

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)1227/00-01
(These minutes have been
seen by the Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/WS

LegCo Panel on Welfare Services

Minutes of meeting
held on Monday, 12 March 2001 at 10:45 am
in Conference Room A of the Legislative Council Building

Members Present : Hon LAW Chi-kwong, JP (Chairman)
Hon CHAN Yuen-han (Deputy Chairman)
Hon David CHU Yu-lin
Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan
Hon LEE Cheuk-yan
Hon CHEUNG Man-kwong
Hon Mrs Sophie LEUNG LAU Yau-fun, SBS, JP
Dr Hon YEUNG Sum
Hon CHOY So-yuk
Hon LI Fung-ying, JP
Hon Henry WU King-cheong, BBS
Hon Michael MAK Kwok-fung
Hon WONG Sing-chi

Members Absent : Hon Fred LI Wah-ming, JP
Hon Frederick FUNG Kin-kee

Public Officers Attending : Item III
Mrs Carrie LAM, JP
Director of Social Welfare

Mr Robin GILL, JP
Deputy Secretary for Health and Welfare 3

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Miss Ann HON
Assistant Director of Social Welfare
(Youth/Human Resources Management)

Item IV

Mrs Carrie LAM, JP
Director of Social Welfare

Mr Robin GILL, JP
Deputy Secretary for Health and Welfare 3

Ms Ann LAU
Assistant Director of Social Welfare (Family and Child Welfare)

Item V

Mr Robin GILL, JP
Deputy Secretary for Health and Welfare 3

Mrs Patricia CHU, BBS, JP
Deputy Director of Social Welfare (Services)

Miss Diane WONG
Principal Assistant Secretary for Health and Welfare (Welfare) 2

Ms Ann LAU
Assistant Director of Social Welfare (Family and Child Welfare)

Prof Nelson CHOW
Consultant

Dr Joe LEUNG
Consultant

Clerk in Attendance : Ms Doris CHAN
Chief Assistant Secretary (2) 4

Staff in Attendance : Miss Mary SO
Senior Assistant Secretary (2) 8

I. Confirmation of minutes of meeting held on 12 February 2001
(LC Paper No. CB(2)1019/00-01)

The minutes were confirmed.

II. Date of next meeting and items for discussion
(LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1021/00-01(01) to (03))

2. Members agreed to discuss the following items at the next meeting to be held on 9 April 2001 -

- (a) Recent upsurge of street sleepers;
- (b) Regulation of private residential care homes for the elderly; and
- (c) Welfare issues in the Report of the HKSAR of the People's Republic of China in the light of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (the Report).

As the welfare issues covered in the Report were numerous, the Chairman requested members to inform the clerk within one week after the meeting as to which welfare issues they wished to discuss at the coming meeting.

3. Miss CHAN Yuen-han proposed and members agreed to discuss the issue of assistance for people afflicted with the hereditary retinal degenerative disease at a future meeting. As the issue was health-related, members agreed to invite members of the Panel on Health Services to attend the discussion of the issue. The Chairman undertook to liaise with the Administration as to whether it was in a position to discuss the issue in May 2001.

4. The Chairman said that as the Administration was not yet ready to discuss the issue of rehabilitation services for mental patients in April 2001, the joint meeting with the Panel on Health services would be deferred to a later date. The Chairman further said that he would liaise with the Administration on the timing for discussing the issues of welfare services for squatter areas in the New Territories and the implementation of Integrated Neighbourhood Projects in Old Urban Areas and whether these two issues should be discussed by the Panel on Home Affairs instead, having regard to the fact they were under the purview of the Home Affairs Bureau (HAB).

