

**立法會**  
**Legislative Council**

LC Paper No. CB(2)2496/01-02  
(These minutes have been  
seen by the Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/WS

**LegCo Panel on Welfare Services**

**Minutes of meeting**  
**held on Monday, 10 June 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)  
Dr Hon David CHU Yu-lin, JP  
Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan  
Hon Fred LI Wah-ming, JP  
Hon Mrs Sophie LEUNG LAU Yau-fun, SBS, JP  
Hon CHOY So-yuk  
Hon LI Fung-ying, JP  
Hon Henry WU King-cheong, BBS  
Hon WONG Sing-chi  
Hon Frederick FUNG Kin-kee

**Members Absent** : Hon LEE Cheuk-yan  
Dr Hon YEUNG Sum  
Hon Bernard CHAN

**Public Officers Attending** : Item IV  
  
Mrs Carrie LAM, JP  
Director of Social Welfare  
  
Miss Diane WONG  
Principal Assistant Secretary for Health and Welfare (Welfare) 2  
  
Mr FUNG Pak-yan  
Assistant Director of Social Welfare (Family & Child Welfare)

Action

Dr WONG Hung  
Division of Social Studies  
City University of Hong Kong

Item V

Mrs Carrie LAM, JP  
Director of Social Welfare

Mr Stephen PANG  
Commissioner for Rehabilitation

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

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

**Staff in Attendance** : Ms Janet SHUM  
Senior Assistant Secretary (2) 9

---

**I. Confirmation of minutes of meeting held on 13 May 2002**  
(LC Paper No. CB(2)2163/01-02)

The minutes were confirmed.

**II. Date of next meeting and items for discussion**  
(LC Paper Nos. CB(2)2164/01-02(01) and (02))

2. Ms Cyd HO proposed to invite the Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food (SHWF) to be appointed under the new accountability system to attend the next meeting and explain to the panel how the Administration would reorganize its resources in light of the expanded statutory functions of the new Bureau. The Deputy Chairman said that as members of other panels might also wish to invite Directors of Bureaux to their panel meetings, he suggested and members agreed that a decision on Ms HO's proposal should be made after the matter had been discussed by the House Committee. The Deputy Chairman further said that as the appointment of the Directors

Action

of Bureaux would not be announced until the end of June, it was not appropriate to extend the invitation at the present time.

3. Members agreed to discuss the following items at the next meeting to be held on 8 July 2002 at 10:45 am -

- (a) Rehabilitation policy for adult ex-prisoners; and
- (b) Re-engineering community support services for elders.

**III. Draft report of the Panel for submission to the Legislative Council**  
(LC Paper No. CB(2)2164/01-02(03))

4. Members endorsed the above report for submission to the Legislative Council on 3 July 2002.

**IV. Action Plan on Street Sleepers**  
(LC Paper Nos. CB(2)2164/01-02(04) and (05))

5. At the invitation of the Deputy Chairman, Director of Social Welfare (DSW) gave a power point presentation on the implementation of the three-year action plan to help street sleepers and the preliminary assessment of the effectiveness of the action plan as detailed in the Administration's paper. The hard copy of the presentation materials was provided to members in LC Paper No. CB(2)2345/01-02.

6. DSW said that the action plan was implemented in April 2001 in view of the rising number of street sleepers (from 819 in January 2000 to 1399 in February 2001) and the rapid increase in the number of younger and short-term street sleepers. DSW further said that the City University of Hong Kong (CityU) had been commissioned to conduct an evaluation research to assess the effectiveness of the three-year project conducted by the three Non-Government Organizations (NGOs). The evaluative research included the setting up of a Client Information and Service Intervention (CISI) System in November 2001 to monitor the inputs and outputs of all service projects for use by the three NGOs and the three Social Welfare Department (SWD) street sleeper outreaching teams. DSW said that the prevention of relapsing into street sleeping would be a major aspect in assessing the outcome of the project. The CityU research team was tasked to conduct a baseline study on the homeless population at the start of the action plan so that more concrete information would be available to compare the changes thereafter upon the delivery of services through the action plan.

7. DSW pointed out that since the implementation of the project, the total number of street sleepers on the Street Sleepers Registry had decreased from 1 203 in April 2001 to 995 in April 2002, of whom 573 were Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) recipients. To tie in with the action plan, the Administration had

Action

taken a number of initiatives and measures such as improving hostel services for single persons, interfacing with specialized service units such as the Society of Rehabilitation and Crime Prevention and Society for the Aid and Rehabilitation of Drug Abusers to provide services to street sleepers with special needs, and strengthening district efforts in tackling the street sleeper problem.

8. Dr Wong HUNG of CityU gave a powerpoint presentation on the major findings of the baseline study which revealed the socio-economic profile and social indexes of the street sleepers. It also showed the initial outcomes of the action plan undertaken by the three NGOs to prevent the street sleepers from becoming habitual street sleepers. Such action plans included meeting their accommodation needs, assisting them in job matching, improving their social well-being, and providing emergency funding support to them, which were detailed in the Administration's paper and in the hard copy of the presentation materials. In particular, Dr WONG pointed out that in view of the possibility that the number of street sleepers might rise in the near future due to increased unemployment, there was a need to strengthen the manpower of the midnight outreaching teams. They might otherwise have difficulties in coping with the outreaching work and following up cases of street sleepers at the same time.

9. Referring to paragraph 11 of the Administration's paper, Mr Fred LI enquired how many out of the 201 street sleepers who were assisted in seeking accommodation had been street sleeping for less than one year and whether any street sleepers had relapsed into street sleeping. Mr LI further enquired why only four street sleepers were provided with public housing and whether street sleepers on CSSA were provided with special grant to help them meet payment for rental deposit.

