA recipients as at end-2017, with a total expenditure of about \$23.2 billion during the year, an 8.2 per cent increase over 2016.

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 SSA, Low-income Working Family Allowance and the Work Incentive Transport Subsidy Scheme.

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 \$4.82 million in 2017. 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 \$241.6 million during the year.

Emergency Relief

Meals or cash in lieu of meals 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 207 victims of 20 disasters in 2017.

Social Security Appeal Board

The board considers appeals against the department's decisions on CSSA, SSA and Traffic Accident Victims Assistance. It ruled on 350 appeals in 2017.

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 2017, 126 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, 165 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 department monitors the output, outcome and service quality of the subvented organisations through the Service Performance Monitoring System, reviewing regular self-assessment reports submitted by NGOs and conducting review and surprise visits. The Lump Sum Grant Independent Complaints Handling Committee handles complaints that cannot be addressed satisfactorily at the NGO level.

The government reviews and introduces measures to optimise the grant arrangements from time to time. The department set up a task force in November to review enhancements of the system. The task force comprises Legislative Council members; representatives from the Hong Kong Council of Social Service and NGO management, staff and service users; Lump Sum Grant-related committees; independent individuals; the Labour and Welfare Bureau and the department. The scope of the review is to be established, after which the review is expected to be completed in two years.

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 2017, about \$171 million was approved for 124 NGOs to implement such projects.

Partnership Fund for the 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 2017, this fund allocated about \$35 million for 49 welfare NGOs and schools to implement 75 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 various sectors, and builds cross-sectoral collaborative platforms and mutual help networks for a caring Hong Kong. In 2017, it allocated \$60.55 million to 28 new projects. Ongoing projects recorded about 113,500 participants, including about 20,200 volunteers, and about 1,020 collaboration partners. Together, they built about 160 mutual support 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. As at end-2017, the fund had 24 assistance programmes operating under its auspices, with a commitment of around \$4.5 billion benefiting about 250,000 cases. These included pilot programmes introduced to help the government identify measures that could be considered for incorporation into its regular assistance and service programmes. Twelve such programmes have been incorporated into the government's regular assistance programmes since the fund was set up in 2011.

Child Development Fund

The Child Development Fund provides children from disadvantaged backgrounds with personal development opportunities. Through the fund's projects, operated by either NGOs or schools, participants draw up and implement their own development plans under guidance and learn to accumulate savings and intangible assets, such as a positive attitude, personal resilience and social networks, thus helping their long-term development. In 2017, there were 54 ongoing NGO-run projects and 34 school-based projects, of which 11 school-based projects involving more than 600 new participants were launched in the year.

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 2017, the committee offered advice to the government on social welfare initiatives announced in the January and October Policy

Addresses and on suggestions about welfare priority in 2018-19, 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. In June, the commission submitted to the government an Elderly Services Programme Plan which included recommendations on the future development of elderly services amid an ageing population. In the 2016-17 school year, about 130 elder academies in primary and secondary schools and tertiary institutions operated 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 an enabling environment, the empowerment of women and public education. It advises the government on policies and initiatives of concern to women to ensure their perspectives are taken into account when policy bureaux formulate government policies.

The commission's Gender Mainstreaming Checklist is an analytical tool to help the government incorporate gender needs and perspectives systematically into policy formulation and programme development. All bureaux and departments are required to refer to the checklist and apply gender mainstreaming when formulating major policies and initiatives. The government also provides training to civil servants on gender issues.

To promote gender mainstreaming to various sectors, the commission runs a network of focal points that serve as contacts in their organisations to raise awareness of gender issues and encourage the use of the checklist at work. The network covers 75 bureaux and departments, 120 NGOs, the 18 District Councils and 168 listed companies.

The commission's Funding Scheme for Women's Development supports women's groups and NGOs to organise activities.

Rehabilitation Advisory Committee

The Rehabilitation Advisory Committee is the principal advisory body to the government on the well-being of people with disabilities and on 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 people with disabilities and the employment support services provided by government departments and rehabilitation organisations.

The committee coordinates public education programmes on rehabilitation. In 2017, 43 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 3,100 organisations and more than 1.29 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