III. Services for young night drifters (LC Paper No. CB(2)1021/00-01(04))

5. At the invitation of the Chairman, Director of Social Welfare (DSW) briefed members on the Administration's paper which detailed the measures taken to address the needs of young night drifters (YNDs). DSW also introduced another paper from the Administration, tabled at the meeting, which outlined several initiatives announced by the Financial Secretary in the 2001/02 Budget Speech to target assistance towards youth-at-risk. In particular, DSW said that based on the experience of the two Youth Mobile Teams (YMTs) set up on a two-year pilot basis from October 1997 to September 1999 in meeting the needs of YNDs, the welfare sector was generally of the view that services for YNDs should best be incorporated into the service scope of mainstream outreaching social work teams (OSWTs)/integrated teams (ITs). To this end, apart from the plan to select eight ITs in key areas to tackle YNDs as announced in the 2000 Policy Address, an additional 10 ITs would be selected to expand the coverage of services for YNDs. As a back-up service for YNDs, the Social Welfare Department (SWD) was presently exploring the possibility of extending the existing residential services units to provide venues which could be used as a place of rest, cooling down and/or staying overnight for YNDs as well as a secure place for counselling. To date, SWD had reached an agreement with the Hong Kong Student Aid Society in making available the Holland Hostel in Kwun Tong for YNDs to stay overnight.

6. DSW further said that in order to render support for parents in discharging their duties in caring for and providing guidance to their children, the Administration had set aside an additional \$50 million to support parent education with a view to equipping parents with the skills essential for good parenting so as to help their children become healthy and responsible members of the community. A Steering Committee on Parent Education had been formed under ED with participation of representatives from the Education and Manpower Bureau, SWD, Department of Health, Home Affairs Department, non-government organisations (NGOs), parents, schools, local leaders etc. On enhancing support service for students, DSW said that the Administration had implemented the policy of 'one school social worker (SSW) for each secondary school' in August 2000. Secondary schools coming on stream in the next school year would automatically be provided with one full-time stationing SSW. DSW further said that the Administration would continue with the additional school-based support to seven large academically low achievement (ALA) schools at an extra annual extra cost of \$1.4 million. As the seven large ALA schools would be provided with their previous enhanced provision on a permanent basis, the Panel under the Steering Committee on School Social Work Service set up by SWD to monitor the provision of school social work service to these seven large ALA schools had therefore dissolved.

7. Responding to Mr WONG Sing-chi's enquiry as to the definition of YNDs,

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Assistant Director of Social Welfare (Youth/Human Resources Management) (ADSW(Y/HRM)) said that YNDs generally referred to youths who habitually loitered late at night at a particular spot on the streets. Responding to Mr WONG's further enquiry as to why youths roving on the streets late at night were not considered YNDs, ADSW(Y/MRM) said that to approach youths indiscriminately and counsel or escort them to go home and/or refer them to receive youth services for positive social and personal development etc might constitute harassment. Moreover, it would entail significant manpower to do so. In the Administration's contact with the local communities, the general message was that approaching youths staying out late at night on the streets to render assistance and counselling should be kept to the minimum. ADSW(Y/MRM) further said that the reason for targeting assistance to youths habitually loitering late at night at a particular spot on the streets was because this group generally had family and behavioral problems, which if such problems were left unattended, might lead them to become juvenile gangs and runaway youths.

8. DSW supplemented that there was no strict definition of YNDs, and that it was up to the outreaching social workers to use their professional judgment to identify which young people were at risk so that appropriate assistance could be given to them. For example, although the 18 ITs selected to tackle YNDs in key areas would generally targeted at those youngsters who habitually drifted the night away in a particular spot on the street, they would not rule out reaching out to youths, say, those who were known to use illegal drugs inside bars and dancing places. DSW further said that it was not the aim of the aforesaid 18 ITs to see that no young people would be loitering on the streets late at night, but to understand why they refused to go home and then try to resolve the problem by getting in touch with their parents and schools.

9. The Chairman enquired how the 18 ITs tasked to tackle YNDs would go about tracing the youth-at-risk, having regard to the facts that the area which each IT was required to cover was wide and that YNDs usually drifted from one night drifting spot to another in irregular timing. Although the adoption of an integrated approach to tackle YNDs was generally supported by the welfare sector, the Chairman said that some doubts remained as to whether such an approach was necessarily the best use of resources.

