



## 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, services for the elderly, family and child welfare services, medical social services, group and community work, services for young people, rehabilitation services for people with disabilities, as well as services for offenders.

In 2015-16, the total estimated expenditure of SWD is \$58.3 billion. Among the sum, \$40.1 billion is for financial assistance payments, \$13.0 billion is for recurrent subventions to non-governmental organisations (NGOs), \$1.9 billion for other payment for welfare services and the remaining balance of \$3.3 billion is for departmental expenditure. The Lotteries Fund is a source of capital funding for NGOs. In 2015-16, the estimated expenditure of Lotteries Fund is \$0.9 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 (CSSA) Scheme* provides cash assistance to bring the income of needy households 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, transport supplement and residential care supplement for specific categories of recipients. Able-bodied recipients have to join the Support for Self-reliance Scheme which aims to help them become 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 (SSA) Scheme* comprises Old Age Allowance (including Guangdong Scheme), Disability Allowance and Old Age Living Allowance. Old Age Allowance and Disability Allowance provide a flat-rate allowance to Hong Kong residents who are 70 years of age or above or who are severely disabled to meet their special needs arising from old age or disability respectively. Old Age Living Allowance aims to provide a special allowance per month to supplement the living expenses of Hong Kong residents aged 65 or above who are in need of financial support. The Guangdong Scheme is to provide Old Age Allowance for eligible Hong Kong elderly persons aged 65 or above who choose to reside in Guangdong without requiring them to return to Hong Kong each

year. Except for the Old Age Living Allowance and Guangdong Scheme (applicable to applicants aged 65 to 69), the allowances paid under the Scheme are non-means-tested.

*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 65 integrated family service centres and two integrated services centres operated by SWD and NGOs over the territory to provide a spectrum of preventive, supportive and remedial services including family life education, parent-child activities, enquiry service, volunteer training, outreaching service groups and programmes, counseling and referral services for individuals and families in need, with extended hours service on some weekday evenings and Saturdays.

The Family and Child Protective Services Units of SWD provide services for families having problems of spouse/ cohabitant battering, child abuse and child custody disputes. Five refuge centres for women, a multi-purpose crisis intervention and support centre and a family crisis support centre provide emergency shelter, temporary accommodation and integrated package of services for individuals and families in face of domestic violence or in 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 day and residential care services 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 child care centres for children aged under three and residential child care centres for children aged under six. The means-tested Kindergarten and Child Care Centre Fee Remission Scheme administered by the Student Finance Office of

the Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency helps families with social needs 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 multi-media 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 operated by an NGO for assistance from social workers.

**Medical Social Services:** SWD operates 34 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.

**Community Development Services:** The services aim at promoting a sense of belonging in the community through social work services which encourage people to identify their social needs and mobilise community resources to solve their problems. NGOs provide community development services in 13 community centres and 17 neighbourhood level community development projects and one care and support networking team.

**Services for Young People:** A total of 138 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 468 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. To promote the healthy development of junior secondary students, especially those who have not participated in the Project before and with greater psychosocial needs, SWD has launched a community-based youth enhancement programme since 2013 under the funding support of the Trust.

Nineteen youth outreaching teams and 18 outreaching service for young night drifters 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 the Community Support Service Scheme, Counselling Centres for Psychotropic Substance Abusers and

Centres for Drug Counselling. 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 persons with physical or intellectual disabilities and emotionally ill persons, including early education and training centres, special child care centres, integrated programme in kindergarten-cum-child care centres and small group homes for mildly mentally handicapped children/integrated small group homes for the care and training of disabled children; day activity centres, sheltered workshops, supported employment services, 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, Extended Care Programme, and Work Extension Programme for the training and vocational rehabilitation services of disabled adults, and hostels for physically/mentally handicapped persons, care and attention homes for severely disabled persons, halfway houses and long stay care homes for emotionally ill persons and care and attention homes for the aged blind to provide residential care for those persons with disabilities in need. The operation of residential care homes for persons with disabilities (RCHDs) is subject to control by the Licensing Office of Residential Care Homes for Persons with Disabilities (LORCHD) under the Residential Care Homes (Persons with Disabilities) Ordinance. LORCHD also encourages operators to enhance the service quality of RCHDs through various means, including the implementation of the "Bought Place Scheme for Private RCHDs" and organising training programmes for the staff of RCHDs.

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. These include day and residential respite service, integrated community centres 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, home care service for persons with severe disabilities, integrated support service for persons with severe physical disabilities, community rehabilitation day centres, a transitional care and support centre for tetraplegic patients, social and recreational centres for the disabled, parents/relatives resource centres as well as the community rehabilitation network and gateway club. In addition, SWD has set up the Marketing Consultancy Office (Rehabilitation) to promote the work abilities of persons with disabilities. The launching of "Enhancing Employment of People with Disabilities through Small Enterprise" Project aims to assist NGOs in setting up small businesses to creating employment opportunities for persons with disabilities; the Support Programme for Employees with Disabilities aims to provide subsidy to employers for procurement of assistive devices and/or workplace modifications to facilitate employees with disabilities in discharging their duties at the workplace and to enhance their work efficiency; the CyberAble.net, a barrier free portal website, provides one-stop information for persons with different disabilities.

**Services for the Elderly:** SWD plans and co-ordinates the operation of community care and support services and residential care services for elderly persons. 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 stay in the familiar 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, nursing homes and contract homes are provided 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. Self-care hostels and homes for the aged are gradually phased out and converted into care and attention homes providing a continuum of care. SWD implements the Central Waiting List for Subsidised Long Term Care Services so that elderly persons may approach a single point to apply for subsidised community care and residential care services. Standardised assessment will be arranged for elderly applicants to ascertain their care needs and then match those eligible elderly persons with appropriate long term care services.

The Licensing Office of Residential Care Homes for the Elderly 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 elderly persons.

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 elderly persons and to create a spirit of care for elderly persons in the community.

**Services for Offenders:** SWD uses the social work approach in providing community-based rehabilitation services for offenders through Probation Service,

Community Service Orders Scheme, residential training and aftercare services. There are seven Probation and Community Service Orders Offices and the High Court and District Court Probation Office serving all Magistrates' Courts, the District Courts and the High Court. Probation Officers prepare social enquiry reports on the offenders and make recommendations 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 community-based sentencing 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.

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.

**Promotion of Volunteer Services:** SWD's Central Office for Volunteer Service serves to build up a community with mutual care and concern through the territory-wide "Volunteer Movement", with the theme "Volunteering – New Attitude to Life!" from 2011 onwards.