

## New Employment Support Supplement to encourage CSSA able-bodied adult recipients aged between 60 and 64 to engage in employment

The Government today (January 18) announced that starting from February 1 a new Employment Support Supplement (at a fixed rate of \$1,060 per person per month) under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme would be provided to able-bodied adult recipients aged between 60 and 64 with a view to encouraging them to join the labour market and remain in employment.

A Government spokesman said, "From February 1, the eligible age for elderly CSSA will be adjusted from 60 to 65 and the Social Welfare Department (SWD) will provide the Employment Support Supplement to able-bodied adult recipients aged between 60 and 64 to provide better employment support for persons affected by the adjustment.

"The amount of Employment Support Supplement will be set at the difference between the monthly CSSA standard rates applicable to singleton elderly and singleton able-bodied adult recipients, which is a fixed rate of \$1,060 per person per month from February 1. The amount will be adjusted annually according to the established mechanism. The new supplement seeks to encourage able-bodied adult recipients aged between 60 and 64 to join the labour market. It is also applicable to employed able-bodied adult recipients in this age group to support them to remain in employment. Apart from this new supplement, these recipients are also eligible for other assistance applicable to able-bodied adult recipients."

The Government is committed to providing support for the employment of mature persons, and its efforts include staging large-scale thematic job fairs and district-based job fairs on part-time employment. The Labour Department also enhanced the Employment Programme for the Middle-aged, which has become the Employment Programme for the Elderly and Middle-aged, to encourage employers to hire mature persons through an on-the-job training allowance. Furthermore, the Employees Retraining Board has been providing suitable courses for mature persons. Mature persons may also make use of the Continuing Education Fund to further their learning. In addition, the SWD will extend the existing services under the Integrated Employment Assistance Programme for Self-reliance for 12 months from April 1 this year. The programme will provide comprehensive employment support for able-bodied adult recipients aged between 60 and 64.

The Government announced in the Policy Address in January 2017 a package of social security measures including the adjustment of the eligible age for elderly CSSA from 60 to 65. Other measures, including raising the asset limits for the Normal Old Age Living Allowance, and introducing the Higher

Old Age Living Allowance and the Fujian Scheme, have been implemented.

As stated by the Government earlier, the redefinition of elderly CSSA from 60 to 65 is premised upon the improved life expectancy of the population in Hong Kong and the trend of extending the retirement age to 65. Persons aged between 60 and 64 who have received elderly CSSA before February 1 this year will be "grandfathered" and will not be affected. The CSSA payments of disabled persons or persons in ill health will not be affected either. They will, regardless of age, continue to receive CSSA payments which are higher than those applicable to able-bodied adults.

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## [Transcript of remarks at press conference on labour and welfare measures \(with photos/video\)](#)

The Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, held a press conference today (January 18) on the implementation of a range of labour and welfare measures. Joining her were the Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, Mr James Lau; the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong; the Director of Social Welfare, Ms Carol Yip; and the Principal Assistant Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury (Treasury), Ms Tracy Chu. Following is the transcript of remarks at the press conference:

Reporter: So, Mrs Lam, you always claim you are not shying away from difficult topics and will not take a populist route. As you said, there are sound rationale behind the policy change, so how would you respond to criticism that you indeed backed down just under huge public pressure? So are you taking a populist route? And the second question is on the figures. So any estimates that how many people would apply for the new supplement and how much is the total cost of the policy change? Thank you.