10. Responding to the Chairman's first question, DSW said that similar to the two YMTs, each of the 18 ITs tasked to tackle YNDs would be provided with a van and its social workers with mobile phones. In line with established practice, the provision of vans and mobile phones would be funded by the Lotteries Fund. As regards the Chairman's second question, DSW said that the Administration was presently in discussion with the welfare agencies providing youth services on development of a set of yardsticks to measure the efficacy and cost-effectiveness of using ITs to tackle YNDs. Any suggestions from members in this regard would be welcomed.

11. Noting that a screening tool for identifying potential at-risk youth was used in

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the 'The Understanding of Adolescent Project' (UAP), Miss LI Fung-ying enquired how such a tool was used to identify potential at-risk youth. Referring to paragraph 15 of the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. CB(2)1021/00-01(04)) which stated that starting from April 2001, 1 290 job opportunities would be provided in SWD and NGO service units for young school leavers who had just completed junior secondary education and had no job experience, Miss LI enquired about the nature and employment terms of these jobs.

12. DSW responded that the creation of the 1 290 jobs for young school leavers was one of the initiatives announced in the 2000 Policy Address to create additional job opportunities in areas of welfare support. She further said that although age could not be specified in the recruitment, it was expected that many of these jobs would be taken up by young people. Youngsters recruited to the jobs would be deployed as programme assistants to work in SWD and NGO units providing services to the elderly and people with disabilities, as well as in youth and community development work. These programme assistants would be paid \$5,000 a month and was required to work an 8-hour day. The aim of creating these 1 290 jobs was to provide young school leavers with some work experience and build up their self-confidence, so that they could eventually secure a job in the marketplace. In this connection, the NGOs concerned would be encouraged to release their programme assistants to pursue further part-time studies during daytime as far as practicable. Regarding the screening tool used in UAP to identify potential at-risk youth, DSW said that due regard had been given to avoid stigmatising the students identified to be at risk as juvenile delinquents. To this end, the screening tool had undergone numerous modifications and rectification since its implementation in 1994 in some secondary schools in Sha Tin. Through such efforts, a tailor-made primary preventive programme package for young people, their parents and teachers had been produced and tested with the aims of heightening the awareness of the parents on their children's problems, and enhancing the resilience of young people, parent-child relationship as well as communication skills. Upon confirmation of the predictive power of the screening tool and effectiveness of the primary preventive programme package of UAP, the Administration had pledged in the 2000 Policy Address to implement UAP in 40 secondary schools in 2001/02, and had announced in the 2001 Budget Speech to implement UAP in 200 secondary schools in phases over the next three years. Moreover, consideration would be given to extending the scheme to primary schools as soon as practicable. The screening tool to be used in primary schools would however need to be adjusted to suit the circumstances of primary schools.

13. Responding to Miss LI's further enquiry as to whether there was any mechanism to monitor the recruitment and training of programme assistants by NGOs, DSW responded said that although the creation of the 1 290 programme assistant jobs was targeted for implementation in April 2001, funding had been allocated to NGOs providing services to people with disabilities to recruit some 400 programme assistants

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since January 2001. DSW further said that the NGOs concerned were required to submit a monthly report to SWD on the progress made in recruiting programme assistants and other related matters. DSW pointed out that NGOs who had joined the Lump Sum Grant (LSG) subvention system would not be exempted from making such a monthly report to SWD. In other words, they were not allowed to divert the fund earmarked for recruiting programme assistants to other areas.

14. Miss CHAN Yuen-han enquired whether there was any duplication of resources in helping young people, having regard to the fact that there were the Youth Pre-employment Training Programme launched by Labour Department (LD), the apprentice programme provided by the Vocational Training Council (VTC) and the creation of 1 290 programme assistant posts by SWD. Miss CHAN further said that young people who failed to succeed in schools and happened to like to drift on the streets at night occasionally should not be looked on as youth-at-risk, as many of them were not juvenile delinquent and could still succeed in other endeavours if given the opportunities. She also said that SWD should implement more measures to prevent young people from going astray, rather than focusing its efforts on remedial measures.

