

Raising social security payments and implementing a series of improvement measures to CSSA Scheme from February

The Social Welfare Department (SWD) announced today (January 27) that the standard payment rates under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme and the rates of Old Age Allowance (OAA) (including OAA under the Guangdong (GD) Scheme and the Fujian (FJ) Scheme), Old Age Living Allowance (OALA) (including OALA under the GD Scheme and the FJ Scheme) and Disability Allowance under the Social Security Allowance (SSA) Scheme will be increased from February 1 this year. On the same day, a series of improvement measures to the CSSA Scheme will also be implemented, including enhancements to the Disregarded Earnings (DE) arrangement and extending a range of special grants to eligible non-elderly able-bodied recipients.

An SWD spokesman said, "Based on the established adjustment mechanism, i.e. according to the movement of the Social Security Assistance Index of Prices, the Government earlier proposed to increase the above rates by 2.7 per cent (see Annex I). The proposal has been approved by the Legislative Council Finance Committee and will take effect on February 1. An additional expenditure of \$1.448 billion per year will be incurred for the adjustment, benefiting some 1.38 million recipients of the above Schemes."

The spokesman added, "According to the established mechanism, the maximum rent allowance under the CSSA Scheme will also be adjusted upwards by 1.6 per cent on the same day (see Annex II) based on the movement of the Consumer Price Index (A) rent index for private housing."

In addition, following the Government's completion of a review on the "pro-employment" measures and other measures under the CSSA Scheme in 2019, the Chief Executive's 2019 Policy Address announced a series of improvement measures to the CSSA Scheme. The relevant funding proposal has been approved by the Legislative Council Finance Committee on May 29, 2020.

The spokesman said that the SWD has been implementing a series of improvement measures to the CSSA Scheme by phases, including the enhancement of the Employment Support Services and effecting a one-off increase in the maximum rent allowance as well as extending the coverage of the "Community Living Supplement" to eligible non-elderly able-bodied recipients from 2020. On February 1 this year, the SWD will implement the remaining improvement measures, including raising the maximum level of DE under the CSSA Scheme from \$2,500 per month to \$4,000 per month and increasing the maximum level of earnings to be totally disregarded from a new job from the first month's income to a maximum of the first two months' income every two years (see Annex III); as well as extending a range of special grants to eligible non-elderly able-bodied recipients (see Annex IV).

CSSA and SSA recipients who have enquiries may contact their respective

social security field units or call the SWD hotline at 2343 2255.