

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)1790/01-02
(These minutes have been
seen by the Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/WS

LegCo Panel on Welfare Services

Minutes of meeting
held on Monday, 8 April 2002 at 10:45 am
in Conference Room A of the Legislative Council Building

- Members Present** : Hon CHAN Yuen-han, JP (Chairman)
Hon LAW Chi-kwong, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan
Hon LEE Cheuk-yan
Hon Fred LI Wah-ming, JP
Hon Bernard CHAN
Dr Hon YEUNG Sum
Hon CHOY So-yuk
Hon LI Fung-ying, JP
Hon Henry WU King-cheong, BBS
Hon WONG Sing-chi
- Members Absent** : Dr Hon David CHU Yu-lin, JP
Hon Mrs Sophie LEUNG LAU Yau-fun, SBS, JP
Hon Frederick FUNG Kin-kee
- Public Officers Attending** : All Items
Mrs Carrie LAM, JP
Director of Social Welfare
- Item III
- Mr Kevin YEUNG
Principal Assistant Secretary for Home Affairs 4

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Mr CHEUNG Hing-wah
Assistant Director of Social Welfare (Youth and Corrections)

Dr Joe C B LEUNG
Head, Department of Social Work and Social Administration
The University of Hong Kong

Item IV

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

Miss Johanna TSAO
District Social Welfare Officer (Kwun Tong)
Social Welfare Department

Item V

Mr Stephen PANG
Commissioner for Rehabilitation

Miss Ophelia CHAN
Assistant Director of Social Welfare (Rehabilitation & Medical
Social Services)

Dr Albert LO
Executive Manager (Professional Services)
Hospital Authority

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 11 March 2002
(LC Paper No. CB(2)1490/01-02)

The minutes were confirmed.

II. Date of next meeting and items for discussion

(LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1491/01-02(01) and (02))

2. Members agreed to discuss the following items at the next meeting to be held on 13 May 2002 at 10:45 am -

- (a) A multi-disciplinary study on the causes of elderly suicide in Hong Kong; and
- (b) Support for vulnerable elders.

Members further agreed to invite deputations to give views on items (a) and (b).

3. The Chairman said that the Society for Community Organization had made a submission on the rehabilitation policy for adult ex-offenders, and sought members' view as to whether they wished to discuss the matter. Director of Social Welfare (DSW) said that the Administration was currently conducting a comprehensive review on services for ex-offenders under the Department of Social Welfare (SWD)'s purview, including discussion with the only non-governmental organisation (NGO) providing subvented services for offenders, namely the Society of Rehabilitation and Crime Prevention, Hong Kong, and preliminary findings of the review were expected to be available in mid-June 2002. In view of such timing provided by DSW, members agreed to discuss the subject matter in July 2002.

III. Review on Integrated Neighbourhood Projects in Targeted Old Urban Areas

(LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1491/01-02(03) and (04))

4. The Chairman asked members to note a submission from the Sheng Kung Hui Alice Kwok Integrated Services Centre tabled at the meeting.

5. At the invitation of the Chairman, DSW took members through the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. CB(2)1491/01-02(03)) which detailed the review on the Integrated Neighbourhood Projects (INPs) (the Review) in targeted old urban areas.

6. Dr YEUNG Sum declared that he was an employee of the University of Hong Kong (HKU). Dr YEUNG was of the view that despite the extensive and enhanced efforts to reach out to underprivileged groups under the new initiatives implemented by SWD and NGOs set out in paragraph 6 of the Administration's paper, there remained a need for the continued existence of INPs as no other outreaching efforts and community support could match that provided by INPs to promote self-help and community development to the target vulnerable groups of new arrivals, the elderly and low income families in the targeted areas. Dr YEUNG hoped that the

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Administration would have regard to the wishes of the service users and would not phase out INPs in order to save \$17.4 million for funding the 12 INPs in 2002-03.

7. DSW responded that in light of the recent developments in the provision of welfare services from fragmentation to integration, from centre-based, institutional to outreaching, home and community support and from compartmentalisation to cross-sector collaboration, it was timely to review the continued existence of INPs as a separate and distinct mode of service vis-à-vis the new endeavours mentioned in paragraph 6 of the Administration's paper. For example, as the new service model of Integrated Family Service Centre (IFSC) presently being pioneered jointly by SWD and NGOs was aimed at providing a continuum of preventive, supportive and remedial services to meet the changing needs of families in a more focused and holistic manner, there was a need to critically examine whether the services of INPs had duplicated or overlapped with that of IFSC so as to ensure better use of resources and more co-ordinated support to clients. DSW further said that the intention of the Review was not to save costs, as evidenced by the fact that funding for family and child welfare services had not been reduced as a result of the recent review of family services. On the contrary, additional resources had been allocated to address such growing social problems as domestic violence and child abuse. Another example was the setting up of the Community Investment and Inclusion Fund to promote mutual care, develop community support and encourage community participation.