15. DSW responded that there was no duplication of resources between the various initiatives implemented by LD, VTC and SWD to help unemployed young school leavers. DSW further said that as in any other systems, it was inevitable that some students would feel a sense of failure in the education system. However, in her view, such a sense of failure should not necessarily cause young people to go astray if appropriate guidance and attention could be given by their parents. DSW agreed that not all young people drifting the night away on the streets were youth-at-risk, as some of them might have a job or attend school during daytime. Nevertheless, the fact that they still drifted the night away on the streets did raise concern as to why they did not wish to go home. She assured members that the ITs tasked to provide services for youth-at-risk would use their professional judgment to decide who their target clients were and would not approach just any young people loitering on the streets late at night. On the suggestion of SWD implementing more measures to prevent young people from going astray, DSW said that arising from a fundamental review of youth expenditure, it had been clarified that SWD would focus on helping youth-at-risk whereas HAB would focus on youth development and civic education.

16. Miss CHAN remarked that relying on family to prevent their children from going astray would not work if the young people came from a broken family or that their parents had no time to take care of them because they had to earn money to make ends meet. DSW responded that as family was the most vital part of youth development, it was necessary to put the greatest responsibility on the family to provide a suitable environment for their children to grow up to become a responsible member of the community. DSW further said that although in some extreme cases a young person would be temporarily put in the care of a foster home if his/her family could no longer take care of him/her, this was not the mainstream of youth welfare

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services. To better help families in crisis, a series of initiatives to support families in crises would come on stream in the coming year.

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17. Dr YEUNG Sum suggested that young people who had been hired by the NGOs to become programme assistants should be given an orientation before embarking on the new job, as it had come to his knowledge that many programme assistants subsequently resigned because they did not expect that they had to provide nursing care to the elderly. DSW said that she was not aware of such a situation, as the programme assistants hired to date all worked at centers for people with disabilities. Nevertheless, as the number of programme assistants and care assistants totalled about 1 600, she agreed to discuss with the NGOs concerned about the possibility of holding an orientation for newcomers and organising meetings to enable sharing of information and experience.

18. Ms Cyd HO expressed concern over the piecemeal approach adopted by the Administration in dealing with the problem of YNDs. Notably, on the one hand it would increase the number of ITs to provide services to YNDs, but on the other hand it refused to introduce policies which would help to strengthen the family as a unit so that they might provide a suitable environment for the physical, emotional and social development of its members. For example, the Administration's reluctance to establish a minimum wage system had pushed many families into low-income group, and financial hardship was not conducive to the development of a harmonious environment. Ms HO further expressed concern about the lack of follow-up actions taken by SWD to help YNDs.

19. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that despite the shortcomings in the services provided to help YNDs, any effort in this regard should be supported as one young person saved from the brink of becoming a juvenile delinquent was still worthwhile. Mr CHEUNG further said that in essence there was no such thing as YNDs, as this group of young people were simply youth-at-risk. In this connection, he expressed support for adopting a multi-system cooperation approach through parents, teachers and the Police. Mr CHEUNG also said that although YNDs certainly warranted giving attention to, the Administration should not lose sight of the runaway youths who stood to expose themselves to more physical and moral danger if no timely intervention and assistance were given to them.

20. Mr WONG Sing-chi was of the view that services to YNDs should also be on a territory-wide basis, having regard to the fact that some YNDs preferred to wander from one place to another. Mr WONG further said that in view of the increasing number of young people seeking fun across the border in places such as Shenzhen, consideration should also be given to dispatching the ITs to observe the activities of these young people across the border.

21. Mrs Sophie LEUNG said that a mechanism should be put in place to assess the effectiveness of services for YNDs. One possible yardstick to assess such was the number of YNDs which had been saved from going astray. Mrs LEUNG further said that apart from parents, teachers and social workers, everyone who could come into

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contact with young people should give them proper guidance and advice in order to enhance their resilience.

22. Miss CHOY So-yuk said that she was concerned whether setting aside \$50 million to support parent education was adequate, having regard to the fact that part of the money would be used on conducting a publicity campaign to encourage families in distress to seek early professional assistance and promote positive ways to cope with adversity.

