

# Poverty Alleviation, Care for the Elderly and Support for the Disadvantaged



- Published the first official poverty line in September 2013, and outlined the poverty alleviation blueprint of the current-term Government in the 2014 Policy Address based on the poverty data analysis. The blueprint comprises the pro-employment and pro-child Low-income Working Families Allowance (LIFA) and a range of measures to promote the upward mobility of young people from grassroots families and support the disadvantaged groups.
- Announced in January 2014 the implementation of LIFA in 2015 to relieve the financial burden of low-income working families not receiving Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA), encourage sustained employment and promote upward mobility among the children and young members of these families. The estimated annual allowance amounts to about \$3.1 billion. The estimated number of beneficiary families is over 200 000, involving 710 000 people including 180 000 eligible children and young people in these families.
- Further raised the income and asset limits of the Work Incentive Transport Subsidy Scheme from the claim month of February 2014 onwards under the annual adjustment mechanism. Over 74 000 low-income earners have benefited from the Scheme since its introduction.
- Provide a subsidy of up to \$15,000 for needy students pursuing full-time undergraduate degree or sub-degree programmes to participate in overseas exchange programmes arranged by institutions from the 2014-15 academic year. About 9 800 students would benefit per annum.
- Regularised from January 2014 the arrangement allowing student loan borrowers to opt to repay their student loans one year after completion of studies. It is estimated that about 23 000 students would benefit per annum.
- Announced in January 2014 the provision of an additional \$300 million for the Child Development Fund to promote the long-term development of grassroots children.
- Strengthened collaboration with employers and training bodies since January 2014. So far, four employment pilot projects to provide young people with appropriate pre-employment training, on-the-job training and employment support services have been launched.
- Implemented the “Future Stars Programme” in collaboration with businesses and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in September 2013 to provide corporate visits and short-term workplace training and internship opportunities for young people from grassroots families.

- Approved eight new programmes under the Community Care Fund (CCF), including the implementation of a pilot incentive scheme to encourage able-bodied CSSA recipients to achieve self-reliance through employment, the provision of a living allowance to carers for the elderly who are from low-income families, providing hostel subsidy for needy undergraduate students, increasing the academic expenses grant for needy students pursuing eligible self-financing post-secondary programmes, and providing a one-off subsidy for low-income families not living in public rental housing and not receiving CSSA. The total commitment for the programmes is around \$1.65 billion, and it is estimated that over 680 000 persons would benefit.
- Regularised seven CCF programmes to provide assistance to needy families and low-income persons, including primary and secondary school students, children on the waiting list for subvented pre-school rehabilitation services, persons with severe physical disabilities living in the community and CSSA recipients who are Tenants Purchase Scheme flat owners. The estimated annual recurrent expenditure is around \$780 million, and it is estimated that over 400 000 people would benefit.
- Implemented a number of targeted CSSA improvement measures from 2014-15 onwards, including the enhancement of rent allowance arrangements for about 3 600 families at an estimated annual expenditure of about \$36 million.
- Extended the Public Transport Fare Concession Scheme for the Elderly and Eligible Persons with Disabilities (\$2 Scheme) to eligible children with disabilities aged below 12 in May 2014, and will extend the \$2 Scheme to cover green minibuses in phases starting from the first quarter of 2015. So far, the number of average daily passenger trips made by the elderly and eligible persons with disabilities on the MTR, buses and ferries has reached 700 000.
- Announced in January 2014 that the Elderly Commission would be tasked to formulate an Elderly Services Programme Plan in two years' time.
- Planned to review the Old Age Living Allowance (OALA) by end-2014 to ascertain, among other things, whether the asset limits should be relaxed and explore the feasibility of extending the OALA to Guangdong in light of the experience with the Guangdong Scheme.
- Increased the annual recurrent provision by \$160 million from 2014-15 onwards to upgrade 51 social centres for the elderly to neighbourhood elderly centres and increase the manpower and programme expenses of all 211 subvented elderly centres.
- Rolled out the two-year first phase of the Pilot Scheme on Community Care Service Voucher for the Elderly in September 2013. By adopting a "money-following-the-user" approach, the Pilot Scheme enables eligible elderly people to choose community care services that suit their individual needs. As at end-May 2014, some 1 210 elderly persons had joined the Pilot Scheme.
- Increased the annual recurrent provision by over \$200 million from 2014-15 onwards to raise the subsidies for places under the Enhanced Bought Place Scheme and the Nursing Home Place Purchase Scheme, upgrade subvented nursing home places to provide continuum of care, and enhance the service of three new contract homes. These would involve a total of 1 810 subsidised places.
- Continued to adopt a multi-pronged approach to increase the provision of subsidised residential care places for elderly persons, including the implementation of a pilot scheme to purchase residential care places from two elderly homes run by Hong Kong NGOs in Guangdong to provide an option for elderly persons waitlisted for subsidised places at their own choice. It is expected that over 1 580 new subsidised residential care places will be provided from 2014-15 to 2016-17.
- Announced in January 2014 that the Elderly Commission would be tasked to explore the feasibility of introducing residential care service vouchers for the elderly in a year's time.
- Injected \$50 million into the Elder Academy Development Foundation in March 2014 to promote the sustainable development of the Elder Academy Scheme.
- Planned to launch by end-June 2014 a pilot scheme to provide a living allowance to carers from low-income families who take care of their frail elderly members at home.
- Announced in January 2014 an additional 6 200 places for rehabilitation services for persons with disabilities during the term of this Government. These include 2 016 places for day training and vocational rehabilitation, 2 713 places for residential care and 1 471 places for pre-school rehabilitation services.
- Allocated an additional \$40 million annually from 2014-15 onwards to regularise the Pilot Bought Place Scheme for Private Residential Care Homes for Persons with Disabilities. The cap of subsidised places in each home would be raised from 55% to 70%, and the number of bought places increased from 300 to 450.
- Allocated an additional annual provision of about \$42 million from 2014-15 onwards to strengthen community support for persons with disabilities, including 442 additional places of short-term day and residential care services for persons with disabilities aged six or above; increasing the manpower of the District Support Centres for Persons with Disabilities and introducing a case management service approach; enhancing sign language interpretation services for persons with hearing impairment; and facilitating the development of self-help groups.

