



Social Welfare

The Social Welfare Department (SWD) is responsible for implementing the Government's policies on social welfare and for developing and co-ordinating social welfare services. These include social security, family and child welfare services, medical social services, group and community work, services for young people, services for the elderly, rehabilitation services for people with disabilities, as well as services for young offenders.

In 2009-10, the estimated expenditure of SWD is \$39.1 billion. Of the \$39.1 billion, \$27.2 billion is for financial assistance payments, \$8.6 billion is for recurrent subventions to non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the remaining balance of \$3.3 billion is for departmental expenditure which included \$0.7 billion for hire of services. The Lotteries Fund is a major source of capital funding for NGOs. In 2009-10, the estimated expenditure of Lotteries Fund is \$1.8 billion.

Social Security: Social Security is a government responsibility provided mainly through non-contributory schemes. There are five social security schemes administered by SWD.

The Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme (CSSA) provides cash assistance to bring the income of needy household up to a prescribed level to meet basic livelihood needs. Payments can be broadly classified into three types: different standard rates to meet the basic and general needs of broad categories of recipients; special grants to meet particular needs of individual recipients, such as rent, essential travelling expenses, school fees and special diets; long-term supplement, single-parent supplement, community living supplement and transport supplement for specific categories of recipients. Able-bodied unemployed recipients have to join the Support for Self-reliance Scheme which aims to help them become more self-reliant through the provision of individualised employment-related services. Elderly recipients meeting the prescribed criteria can continue to receive cash assistance under the Portable CSSA Scheme if they choose to retire to Guangdong or Fujian Province.

The Social Security Allowance Scheme comprises Old Age Allowance and Disability Allowance. It provides a flat-rate allowance to meet the special needs of the elderly and the severely disabled. Applicants for Old Age Allowance aged 65-69 are subject to a means test while those aged 70 and above are eligible regardless of their means. Disability Allowance is for those who suffer a disability broadly equivalent to a total loss of earning capacity.

The Criminal and Law Enforcement Injuries Compensation Scheme provides cash assistance for people injured or for dependants of those killed in crimes of violence, or through the action of a law enforcement officer using a weapon in the execution of his duty.

The Traffic Accident Victims Assistance Scheme offers speedy financial assistance for people injured or for dependants of those killed in road traffic accidents.

Emergency Relief, in the form of cooked meals (or cash grant in lieu of cooked meals) and other essential articles, is provided for victims of natural and other disasters.

An independent Social Security Appeal Board, comprising non-government members, provides a means of redress for any person not satisfied with the decision of the SWD in respect of eligibility and payment of social security benefits.

Family and Child Welfare Services: SWD and NGOs provide a variety of family and child welfare services with the objective of preserving and strengthening the family as a unit. There is an extensive network of 61 integrated family service centres and two integrated services centres operated by SWD and NGOs over the territory to provide a continuum of preventive, supportive and remedial services including family life education, parent-child activities, enquiry service, volunteer training, outreaching service, mutual support groups, counseling and referral service for individuals or families in need, with extended hour services.

The Family and Child Protective Services Units provide services for families having problems of spouse battering, child abuse and child custody disputes. Four refuge centres for women provide emergency shelter for battered women and their children in face of domestic violence or other crisis. There are integrated services teams for street sleepers, temporary shelters and urban hostels for street sleepers and homeless persons.

On child welfare, SWD and NGOs provide a wide range of services including day and residential service for children and young persons who are in need of care or protection. The Child Care Centres Advisory Inspectorate is responsible for the registration, control and inspection of day child care centres for children under three and residential child care centres for children under six. The means-tested Kindergarten and Child Care Centre Fee Remission Scheme administered by the Student Financial Assistance Agency of the Education Bureau helps families with social need to place their children in full day child care centres.

Together with Accredited Bodies for adoption services, the Adoption Unit arranges local and overseas adoption, while the Central Foster Care Unit promotes and co-ordinates the recruitment of foster homes and development of foster care.

Through a wide range of educational and promotional programmes, family life education aims to maintain and strengthen family functioning. A Family Life Education Resource Centre provides resource materials in support of the service.

SWD's hotline service provides 24-hour information on social welfare services. Social workers are available during specified hours to provide immediate counselling and support. Outside the duty hours of the social workers, callers can choose to transfer their calls to the Hotline and Outreaching Service Team for assistance from social workers.

Medical Social Services: SWD operates 33 medical social services units in some public hospitals and specialist clinics under the Hospital Authority and in some out-patient clinics under the Department of Health. Medical social workers provide patients and their families with individual and group counselling, financial aid, housing assistance or referral to other community resources to facilitate their treatment, rehabilitation and re-integration into society.

Group and Community Work Services: The services aim at developing the character, self-reliance, and responsibility of individuals and groups, and improving their ability in tackling community problems as well as the quality of community life. NGOs provide group and community work service in 13 community centres and 18 neighbourhood level community development projects and one care and support networking team. SWD Central Office for Volunteer Service launches the "Volunteer Movement" with a mission to build a more caring community.

Services for Young People: A total of 136 integrated children and youth services centres are operated by NGOs to offer a holistic and integrated mode of service to young people. Services provided include personal guidance and counselling, supportive services for young people in disadvantaged circumstances, socialisation programmes as well as activities on the development of social responsibility and competence. SWD's Planning and Co-ordinating Teams promote and co-ordinate youth development services in the districts. SWD provides school social work services for 486 secondary schools through 34 NGOs to help students develop their potential and assist them in coping with academic, social and emotional problems. To promote the holistic development of the young people, SWD has been engaged to implement the P.A.T.H.S. to Adulthood: A Jockey Club Youth Enhancement Scheme, which is a project funded by the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust, from the 2005/06 school year to the 2011/12 school year.