23. Responding to Miss CHOY's concern, DSW clarified that a separate funding of some \$900,000 had been earmarked for conducting the publicity campaign which would be launched in the coming months to encourage families in distress to seek early professional assistance and promote positive ways to cope with adversity. DSW further said that the Administration was presently still considering how the \$50 million should be used to support parent education. As regards the questions raised by Ms HO, DSW said that she could only speak on the range of services provided by SWD and NGOs to help young people which was comprehensive. For example, youth social workers provided general counselling to young people in need, the 65 Family Services Centres of SWD and NGOs provided family and child welfare services rendered assistance to strengthen and support families in distress, say, by referring them to receive clinical psychological services, the Family and Child Protective Services Unit provided early intervention, intensive casework and group work services for the protection of victims and other vulnerable family members involved in child abuse and spouse battering and launched public education programmes to enhance public awareness of the prevention of domestic violence; and the Social Security Branch of SWD provided financial assistance to families suffering financial hardship. DSW further said that she would seriously consider the suggestions put forward by Mrs LEUNG regarding putting in place a mechanism to assess the effectiveness of services to YNDs and that of Mr WONG of deploying some ITs to cover activities of YNDs on a territory-wide basis. Regarding the issue of youths who refused to go home and lived on the streets, DSW said that the Administration would brief members on the measures taken/would be taken to help this group of young people at the next Panel meeting when discussing the issue of the recent upsurge of street sleepers.

IV. Support for families in crisis

(LC Paper No. CB(2)1021/00-01(05))

24. DSW briefed members on the current position and future development of supportive services provided to families in crisis as detailed in the Administration's paper.

25. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that according to the figures from Hong Kong

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Caritas, about 80 cases of casualties due to extra-marital affairs occurred between 1998 and 2000. Among them, 30 people were killed and 50 were injured. Moreover, the number of cases received by Caritas's Hotline Service for Extra-marital Affairs had increased by 70% in one year and that there was a trend that women was increasingly found to be the party having extra-marital affairs. In this connection, Mr CHEUNG enquired how the Family Crisis Support Centre to be set up in 2001/02 would deal with the increasing number of extra-marital affairs and the casualties which came along with them. He further enquired about the number of cases of casualties due to extra-marital affairs which had been handled by SWD, as well as the number of cases seeking for help in coping with crisis arising from extra-marital affairs.

26. Miss CHAN Yuen-han expressed regret that the Administration had long neglected the importance of family welfare services. To remedy this situation, she hoped that the review of family welfare services would give due regard to the aggravated family problems brought about by economic recession and to families with newly arrived children and spouse.

27. Dr YEUNG Sum said that when encountering family crisis, the most vulnerable persons were often the children. In this connection, Dr YEUNG enquired about the actions which would be taken by the Administration to help the children facing family crisis. Noting that various government departments, such as Housing Department (HD), were involved in rendering assistance to families in crisis, Dr YEUNG was of the view that more coordinated efforts should be made in this regard.

28. DSW responded that at present the provision of services by SWD could not fully cater to the needs of family members facing marital crisis. In view of this and having regard to the rising number of extra-marital affairs cases which caused the breaking up of families and sometimes even casualties, SWD had therefore decided to commission an NGO to set up a Family Crisis Support Centre in 2001/02. The Centre would act as a focal point to tackle family crisis at an early stage by providing hotline service, short-term emergency intervention with overnight accommodation and temporary retreat. Services provided by the Centre would include a hotline, crisis intervention and focused counselling service provided by social workers, programmes in managing stress and enhancing problem-solving skills, etc. DSW pointed out that unlike the refuge centres run by SWD which provided temporary accommodation to females and their children in face of family crisis, the overnight accommodation and temporary retreat provided by the Centre would also open to males in face of family crisis.

