

Government spokesman's response to media enquiries

In response to media enquiries on the meeting between the Acting Chief Executive, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung, and the pan-democratic members of the Legislative Council today (January 24), a Government spokesman responded as follows:

The Acting Chief Executive, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung; the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong; the Director of the Chief Executive's Office, Mr Chan Kwok-ki, and representatives from relevant government departments this afternoon met pan-democratic members of the Legislative Council for 1 hour 15 minutes and had a candid dialogue to clarify misunderstandings on the measure to adjust the eligible age for elderly Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) from 60 to 65.

The Government spokesman reiterated that the aim of adjusting the eligible age for elderly CSSA from 60 to 65 is not to cut expenses, but to encourage able-bodied adults aged up to 64 to engage in employment by extending CSSA employment support services to them. The Government will introduce a new Employment Support Supplement under the CSSA Scheme to provide able-bodied adult recipient aged 60 to 64 with a monthly sum of \$1,060 per recipient to encourage them to join the labour market and remain in employment. The Government will closely monitor the implementation of the measure, continuously listen to different views and explore areas for improvement during the process.

Moreover, the Social Welfare Department will assist these CSSA recipients to participate in the Integrated Employment Assistance Programme for Self-reliance operated by non-governmental organisations (NGOs). NGOs will assist these recipients in a caring manner, help them get access to up-to-date labour market information, arrange job matching, assess their needs and provide them with tailor-made and focused employment assistance services. The main objective of the above arrangement is to assist the able-bodied CSSA recipients aged 60 to 64 in joining the workforce, not forcing them to find jobs.

The Government spokesman also clarified that all persons with disabilities or persons in ill health and their family carers, or single parents and child carers with their youngest child aged below 12, do not have to participate in the employment support programme. Persons aged 60 to 64 who have received elderly CSSA before February 1, 2019, or had received elderly CSSA before and re-apply for CSSA also do not have to participate in the programme.