8. Dr Joe LEUNG supplemented that the consultancy study, which comprised two phases, would take about six months to complete. The first phase was from February 2002 to April 2002 and major tasks carried out/to be carried out included the review of policy documents, compilation and review of service statistics, review of business plans of projects and conduct of focus group discussions with various stakeholders. Key issues to be explored by the consultant team were detailed in paragraph 10 of Annex III to the Administration's paper. Of the some 10 focus group discussions held/to be held with various stakeholders in each of the three districts (Kowloon City, Sham Shui Po and Yau Ma Tei/Mong Kok) where the 12 INPs operated, about half of them were/would be held with service users to see how they viewed the services provided by INPs. The remaining focus group discussions were/would be held with other stakeholders such as service providers, policy makers, academics and other NGOs. An interim progress report would be produced in early May 2002, and a final report would be produced at the end of the consultancy study, i.e. around end of July 2002.

9. Mr WONG Sing-chi said that INPs should not be phased out. He pointed out that although the various initiatives to strengthen support for families, youth, the elderly and new arrivals mentioned in paragraph 6 of the Administration's paper were targeted at the same vulnerable groups of people as INPs, i.e. the new arrivals, the elderly and low income families, the aforesaid initiatives were largely remedial in nature and lacked the element of helping vulnerable individuals to organise themselves to fight for their rights as in the case of INPs.

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10. DSW disagreed that services for families, youth, the elderly and the new arrivals were largely remedial in nature, as the provision of such was now moving in the directions from fragmentation to integration, from centre-based, institutional to outreaching, home and community support and from compartmentalisation to cross-sector collaboration. A case in point was that family services were now focused on early identification and intervention to prevent the need for crisis intervention, and on preventive work, such as by stepping up work in parent education. DSW reiterated that the aim of the Review was to ensure that public resources were used in a cost-effective manner. With the setting up of 14 Family Support Networking Teams mainly at Family Support and Resource Centres in each and every administrative district of SWD for providing outreach and networking services to vulnerable families, it was incumbent upon SWD to review how INPs were interfacing with these and other outreach networks. DSW further said that integration of services did not necessarily mean certain existing services would no longer be provided. Rather, it was aimed at making the best use of available resources to meet the changing welfare needs of the community. For example, in the integration of youth services, the numbers of school social workers and child and youth centres had not been reduced, save for the closure of some study and reading rooms which had low utilisation, and more Integrated Teams had been formed.

11. Mr WONG Sing-chi maintained his view that the roles and functions of family services were not the same as that of INPs. Whereas family services helped families at risk to solve problems, INPs served to empower vulnerable individuals to fight for their rights. Mr WONG was also of the view that INPs should not only target at the new arrivals, the elderly and low income families, as people outside these categories in the targeted areas might also need their services.

12. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan expressed similar concerns that phasing out INPs would undermine services to vulnerable individuals in old urban areas, and urged that INPs be allowed to exist.

13. DSW responded that the reason for conducting the Review was because the five areas of services provided by INPs, as set out in paragraph 3 of the Administration's paper, were largely covered by the existing mainstream services. For example, the Support Teams for Elders, which was one of SWD's initiatives to strengthen care and support for vulnerable elders, had engaged about 18 000 senior volunteers who formed a network for more than 57 000 elders by maintaining regular contacts with them, providing them with support to prevent social isolation and making service referrals for those in need. Under the circumstances, there was a need to examine whether the existence of INPs as a separate and distinct mode of delivery should be continued and how the existing mainstream services could be strengthened to incorporate those INP's services which were presently not provided by them. DSW further said that SWD had not come to any decision on the way forward of INPs. She pointed out that if it was SWD's unilateral intention to phase out INPs, it could do so without the need for a review on INP but simply cease the operation of INPs after their three-year term had expired.

14. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan opined that if INPs were subsumed under the existing outreaching networks, support and care for vulnerable individuals in old urban areas would be undermined. DSW responded that this should not be the case. This was because if INPs were to be subsumed under the existing outreaching networks, every effort would be made to ensure that such networks would cover the target groups of INPs. DSW further said that to provide welfare services on a small area basis was not ideal, as this would lead to fragmentation of services. Moreover, it was very difficult to determine the boundary of old urban areas. In old urban areas subject to urban renewal or where unauthorised building works on rooftops were concerned, DSW said that there was no cause for concern that people affected, who were usually living alone, lacking family support and social network, of poor health and/or in financial difficulty, would be left without adequate support should INPs be phased out as both the Urban Renewal Authority and the Buildings Departments had formed outreach teams in identifying individuals who might need help.

15. Mr Fred LI expressed concern about the independence of the Review, as the Administration appeared to have already formed a view that INPs should be phased out or subsumed/re-engineered under the existing outreach networks. Mr LI further said that in old districts predominated by private housing such as Sham Shui Po, INPs played an important role because the vulnerable groups they served were not readily covered by other support and outreaching networks such as the Support Teams for the Elderly (STEs). In this connection, Mr LI concurred with members that INPs should be allowed to continue to fill such service gaps.

16. DSW responded that there was no question of SWD attempting to influence the outcome of the consultancy study. The reason why it said INPs should be phased out or subsumed/re-engineered under the existing outreach networks was because this would perhaps be a more cost-effective deployment of public resources, and should not be construed as the Administration having already formed a view on the way forward of INPs. DSW further said that a Steering Group had been formed to monitor the progress of the Review, and to give directions to the consultant team and to receive reports from them. The Steering Group comprised representatives from the Home Affairs Bureau, SWD, Hong Kong Council of Social Service, NGOs operating INPs and lay member. Dr Joe LEUNG confirmed that SWD had not given any hint or directive to the consultant team on what it wished to be the outcome of the Review. Dr LEUNG added that the consultant team would employ an evidence-based summative evaluative approach in its review on INPs. Moreover, the review process would be kept open and transparent, with maximum participation and input from relevant stakeholders.

17. Referring to the comments made by Mr Fred LI in paragraph 15 above about the existing support and outreaching networks such as STEs not able to reach vulnerable elders residing in old private buildings in old urban areas such as Sham Shui Po, DSW said that this was not the case. To prove her point, DSW undertook to provide members with information on the existing support rendered to vulnerable

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elders residing in old private buildings in Sham Shui Po after the meeting.

18. Mr LAW Chi-kwong made the following points -

- (a) Duplication or overlapping of services should not be a determining factor for deleting welfare services, as sometimes duplication or overlapping of services might not be a waste of resources. In fact, the existence of certain degree of duplication or overlapping in the provision of welfare services was quite common. For example, parents whose children were having behavioural problems could seek guidance and support from the school social workers or from the Family Services Centres;
- (b) There might be a need to retain INPs, in view of the varying needs of low income families;
- (c) It would be useful if the consultancy study would take into account the reasons why the Review Group on Pilot Neighbourhood Level Community Development Projects came up with its recommendation that a form of INP should be introduced in selected old urban areas according to a set of criteria; and
- (d) The consultancy study should find out whether the size of the targeted area and the influx rate of new target groups into it, or the characteristics of the target groups of INPs had any impact on the effectiveness of INP staff in carrying out their services, particularly in making referrals.

19. DSW responded that the consultancy study would pay attention to the views expressed by Mr LAW in paragraph 18(a), (b) and (d) above. As to the view expressed by Mr LAW in paragraph 18(c) above, DSW said that this would be done as the Steering Group had invited Professor Anthony YEH Gar-on, who had headed the Working Group tasked with identifying the 12 targeted areas, as Resource Person on the updating of needs of the three targeted groups of the 12 targeted areas.

20. Dr YEUNG Sum said that there was a need for retaining INPs despite the fact that they duplicated or overlapped with other support and outreaching networks, as no other support and outreaching networks could match the same level of outreaching service provided by INPs in terms of frequency and intensity.

21. Noting that the final report on the review of INPs would be produced around end of July 2002, the Chairman enquired when the Administration would be in a position to present it for members' consideration. DSW responded that the Administration would be in a position to do so in early October 2002. At the request of Mr LEE Cheuk-yan, DSW agreed to provide members with the interim report on the review of INP which was expected to be ready in early May 2002.

IV. Enhanced functions of District Social Welfare Officers

(LC Paper No. CB(2)1491/01-02(05))

22. DSW took members through the Administration's paper which detailed the enhanced functions of District Social Welfare Officers (DSWOs) and their impact on SWD's responsiveness to meet community needs, efficiency and productivity, and capacity to meet new challenges in the planning and co-ordination of welfare services.