29. As regards the number of domestic violence cases, DSW said that there was a 46% increase in the number of such cases recorded by the Central Registry of Domestic Violence of SWD in the first nine months of 2000 compared with the same period in 1999. Furthermore, the number of victims of domestic violence being males although still relatively small (some 7.7%), was nevertheless increasing. As

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prevention was better than cure, DSW said that a publicity campaign on 'empowering families in distress to face challenges' would be launched in the next few months to promote positive ways to cope with adversity. On the question of helping new arrival families, DSW said that common problems of these families, such as older husband and his much younger wife, cramped living condition and financial difficulties, could not easily be tackled by SWD alone. She hoped that the community would accept the new arrivals as one of them, as acceptance would help the new arrivals to better integrate into the new environment, which, in turn, would help to reduce the occurrence of family problems. DSW further said that although she could not speak for other government departments in helping families in crisis, plans had been made for SWD to move towards a district planning mechanism whereby based on strategic needs assessment on a district and territory-wide basis, resources would be used flexibly and in a focused manner in meeting district needs and having emerging family needs identified.

30. Miss CHAN Yuen-han urged the Administration to set up offices in the Mainland to organise orientation programme for people who had been granted permits to settle in Hong Kong so that they could have a better knowledge of life in Hong Kong, which, in turn, would help them to adjust and integrate into the local community after they entered Hong Kong. DSW responded that resources had been allocated for SWD to fund the setting up of four offices in the Guangdong Province in this regard. Discussion was currently held with the Mainland side on how such offices should be set up and the services to be provided.

31. Mr WONG Sing-chi expressed support for SWD's plan to encourage the development of district-based services and programmes to involve the participation of NGOs, local residents and organisations to promote local networking, volunteerism and formation of mutual help groups, targetted at district needs to assist families in crisis. In this connection, Mr WONG enquired whether consideration would be given to expanding the scope of work of youth centres to also provide counselling to parents as such centres had a lot of opportunities to meet the parents of the youths who used their services. Mr WONG pointed out that one of the advantages of using the youth centres to provide family counselling was that parents facing family problems would feel more at ease requesting for counselling service in a youth centre rather than in a place which was distinctly set up to help families in crisis.

32. Miss LI Fung-ying expressed support for the setting up of a Family Crisis Support Centre, and hoped that the Centre could really provide timely assistance to families in crisis by better coordinating with relevant government departments such as LD's Employees' Compensation Division.

33. Ms Cyd HO hoped that in future discussion of the issue of support for families in crisis, DSW could provide more information on the extent to which government departments had been involved in helping families in crisis. Noting that a pilot

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project was implemented by SWD, NGOs and DH in providing parent education in ante-natal and post-natal programmes in 13 Maternal and Child Health Centres for parents and parents-to-be in order to help address the difficulties faced by vulnerable families at an early stage, Ms HO enquired whether apart from waiting vulnerable families such as young parents and new arrival families to come and attend the aforesaid programmes, consideration would be given to visiting the homes of these groups of people, say, on a monthly or bi-monthly basis, to detect whether there was any sign of stress among parents for early intervention in order to reduce the occurrence of family problems. As prevention was better than cure, Ms HO suggested that the curriculum of secondary schools and universities should include lessons on how to be a good parent and a good wife or husband.

34. Mrs Sophie LEUNG said that in order to reduce the number of extra-marital affairs, SWD should consider organising pre-marriage counselling session to better prepare couples to cope with married life. Mrs LEUNG further said that one way to prevent young people from going astray was to enhance their resilience rather than overly protecting them from bad influence. To this end, she hoped that the parent education programme to be launched by ED would heighten parents' awareness of the need to strengthen the resilience of their children.

35. Miss CHOY So-yuk expressed disappointment that the setting up of offices to help people who had been granted permits to settle in Hong Kong was only located in the Guangdong Province, and urged that similar offices should be set up in other provinces where there were also many potential new arrivals, such as the Fukien Province. Miss CHOY further enquired about the measures which would be adopted by the Administration to help local organisations, such as Legislative Council Member's office and District Council member's office, in rendering assistance to families in crisis, having regard to the fact that in many instances people often turned to their local organisations for assistance when facing problems.