Chief Executive: Let me answer the second question first. As I said, for CSSA recipients aged 60 to 64, in addition to receiving the standard rate, they will receive this Employment Support Supplement (ESS). There is no procedure to apply. It will be disbursed at the same time with the standard rate on almost a permanent and perpetual basis, so as long as he or she receives the standard rate, he or she will receive the ESS. That's hand in hand, given to them in recognition of the special circumstances of an elderly person trying to find a job, so there is no process. And we don't have any estimate because the whole purpose of initiating this change is driven by population policy. It's to respond to the general aspiration that we should extend people's working life, which we had. We had extended the retirement age for new civil servants serving civil service. We had extended the working life of the security guards up to 70 by amending the legislation. This is one of those

measures, and perhaps one of the final measures in that package, to address the ageing issue and also to extend people's working life. We don't have an estimate of how much we will save as a result of that, so for the same reason we don't have any estimate of how much we will pay out as a result of the ESS. The simple calculation is whatever the number of applicants coming to our Social Welfare Department eligible to receive this CSSA as able-bodied 60 to 64, then we will disburse the supplement to them.

As far as the first question, which is concerning governance, as I've said at the beginning, every policy initiative has two sides to it. One is the justifications of why you want to do this – the purpose, the objective, the justifications – and very often it's based on evidence, based on some consultations. Decision has been made for the three measures based on those deliberations. But implementation of a policy initiative requires much detailed analysis and planning in order to mitigate any adverse impact on the affected people – that's only normal – and also to resonate well with the objective of doing that. For example, the objective of improving the terms and conditions of employment of the non-skilled workers in the government service contract is to help these very grass-root workers, so why should we be so concerned about awarding a contract before the first of April and putting these people on a two-year, three-year basis so that they could not enjoy the new terms? That is an implementation issue which could be mitigated through very careful and meticulous planning.

What I am saying and confessing today is in the actual implementation and planning, there is room for improvement. And on today's announcement of improvement measures to ensure more effective and more compassionate implementation of the policy initiatives, I will not regard that as backing down or yielding to pressure or being populist. Had I known this two months ago before all these issues have caught public concern, I would probably have done the same thing, but unfortunately, and you have to appreciate that, as the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong SAR it is now no longer possible for me to be so hands-on in every detail of implementation. So as long as I know and as soon as I know – and I'm not blaming the colleagues because they have rules to follow, there are financial rules and procurement rules to follow and there are computer systems to handle – as the Chief Executive I could make all those decisions, on money, on technical matters and on things like that. That's why I have made that decision to introduce the improvement measures to smooth out the implementation of these three policy initiatives.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript.)



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## [Exhibition to showcase works by Art Specialist Course 2018-19 graduates \(with photos\)](#)

The Hong Kong Visual Arts Centre of the Art Promotion Office is holding the "Art Specialist Course 2018-19 Graduation Exhibition" from today (January 18) to February 2. The exhibition showcases 23 graduates' achievements to share their creative ideas and enable the public to appreciate inventive contemporary art pieces created by up-and-coming artists.

The opening ceremony was held today. Officiating guests included the Acting Deputy Director of Leisure and Cultural Services (Culture), Mr Chan Shing-wai; the Art Specialist Course (Painting) Course Coordinator, Ms Wong Wai-yin; and the Art Specialist Course (Printmaking) Course Coordinator, Ms Jane Liu.

The Art Specialist Course 2018-19 covers the disciplines of painting and printmaking, which are co-ordinated by experienced artists Wong and Liu respectively. Established local artists are also invited to teach specific topics and take the students out of the classroom to visit exhibitions and artists' studios, as well as to conduct outdoor studies. The painting course takes a progressive approach which enables students to explore the possibilities of painting. The printmaking course introduces traditional and contemporary printmaking through theoretical and practical training, and helps students to explore their creative development and build up their own styles.

The new courses for 2019-20 are now open for application. They include Art Specialist Courses in ink painting, ceramics and sculpture, as well as Advanced Specialist Courses in painting and printmaking. The deadline for application is February 24.



For enquiries about the exhibition and application, please call 3101 2734 or visit [https://www.lcsd.gov.hk/CE/Museum/AP0/en\\_US/web/apo/va\\_art\\_specialist\\_course\\_1819.html](https://www.lcsd.gov.hk/CE/Museum/AP0/en_US/web/apo/va_art_specialist_course_1819.html).