23. Mr WONG Sing-chi enquired whether training was provided to staff to better equip them to carry out their new functions in the new structure.

24. DSW responded that relevant training programmes/activities had been and would continue to be organised for DSWOs and members of the Planning and Co-ordinating Teams (PCTs) and Family Support Networking Teams (FSNTs) to better equip them to carry out their new functions in the new structure. Apart from providing training for staff involved in handling domestic violence and child abuse cases, the bulk of money set aside for staff training in 2002-03 would be used on having to support district-based initiatives such as the pilot IFSCs, PCTs and FSNTs. District Social Welfare Officer (Kwun Tong) supplemented that apart from attending training programmes/activities, members of PCTs and FSNTs had also set up numerous focus groups to collect views from organisations such as the District Co-ordinating Committees and Kwun Tong District Council, and service users to better prepare themselves for carrying out district-wide liaison, district-based planning, networking and collaborating duties.

25. Mr LAW Chi-kwong said that consideration should be given to commissioning a study to evaluate the effectiveness of the enhanced functions of DSWOs, including the response of the community on the new structure. The Chairman expressed support for Mr LAW's suggestion. DSW considered it worthy to conduct such a study after the new structure had been in operation for a longer period of time. She said that the Department would normally enlist help from local universities in this endeavour. DSW added that SWD would re-visit later whether the 13 SWD district boundaries should be re-aligned to follow those of district administration.

26. Mr WONG Sing-chi expressed concern that as the planning of welfare services was now made on a district basis, inconsistencies in the implementation of welfare policies might arise. DSW responded that there was no question of such a situation. Although the role of DSWOs had been strengthened as a district planner and service co-ordinator under the new structure, they would still be required to plan their provision of welfare services in accordance with the welfare policies set out at the headquarters level. Notably, planning of premises-tied projects was still mainly carried out at the headquarters level, although DSWOs had been involved from the very early stages of the projects since the re-organisation of SWD. DSWOs, however, now had more involvement in the planning of non-premises-tied projects and

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integrated projects, but in doing so, they were required to work under the framework and parameters set down by the various service branches at the headquarters level.

V. Provision of medical social services
(LC Paper No. CB(2)1491/01-02(06))

27. As discussion of the issue of provision of medical social services (MSS) was requested by Mr LAW Chi-kwong, the Chairman invited Mr LAW to give his views on the matter. Mr LAW said that the reason for raising the issue for discussion was because a mixed provision of both SWD and Hospital Authority (HA)'s medical social workers (MSWs) in the same hospital had undermined the professional development of MSWs. Moreover, such a dual system had led to confusion and inconvenience to patients, medical staff as well as other helping organisations outside hospitals.

28. In response, DSW introduced the Administration's paper which detailed the current provision of MSS and the latest developments in this area, including measures taken to phase out the long-standing dual system problem in some hospitals.

29. In reply to Mr Bernard CHAN's enquiry on the financial implication for withdrawing 14 SWD MSWs from nine former subvented hospitals in 2002-03, DSW said that the resources for hiring these 14 staff would be transferred to the concerned hospitals for them to engage their own MSWs. The reason why SWD would not need to take back the resources was because SWD would only withdraw these 14 staff as and when there were sufficient resources to absorb the staff concerned in other funded initiatives in either the medical social service or other welfare unit.

30. Mr LAW Chi-kwong welcomed the development of specialisation in the provision of MSS, and hoped that SWD would strive to meet staff's requests for developing their career in MSS as far as practicable. Mr LAW further said that notwithstanding the phasing out of the dual system in the former subvented hospitals, consideration should be given to determining which types of MSS should best be taken up by SWD MSWs and HA MSWs so as to avoid duplication of services. DSW agreed with Mr LAW's suggestion but was of view that this should be pursued after the development of cluster management and other related matters of HA had stabilised.

31. The Chairman enquired whether, under the "One Patient, One Medical Social Worker" mode of service delivery, a patient would continue to be served by the same MSW if he/she became the patient of another public hospital. Assistant Director of Social Welfare replied in the negative to the Chairman's question, and clarified that the "One Patient, One Medical Social Worker" approach meant that a patient would be served by the same MSW regardless of his/her in-patient or out-patient status while in the same hospital.

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32. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 12:30 pm.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
8 May 2002