

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, community development services, services for young people, rehabilitation services for people with disabilities, as well as services for offenders.

In 2024-25, the total estimated expenditure of SWD is \$120.1 billion. Among the sum, \$80.3 billion is for financial assistance payments, \$26.7 billion is for recurrent subventions to non-governmental organisations (NGOs), \$7.2 billion is for other payment for welfare services and the remaining balance of \$5.9 billion is for departmental and other expenditure. The Lotteries Fund is a source of capital funding for NGOs. In 2024-25, the estimated expenditure of Lotteries Fund is \$4.1 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 financial 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, grant for selected items of school related expenses and special diets etc.; long-term supplement, single parent supplement, community living supplement, transport supplement, residential care supplement and employment support supplement for specific categories of recipients. Able-bodied adult applicants/ recipients have to join the Support for Self-reliance Scheme which aims to help them become self-reliant through the provision of employment support 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, Disability Allowance (including Normal Disability Allowance and Higher Disability Allowance) and Old Age Living Allowance, Guangdong Scheme and Fujian Scheme. Old Age Allowance and Disability Allowance provide a monthly 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 and Fujian Scheme are to provide Old Age Allowance or Old Age Living Allowance for eligible Hong Kong elderly persons who

choose to reside in Guangdong or Fujian without requiring them to return to Hong Kong each year. Except for the applicants of Old Age Living Allowance, persons applying for allowances under the Scheme are not required to go through a means test.

The Criminal and Law Enforcement Injuries Compensation Scheme provides financial 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 food (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 or subvented NGOs provide a variety of family and child welfare services with the objective of preserving and strengthening the family as a unit. The 65 Integrated Family Service Centres and two Integrated Services Centres operated by SWD or NGOs provide a spectrum of preventive, supportive and remedial services including family life education, parent-child activities, enquiry service, volunteer training and service, outreaching service groups and programmes, counselling and referral services for individuals and families in need.

The 11 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. Five Specialised Co-parenting Support Centres provide support service for separated / divorced families. There are integrated services teams for street sleepers, temporary shelters and urban hostels for street sleepers and homeless persons.

To assist parents who cannot take care of their young children because of work or other reasons, SWD subsidises NGOs to provide different types of day child care services, to meet the needs of the parents and their young children. The services include child care centre service, occasional child care service, extended hours service, Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project and after school care programme, etc. Social Work Service for Pre-primary Institutions provide stationing social work service to all subsidised pre-primary

institutions in Hong Kong for early identification and assistance to pre-primary children and their families with welfare needs.

On child welfare, SWD and NGOs provide a wide range of residential care services for children and young persons who are in need of care or protection. The Central Foster Care Unit promotes and co-ordinates the recruitment of foster homes as well as co-ordinates the foster care agencies to provide foster care for needy children. Together with Accredited Bodies for adoption services, the Adoption Unit arranges local and overseas adoption for children awaiting adoption.

Through a wide range of educational and promotional programmes, family life education aims to enhance family functioning, strengthen family relationship and prevent family breakdown.

SWD's hotline service provides 24-hour information on social welfare services. Social workers of SWD are available during specified hours to provide immediate counselling and support. Outside the duty hours of the SWD 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 36 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 total 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 139 integrated children and youth services centres are operated by NGOs adopting a total person and community approach to meet the multifarious needs of children and youth. Services provided include personal guidance and counselling, supportive services for young people in disadvantaged circumstances, developmental and socialisation programmes as well as community engagement programmes. SWD's Planning and Co-ordinating Teams promote and co-ordinate youth development services in the districts. SWD provides school social work service for 459 secondary schools through 33 NGOs to help students develop their potential and assist them in coping with academic, social and emotional problems.

The 19 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.

Besides, five Cyber Youth Support Teams provide professional social work intervention for at-risk and hidden youths including online and offline counselling and group/programme services. In addition, through the Community Support Service Scheme, the young people cautioned under the Police Superintendent's Discretion Scheme, the arrested youth and their peers are served by five NGOs. Regarding drug treatment and rehabilitation services, NGOs operate residential services including non-medical voluntary drug treatment and rehabilitation centres and half-way houses for ex-drug abusers, and community-based services including counselling centres for psychotropic substance abusers and centres for drug counselling.