Sixteen district youth outreaching social work teams of NGOs provide counselling, guidance and other social work services to young people who normally do not participate in conventional social or youth activities and are vulnerable to undesirable influences. In addition, special needs of young people are met by services like Community Support Service Scheme and counselling centres for psychotropic substance abusers. SWD's Licensing Office of Drug Dependents Treatment Centres is responsible for licensing, control and inspection of drug dependent persons treatment and rehabilitation centres.

Rehabilitation Services: SWD and NGOs provide a comprehensive network of rehabilitation services for people with physical or mental disabilities and ex-mentally ill persons, including early education and training centres, special child care centres and integrated programme in kindergarten-cum-child care centres for the care and training of disabled children; day activity centres, sheltered workshops, supported employment, integrated vocational rehabilitation services centres, integrated vocational training centres, On the Job Training Programme for People with Disabilities, Sunnyway - On the Job Training Programme for Young People with Disabilities for the training and employment of disabled adults, Extended Care Programme, and Work Extension Programme; and

hostels for physically/mentally handicapped persons, care and attention homes for severely disabled persons, halfway house and long stay care home for ex-mentally ill persons and care and attention home for the aged blind to provide residential care to those disabled persons in need.

To assist the rehabilitation of the disabled and their integration into the community, NGOs are providing various after care/support services to the disabled and their families. They include residential respite service, training and activity centre for the ex-mentally ill persons, Community Mental Health Link, Community Mental Health Care Services, Community Mental Health Intervention Project, Integrated Community Centre for Mental Wellness, district support centres for persons with disabilities, community support projects for persons with disabilities, day care service for persons with severe disabilities, community rehabilitation day centres, transitional care and support centre for tetraplegic patients, social and recreational centres for the disabled, parents/relatives resource centres and community rehabilitation network services centres, gateway clubs, etc. In addition, the Marketing Consultancy Office (Rehabilitation) in SWD is set up to promote the working abilities of people with disabilities and enhance their employment opportunities; the CyberAble.net, a barrier free portal website, to provide one-stop information for people with different disabilities; and the Registration Office of Private Residential Care Homes for Persons with Disabilities to conduct consultation and preparatory work for the introduction of a licensing scheme to regulate all residential care homes for persons with disabilities.

Services for the Elders: SWD plans and co-ordinates the operation of community care and support and residential care services for elders. A wide range of community care and support services, including district elderly community centres, neighbourhood elderly centres, social centres for the elderly, day care centres/units for the elderly, enhanced home and community care services, integrated home care services, home help service and support teams for the elderly, are provided to enable elderly persons to remain in the community for as long as possible. Different types of subsidised residential care facilities including self-care hostels, homes for the aged, care and attention homes and nursing homes are operated to meet the varying needs of elderly persons who, because of health, social or other reasons, can no longer live with their families or on their own. Starting from 2005/06, self-care hostels and homes for the aged have gradually been phased out and converted into care and attention places providing continuum of care. Since November 2003, SWD has implemented the Central Waiting List for Subsidised Long Term Care Services so that elders may approach a single point to apply for subsidised community care and residential care services. Elder applicants will be arranged standardised assessment to ascertain their care needs and be matched with appropriate long term care services.

The Licensing Office of Residential Care Homes for the Elderly (LORCHE) of SWD is responsible for enforcing the Residential Care Homes (Elderly Persons) Ordinance. Under the ordinance, residential care homes are required to comply with the legislative requirements before they are issued a licence to operate. SWD also administers a series of measures to encourage operators of residential care homes to improve service standards and to promote private sector participation in providing quality residential care for the elderly.

The Senior Citizen Card Office issues senior citizen cards to elderly persons aged 65 or above, entitling them to concessions, discount and priority services offered by companies, organisations and government departments. Opportunities for the Elderly Project is run by providing

subsidies to community organisations to implement innovative programmes to achieve a sense of worthiness among elders and to create a spirit of care for elders in the community.

Services for Offenders: SWD uses the social work approach in the treatment and rehabilitation of offenders through Probation Service, Community Service Orders Scheme, Community Support Service Scheme, residential training and aftercare services. Probation service is provided in 12 probation offices which serve all Magistrates' Courts, the District Court and the High Court. Probation officers prepare social enquiry reports on the offenders' background as requested by the courts and on petitioning and long-term prisoners. They provide probation supervision and guidance through social work methods for a period specified under a probation order so that offenders may be rehabilitated within the community. The Community Service Orders Scheme provides the courts with the option to order offenders aged 14 and above, who are convicted of an offence punishable by imprisonment, to perform unpaid work of benefit to the community in place

of, or in addition to, any other sentence. The Community Support Service Scheme provides training and structural activities as supportive service to probationers and young offenders under residential training for their rehabilitation.

SWD provides residential service and rehabilitation training for juvenile offenders and children in need of care or protection in a purpose built training complex. It serves the statutory functions of a place of refuge, a remand home, a place of detention, an approved institution (probation home) and a reformatory school.

SWD also works jointly with the Correctional Services Department. The Young Offender Assessment Panel provides judges and magistrates with assistance in the form of recommendations on the most appropriate programme of social rehabilitation for convicted young offenders aged between 14 and under 25. The Post-Release Supervision of Prisoners Scheme provides statutory supervision and social work inputs to assist discharged prisoners to rehabilitate and reintegrate into society. NGOs are providing counselling, employment, accommodation and other supportive services to discharged prisoners and ex-offenders.