The Hong Kong Visual Arts Centre is located at 7A Kennedy Road, Central.



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## [Immigration Department combats Mainland visitors abusing transit](#)

## arrangement for holders of PRC passports

Two Mainland visitors were convicted of making false representation to Immigration Officers and jailed at Shatin Magistrates' Courts on January 11 and today (January 18).

The two Mainland visitors comprised one man and one woman aged 28 and 21 respectively. They were arrested in an operation codenamed "Breakshadow" by the Immigration Department (ImmD) on January 9. The operation tackled abuses by Mainland visitors of the existing transit arrangement for holders of People's Republic of China (PRC) passports. Upon arrival for immigration clearance at Lo Wu Control Point and Shenzhen Bay Control Point respectively, the two Mainland visitors falsely told Immigration Officers that they were transiting through Hong Kong to other countries. The ImmD officer found that their onward flight tickets were invalid and therefore arrested them. Upon further investigation, they admitted that their actual purpose of visit was not to transit via Hong Kong to other countries but sightseeing in Hong Kong.

The two arrested Mainland visitors were charged with making false representation to Immigration Officers. They pleaded guilty and were sentenced to three months' and four months' imprisonment respectively.

The ImmD spokesman warned that, under the laws of Hong Kong, any person who makes false representation to an Immigration Officer commits an offence. Offenders are liable to prosecution and, upon conviction, the maximum penalty will be a fine of \$150,000 and imprisonment for 14 years. In addition, if Mainland visitors abuse the existing transit arrangement for holders of PRC passports by not departing for other countries or territories according to their original itinerary, relevant information will be recorded by the ImmD. Upon their next arrival, ImmD officers at control points will conduct detailed examination before a decision to grant or refuse permission to land is made.

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## CFS follows up on incident of imported prepackaged smoked salmon suspected to be contaminated with Listeria monocytogenes

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene

Department today (January 18) said that following further investigation on the incident of prepackaged smoked salmon imported from New Zealand suspected to be contaminated with *Listeria monocytogenes*, it was found that the importer concerned had imported another batch of affected smoked salmon based on the latest information. The CFS urged the public not to consume the product concerned and the trade should stop using or selling the affected product immediately if they possess it.

Details of the product are as follows:

Product name: Beech Wood Smoked Slices  
Brand: Regal New Zealand King Salmon  
Place of origin: New Zealand  
Manufacturer: The New Zealand King Salmon Co Ltd  
Importer: PARKnSHOP (HK) Limited  
Net weight: 100 grams per pack  
Batch code: M362D  
Expiry date: February 1, 2019

"The CFS announced yesterday (January 17) that a batch of the above product was to be recalled due to possible contamination with *Listeria monocytogenes*. The CFS' follow-up investigation found that the importer concerned had also imported 240 packs of the same kind of affected product but with a different expiry date and some of it was sold. The CFS has instructed the importer to also stop sale of the above-mentioned product and remove it from shelves, and initiated a recall. Enquiries about the recall can be made to the importer's hotline at 2606 8658 during office hours," a spokesman for the CFS said.

"*Listeria monocytogenes* can be easily destroyed by cooking but can survive and multiply at refrigerator temperature. Most healthy individuals do not develop symptoms or only have mild symptoms like fever, muscle pain, headache, nausea, vomiting or diarrhoea when infected. However, severe complications such as septicaemia, meningitis or even death may occur in newborns, the elderly and those with a weaker immune system. Although infected pregnant women may just experience mild symptoms generally, the infection of *Listeria monocytogenes* may cause miscarriage, infant death, preterm birth, or severe infection in newborns," the spokesman said.

The spokesman urged consumers not to consume the affected product if they have bought it. The trade should also stop using or selling the product concerned immediately if they possess it.

The CFS will alert the trade to the incident, continue to follow up and take appropriate action. Investigation is ongoing.