36. On the suggestion made by Mr WONG regarding the mode of delivery of family counselling service, DSW said that this was one of the aspects being studied by the consultancy team commissioned by SWD to review family welfare services. DSW further said that provision of family counselling in a youth centre was not new to the welfare sector. She cited as an example that welfare services in Tung Chung new town was presently provided in an integrated manner by one NGO. The range of welfare services included family, youth and elderly. In view of the success of such an integrated mode of service delivery, plan had been made to provide welfare services in area 31 of Tung Chung also in a similar manner. As to Miss LI 's view that SWD should step up its coordination with other government departments so that more timely assistance to the families in need could be given, DSW said that SWD would do so. To this end, in order to provide timely assistance to people in need, the NGO commissioned to run the Family Crisis Support Centre to be set up in 2001/02 would be required to open the Centre at all hours, and if calls for help should come in

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at night, staff would be sent to escort the caller or the person in need of help back to the Centre and provide him/her with temporary accommodation at the Centre and other necessary follow-up services.

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37. Responding to Ms HO's comments, DSW agreed to provide more information in this regard in future on the involvement of other government departments in helping families in crises. On the suggestion of maximising the strategic point of service entry to identify families in need, DSW said that at present SWD had joint action with other government departments and NGOs in reaching out to families in need so that early identification of family problems could be made. She pointed out that apart from the pilot project implemented by SWD, NGOs and DH in providing parent education in ante-natal and post-natal programmes in 13 Maternal and Child Health Centres for parents and parents-to-be, SWD had recently enlisted the assistance of DH's Student Health Service. In its task of promoting and maintaining the physical and mental health of students, the Student Health Service was in the best position to detect early sign of problems which a student might have. The Police and ED were two other government departments which had helped to detect sign of stress among parents and students respectively for early intervention in order to reduce the occurrence of family problems. In respect of the Police, families prone to domestic violence and abuse would be referred to SWD for necessary action. As regards ED, the implementation of one SSW for each secondary school had enabled social workers to detect early sign of family problems which students faced at home and render timely assistance as appropriate. The provision of compassionate rehousing by HD was another way to prevent the occurrence of family problems.

38. DSW further pointed out that some organisations were currently giving lessons on parenthood to employees in private companies, and SWD had been invited to give input in such endeavour. Regarding Mrs LEUNG's suggestion of providing pre-marriage counselling to couples, DSW said that similar service was currently provided by Hong Kong Family Planning Association under DH's subvention. As regards Mrs LEUNG's view that actions should be taken to enhance the resilience of young people, DSW agreed to give the suggestion more thought. On Miss CHOY's suggestion to set up offices outside Guangdong Province to provide people who had been granted permits to settle in Hong Kong with essential knowledge of Hong Kong so that they could integrate easier into the local community when they arrived, DSW said that due to constraint of resources and having regard to the fact that the great majority of new arrivals were from Guangdong Province, it was not possible to open up more offices at this stage outside Guangdong Province. However, SWD would be willing to render any assistance to local organisations in their endeavour to publicise information on the preparation to be made for settling in Hong Kong and services provided by the Administration for new arrivals, etc. DSW further said that the Administration was well aware of the fact that many families in need often opted to approach local organisations, such as District Council member's office, for assistance. To this end, the Administration would be happy to provide training and information to local organisations to help them to better cope with the demand for assistance from families in need.

V. Review of family welfare services
(LC Paper No. CB(2)1021/00-01(06))

39. The Chairman declared interest as a member of the consultancy team of the University of Hong Kong commissioned by SWD to carry out a review of family welfare services, and invited Miss CHAN Yuen-han to take the chair for the discussion of this item.

40. Deputy Director of Social Welfare (Services) (DDSW(S)) briefed members on the objectives and scope of the review on family welfare services, the methodology of the review, and the progress of consultation with stakeholders as set out in paragraphs 2 to 8 of the Administration's paper. Prof CHOW then briefed members on the preliminary findings of the review and the way forward as set out in paragraphs 9 to 17 of the same.