- Regularised and extended the Home Care Service for Persons with Severe Disabilities in March 2014 to cover persons with severe disabilities in all districts, regardless of whether they are on the waiting list for residential care service for persons with disabilities. The service, with an estimated annual expenditure of about \$200 million, would benefit about 3 250 persons with severe disabilities.
- Increased the manpower of day training centres for persons with disabilities from 2014-15 onwards to strengthen the care and support for ageing service users. Additional annual expenditure is about \$93 million.
- Allocated an additional \$9.3 million annually from 2014-15 onwards to strengthen the manpower of the Integrated Community Centres for Mental Wellness, with a view to dovetailing it with the Case Management Programme implemented by the Hospital Authority (HA). Together with the resources injected in the past, the total amount of resources allocated for these centres would be about \$205 million per annum.
- Injected \$200 million into the Hong Kong Paralympians Fund in February 2014 to strengthen support for athletes with disabilities.
- Launched the “Talent-Wise Employment Charter” and Inclusive Organisations Recognition Scheme in September 2013 to mobilise the Government, public and private sectors to make collective efforts to promote the employment of persons with disabilities. As at May 2014, over 260 organisations had participated in the Scheme.
- To provide the “Chinese Language Curriculum Second Language Learning Framework” to schools for implementation from the 2014-15 school year to help non-Chinese speaking students overcome difficulties in learning Chinese, and substantially increased the enhanced funding support to schools to about \$200 million. Relevant professional support would also be enhanced.
- Commenced preparations to introduce an Applied Learning (Chinese) subject for non-Chinese speaking students at senior secondary levels in January 2015, the contents of which would be pegged at Levels 1 to 3 of the Qualifications Framework. The results of the subject would be recorded in the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education for the purposes of further studies and employment.
- Commenced preparations to strengthen community support for ethnic minorities in the second half of 2014, including setting up a new support service centre for ethnic minorities in Kwai Tsing, setting up youth units in all support service centres and sub-centres for ethnic minorities, implementing a youth ambassador scheme and recruiting additional staff familiar with ethnic minority cultures and languages.
- To provide, from the 2014-15 school year, additional teacher assistants to schools for children with intellectual disability, physical disability, and visual impairment cum intellectual disability as well as the psychiatric classes of hospital schools; progressively reduced the class size in schools for children with visual impairment and schools for social development to 12 students per class; increased the staff of boarding sections; and provided an additional grant to enhance the support for boarders with medical complexity. About 7 500 students of special schools would benefit.
- Further enhanced support for students with special educational needs in government and aided primary and secondary schools by increasing the grant rates of the Learning Support Grant by 30% from the 2014-15 school year, and adjusting the grant rates and its ceiling annually according to the change in the Composite Consumer Price Index. More than 30 000 students would benefit.
- Announced in January 2014 the injection of \$400 million into the Partnership Fund for the Disadvantaged, of which \$200 million would be dedicated to launching more after-school learning and support programmes for primary and secondary students from grassroots families.
- Implemented in January 2014 the “Bless Hong Kong Campaign” activities to promote caring for the underprivileged and the spirit of mutual help, and foster collaboration amongst businesses, NGOs and the Government in poverty alleviation.
- Transferred \$10 billion to the Lotteries Fund in March 2014 to provide sufficient resources to implement the Special Scheme on Privately Owned Sites for Welfare Uses. Under this Special Scheme, welfare NGOs are encouraged to make better use of their land through in-situ expansion or redevelopment, especially to provide additional facilities for elderly and rehabilitation services. If all 63 preliminary proposals can be fully implemented, about 17 000 additional service places would be provided for the elderly and persons with disabilities.
- Implemented the Navigation Scheme for Young Persons in Care Services in phases from 2014-15 to provide 1 000 training places for young people in elderly and rehabilitation services units and subsidies for those young people to pursue related studies.
- The two working groups of the Standard Working Hours Committee are conducting wide public consultation and comprehensive working hours surveys, with a view to submitting their reports to the Committee by end-2014 for further deliberation.
- Introduced a bill in March 2014 to provide three days of paid paternity leave.