Rehabilitation Services: SWD and NGOs provide a comprehensive network of rehabilitation services for persons with physical or intellectual disabilities and persons in mental recovery, including early education and training centres, special child care centres, integrated programme in kindergarten-cum-child care centres, on-site pre-school rehabilitation services and small group homes for mildly mentally handicapped children/integrated small group homes for mildly mentally handicapped children for the care and training of disabled children; day activity centres, sheltered workshops, supported employment training for persons with disabilities, integrated vocational rehabilitation services centres, integrated vocational training centres, 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 persons in mental recovery and care and attention homes for the aged blind to provide residential care for those persons with disabilities 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. These include day and residential respite service, integrated community centres for mental wellness, district support centres for persons with disabilities, community-based 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, support centre for persons with autism, the community rehabilitation network as well as the mobile van for publicity service on mental wellness. SWD has set up the "Enhancing Employment of People with Disabilities through Small Enterprise" Project which aims to assist NGOs in setting up small businesses to create 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 Information Technology

Scheme for People with Visual Impairment to support persons with visual impairment in the acquisition of equipment/devices to facilitate access to a wide variety of information; the CyberAble.net, a barrier free portal website, provides one-stop information for persons with different disabilities. In addition, the \$1 billion "Innovation and Technology Fund for Application in Elderly and Rehabilitation Care" has also been set up for subsidising elderly and rehabilitation service units to procure, rent and try out technology products in order to improve the quality of life of the service users and reduce the burden and pressure of care staff and carers. To promote participation of persons with disabilities in arts activities and foster their arts development, SWD has set up the Arts Development Fund for Persons with Disabilities to subsidise eligible organisations for organising elementary or continuing arts programmes and help those with artistic potential to strive for excellence and develop their career. To provide reliable and affordable trust services to the parents of children with special needs, SWD has set up the Special Needs Trust, with the Director of Social Welfare Incorporated as the trustee, for managing the assets of deceased parents. Regular disbursements will be made to the carers of their children in accordance with the parents' wishes to ensure that their assets will be used for meeting the long-term daily needs of their children.

Besides, SWD has launched the 24-hour Designated Hotline for Carer Support to provide information on community support services, instant consultation and emotional support, counselling service, outreaching and referral service, etc. for supporting carers of the elderly and persons with 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 centre for the elderly, day care centres/units for the elderly, enhanced home and community care services, integrated home care services, and support teams for the elderly, are provided to enable elderly persons to stay in the familiar community for as long as possible. SWD also provides residential care and facilities for elders aged 65 or above who, for personal, social, health and/or other reasons cannot adequately be taken care of at home. Subsidised places of different care levels including care and attention places and nursing home places are provided at subvented homes, contract homes, private homes participating in the "Enhanced Bought Place Scheme" and self-financing homes under the "Nursing Home Place Purchase Scheme" 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 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.

Licensing and Regulation: SWD through its Licensing and Regulation Branch is responsible for the administration of the licensing or registration schemes in respect of residential care homes for the elderly (RCHEs), residential care homes for persons with disabilities (RCHDs), drug dependent persons treatment and rehabilitation centres, and child care centres, in accordance with the relevant legislation of Hong Kong. The objectives of licensing and regulation are to ensure that the above four types of residential care homes or centres comply with the legislative requirements with a view to providing an acceptable standard of services. In parallel with the strengthened regulation of the operations of RCHEs and RCHDs, the Branch also implements a series of measures with a view to enhancing their service quality.

Services for Offenders: SWD uses social work approach in providing community-based statutory supervision and guidance 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 and the District Courts and the High Court respectively. Probation Officers prepare social enquiry reports on offenders and make recommendations as requested by the court and on petitioning and long-term prisoners making appeals. Probation Officers provide probation supervision and counselling for probationers according to conditions specified in probation orders. The Community Service Orders Scheme provides the court with another 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 training for children/juveniles with behavioural problems or involved in offences in a purpose-built training complex. It serves the statutory functions of a place of refuge, a remand home, a place of detention for young illegal immigrants, an approved institution (probation home) and a reformatory school, and provides temporary custody and residential training for children/juveniles who are in need of care or protection, involved in offences or illegal immigrants.

SWD works jointly with the Correctional Services Department in delivering services for offenders. The Young Offender Assessment Panel formed by the two departments consolidates views of different professionals and recommends to the court the most appropriate programme of social rehabilitation for convicted young offenders. SWD provides adult discharged prisoners of Post-release Supervision of Prisoners Scheme with guidance and counselling to help them reintegrate into society and lead a law-abiding life.

NGOs also provide counselling, employment, accommodation and other supportive services for discharged prisoners and ex-offenders.