

**Existing and planned measures
on the promotion of racial equality
Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency**

The Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency (WFSFAA), underpinned by the Student Finance Office (SFO) and the Working Family Allowance Office (WFAO), is committed to providing dedicated financial assistance to needy families in Hong Kong, supporting children and youths receiving education and encouraging working families to stay in active employment.

The WFSFAA attaches great importance to providing accessible information and services to people of diverse race. Measures to promote racial equality and equal access of our services for people of diverse race are set out below.

**Services
Concerned**

- To support needy families through various student financial assistance schemes applicable to pre-primary, primary and secondary levels.
- To encourage self-reliance and ease inter-generational poverty through the Working Family Allowance (WFA) Scheme¹.
- Through the Individual-based Work Incentive Transport Subsidy (I-WITS) Scheme, to help low-income earners reduce their cost of travelling to and from work and encourage them to secure or stay in employment.

**Existing
Measures**

(A) Publicity of Financial Assistance Schemes

- Information on student financial assistance schemes applicable to pre-primary, primary and secondary levels; the WFA and I-WITS

¹ The Low-income Working Family Allowance was renamed as the Working Family Allowance (WFA) Scheme with effect from 1 April 2018.

schemes is published in eight languages² in addition to Chinese and English on the respective websites of SFO and WFAO. A short cut icon on “Support Services for People of Diverse Race” is also available in the two websites to facilitate quick access.

- Promotional leaflets/posters, and sample forms for the schemes translated into eight languages other than Chinese and English are available to the public at Home Affairs Enquiry Centres, District Offices of Social Welfare Department and WFSFAA’s enquiry counters, and can be downloaded from the website of SFO for student financial assistance schemes and that of WFAO for WFA and I-WITS schemes. Promotional leaflets for student financial assistance schemes are also available at Maternal and Child Health Centres under Department of Health and Regional Education Offices of Education Bureau and are distributed to parents/students of different races through schools, kindergartens, child care centres and support service centres, while those for the WFA and I-WITS Schemes are also available at the service counters of the Labour Department. Information on the WFA Scheme has also been covered in radio programmes and newspapers in languages other than Chinese and English for promotion to the general public.
- Student financial assistance schemes and WFA Scheme are also introduced to people of diverse race through the booklet “Your Guide to Services in Hong Kong” published in six other languages by the Home Affairs Department.

² The eight languages include Bahasa Indonesia, Hindi, Nepali, Punjabi, Tagalog, Thai, Urdu and Vietnamese.

- Through briefings, WFSFAA introduces the details of the student financial assistance schemes, and WFA and I-WITS Schemes to people of diverse race and briefs them how to complete the application forms. Interpretation services are made available to them during the briefings whenever the need arises. The hotline/counter services of WFSFAA and translation and interpretation services are also introduced to people of diverse race at the briefings.
- The various assistance schemes are also introduced to the people of diverse race through the Support Services Centres for Ethnic Minorities funded by the Home Affairs Department and/or on-going territory-wide outreaching services to organisations for people of diverse race including participation in special programmes/events e.g. job fairs for people of diverse race.

(B) Enquiry and Application Support

- Enquiry hotlines³ (<2802 2345> for SFO and <2558 3000> for WFAO) provide enquirers of diverse race with access to telephone interpretation service free of charge with the assistance of the Centre for Harmony and Enhancement of Ethnic Minority Residents (CHEER) under the Hong Kong Christian Service so as to facilitate their application enquiries. CHEER also provides on-sight interpretation services to people of diverse race free of charge.

³ When people of diverse race call the above-mentioned enquiry hotlines and select “Other languages” in the voice system or, no any language is being selected within the time limit, the call will be transferred to staff of CHEER in order to provide timely and convenient telephone interpretation service.

- Information sheets in eight other languages with contacts of respective financial assistance schemes and the Support Services Centres for Ethnic Minorities funded by the Home Affairs Department are prominently displayed in the enquiry counters of WFSFAA for visitors of diverse race, and are also enclosed in the letters seeking supplementary information from applicants of diverse race for their reference.
- A CHEER language identification card, which shows the CHEER Centre's Telephone Interpretation Services Hotline numbers for the interpretation services in eight other languages, is displayed at the counters to facilitate staff to make proper arrangement for people of diverse race if interpretation service is required. The people of diverse race could indicate the language they speak by pointing to the language identification card, and our staff can help make a call to the hotline so the people with diverse race can communicate with our staff.
- WFSFAA will arrange for interpretation service as necessary when providing service for people of diverse race at the counters or in the course of processing their applications. Moreover, various support service centres (including CHEER Centre, HOME Centre, HOPE Centre, LINK Centre, SHINE Centre, TOUCH Centre and Yuen Long Town Hall Support Service Centre for Ethnic Minorities) are invited to provide assistance to people of diverse race, such as to introduce them the various assistance schemes, to provide guidance on completing the application form and to translate for them relevant documents related to the application.

(C) Staff Training

- WFSFAA provides staff with regular training and the “Procedural Guide on Handling Enquiry from People of Diverse Race” as reference on how to handle enquiries from people of diverse race. Staff is also encouraged to attend other related trainings so as to enhance their understanding of the needs, cultural and religious background of applicants of diverse race.
- E-version of relevant guidelines and training materials is available for staff’s easy reference.

Assessment of Future Work

WFSFAA will continue to –

- collect data and statistics on use of services by people of diverse race for conducting studies to facilitate the formulation/assessment of policies and measures.
- solicit feedbacks and views from communities and organisations of diverse race on our services and possible improvements.
- regularly review feedbacks received on the interpretation services being provided to the people of diverse race to ensure their effectiveness.
- review services for people of diverse race from time to time for further improvements.
- solicit and review feedbacks and suggestions from staff on related training programmes and activities for review and improvements.

**Additional
Measures
Taken/To Be
Taken**

- To provide promotional leaflets and sample forms of the various assistance schemes, in eight other languages to facilitate applications from more people of diverse race.
- To translate the Personal Information Collection Statement into the aforesaid eight other languages so that applicants of diverse race may better understand the purpose for collecting their personal data when they apply for financial assistance, as well as their right to access and correct their personal data under the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance.

For enquiries concerning the existing and planned measures on the promotion of racial equality, please contact Mr Herman TSE, Chief Executive Officer (Change Management) of SFO via the following channels –

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**Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency
June 2021**