41. Mrs Sophie LEUNG was of the view that given the growing complexity of family problems brought about by changes in traditional Chinese family values and structures, immigration, population mobility, aging society and economic recession, services to families should move towards enhancing their resilience rather than adopting measures which tended to be protective in nature. Prof CHOW concurred with Mrs LEUNG, and further said that the consultancy team was now looking at ways on how the existing mode of service delivery should be re-structured to strengthen the capability and competence of families and individuals to detect problems and then cope with them.

42. Responding to Ms Cyd HO's enquiry about the future direction of making early identification of problems faced by individuals and families, Prof CHOW said that the consultancy team was now looking at how services for families could be effectively integrated with the preventive work of community-based programmes, and re-positioned in relation to the current focus of work being provided by other sectors including health and education services, where there were wide entry points to parents and children in delivering preventive work. Prof CHOW further said that it was hoped that the new mechanism for early identification of problems faced by families would be accessible to all families in Hong Kong and not restricted to just families in need.

43. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that although integration of services would result in some cost savings, identifying whether all families had problems would nevertheless entail very significant resources. Moreover, it was doubtful whether families who had no problems would like to be probed as to whether they had problems. Noting one of the future directions of provision of family welfare services would be for SWD to step up joint action with various government departments as well as working in partnership with NGOs and community organisations to reach families in need so that timely assistance could be provided, Mr CHEUNG expressed

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concern that the involvement of too many parties would not be conducive to addressing the family needs in a more holistic and coordinated manner.

44. Prof CHOW clarified that the idea was not to approach each family and see whether it had problems, but to make every family aware that there were services available to them if they needed them. The aim of providing easy accessibility of family services to all families was to encourage them to use such services at an early stage of the occurrence of problems so that damages to families could be kept to the minimum. One way to encourage families to seek assistance or counselling on family matters was to put family services in centres which offered a comprehensive range of welfare services, so that families and individuals would feel more at ease at seeking assistance. As regards the concern raised by Mr CHEUNG about SWD expanding partnership with various government departments as well as working in partnership with NGOs and community organisations to reach families in need so that timely assistance could be provided, Prof CHOW said that the thinking of the consultancy team was that each district should only enlist the involvement of certain organisations according to their local characteristics. For example, in new town such as Tuen Mun where there were many young married couples, it would be worthwhile to join force with the local Maternal and Child Health Centres on educating young parents and parents-to-be on how to be good parents so as to reduce the occurrence of family problems in future.

45. Mr WONG Sing-chi expressed concern that NGOs which had opted to joined the LSG subvention system might try to save costs by laying off senior social work practitioners. Mr WONG enquired whether the Administration would consider engaging such senior social work practitioners in providing family services to the community. Prof CHOW responded that the consultancy team was well aware of the fact that senior social work practitioners were valuable resources in handling difficult and complex cases and to provide appropriate support so that problems would not further deteriorate. To better utilise the wide experience of senior social work practitioners in tackling family problems, the review would also explore how the existing services could be re-designed to achieve such.

46. Referring to a letter from the Hong Kong Social Workers Association requesting for the release of the interim report on review of family welfare services, Mr LAW Chi-kwong enquired whether the Administration would accede to such a request. DDSW(S) replied in the negative as the review was still ongoing. She further said that even without the release of the interim report on review of family welfare services, stakeholders had been kept informed of the progress of work of the review through the three briefings conducted by the consultancy team and SWD during which stakeholders had the opportunity to clarify their concerns and put forward their suggestions.

47. The Chairman hoped that consultations with stakeholders on the review of

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family welfare services would also include representatives from the trade unions and grassroots groups from public housing estates. Referring to paragraph 13 of the Administration's paper which stated that the basic philosophy to be adopted in the development and provision of services for families should include, inter alia, child-centred, family-focused, community-based and user-oriented and easily accessible, the Chairman pointed out that elderly persons and housewives were very important elements of families but they seemed to have been neglected in the review. Prof LEUNG responded that there was no question of such a situation as the provision of services for families was family-focused. He further said that the reason why it was mentioned that the provision of services for families should be focused on children was because children were the most vulnerable group when faced with family problems, and that it was likely that they would repeat the mistakes of their parents by creating the same family problems when they grew up.

48. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 1:05 p.m.

Legislative Council Secretariat

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