10. In response to Mr LI's first question, Dr WONG said that about two third of the 201 accommodated were short term street sleepers who had been street sleeping for less than one year. As to the second question, Dr WONG said that data of the number of street sleepers relapsing into street sleeping was not available in the meantime as the research team had just started the assessment of the 201 cases in June. However, Dr WONG said that he understood that currently no more than one or two street sleepers were known to have relapsed into street sleeping.

11. As regards the housing needs of the street sleepers, DSW said that the action plan included a newly set up emergency shelter in Wan Chai run by St James's Settlement which was used as an expedient form of transit housing before more long term arrangement could be made for street sleepers to live in private rental housing or hostels. Moreover, most of the hostels run by NGOs on a subvented or self-financing basis as listed in Annex 4 of the Administration's paper could continue to provide temporary accommodation for street sleepers until they found more permanent accommodation. In this regard, DSW said that although the research showed that only four street sleepers were accommodated in public housing, she trusted that her staff had and would carefully consider each case before deciding whether compassionate rehousing should be granted to the street sleepers. DSW said that in

Action

view of the prevailing characteristics of the street sleepers, other types of accommodation such as provision of hostel services would be a more suitable interim measure to assist the street sleepers who were mostly unemployed and financially unstable.

12. In response to Mr LI's last question, DSW said that instead of reinstating the provision of special grant to street sleepers on CSSA to help them pay rental deposits, the provision of emergency fund was considered a more efficient way to assist the street sleepers in solving their immediate needs. DSW pointed out that about \$280,000 out of the \$770,000 emergency fund included in the Action Plan budget had been granted to 263 needy street sleepers in the past 12 months and about 55% was for paying rental expenses.

13. Mr WONG Sing-chi expressed concern that as most of the hostels under the NGOs were located in the urban area, street sleepers whose social links were in the non-urban areas might be reluctant to seek accommodation in the hostels. Mr WONG said that he noticed that there were quite a number of street sleepers in the Northern District where no hostel services were available. DSW responded that it had not been brought to her attention that the above problem had occurred. On the contrary, the research indicated that some street sleepers who were tenants of public housing estates in more faraway districts of the New Territories preferred to street sleep in the urban area where chances for getting jobs were greater. Dr WONG supplemented that the research indicated that some street sleepers who had social links in Tsuen Wan might prefer to stay in that district rather than the urban area. In this connection, DSW pointed out that one of the NGOs (Yan Chai Hospital Urban Hostel for Single Persons) provided accommodation in Tsuen Wan and still had capacity to accommodate the street sleepers in need.

14. Mr David CHU enquired whether there were any measures to clear those street sleepers who were mentally ill and might have negative impact on the outlook of Hong Kong and tourism. DSW responded that the SWD had worked closely with the healthcare professionals from the Hospital Authority (HA) in providing support to the 7% (72) of the street sleepers on the Registry who were suspected to be mentally ill. DSW pointed out that through the joint efforts of social workers and the community psychiatric team of the Hospital Authority, two suspected mentally ill street sleepers accepted psychiatric treatment in hospitals during the project period. DSW said that as psychiatric treatment required the consent of the patients, whether the suspected mentally ill street sleepers could be assisted in this respect had to be determined by the street sleepers themselves. The government had no right to remove street sleepers suspected to be mentally ill from the street unless they were doing things to harm others or themselves.

15. In view of the research result which showed that 66% of the street sleepers were between 20 and 49 of age and 37.5 % had been successfully matched with jobs, Miss CHOY So-yuk was of the view that early intervention measures should be taken by the Administration to prevent the young and able-bodied persons from street

Action

sleeping.

16. DSW responded that while SWD was well aware of the importance of implementing effective preventive measures to assist the needy in seeking employment and accommodation before they turned to street sleeping, it could not prevent the occurrence of the street sleeping problem. She explained that it was one of SWD's tasks to take remedial actions on social problems which had occurred. As regards the problem of unemployment, DSW said that the Administration had been highly proactive in implementing a series of employment-related measures to help the unemployed. For example, although job matching was not within the scope of SWD, it had allocated about 20 to 30% of the placement under the Support for Self-reliance Scheme employment assistance projects to non-CSSA recipients who needed to find jobs.

17. Miss CHOY So-yuk was of the view that SWD should jointly discussed with other departments to draw up early intervention measures such as the setting up of hotline services to prevent the young and able-bodied persons to turn to street sleeping. DSW said that it was the plan of SWD under the enhanced role of its district officers to build up better network with NGOs in the territory and to further disseminate information on the wide range of services offered by SWD. The on-going services offered by SWD such as the provisions of hostel services and assistance in employment would also be broadly publicized through the network.

18. Mr Henry WU enquired why there was a sudden drop in the percentage of street sleepers on CSSA in Oct 2001 and why so many non-CSSA recipients chose to street sleep. Mr WU also enquired whether there were any drug abusers among the street sleepers and whether there was any indication showing that the addicted street sleepers tended to street sleep in the vicinity of methadone treatment centres.

19. In reply, DSW said that while the reasons for the decrease in the number of street sleepers since November 2001 had been provided in paragraph 20 of the Administration's paper, the reasons behind the sudden drop of street sleepers on CSSA in October 2001 would be looked into. As regards information about the non-CSSA street sleepers, Dr WONG said that the result of the baseline study showed that about 30% of the street sleepers were on CSSA, whereas among the non-CSSA street sleepers, about 10% worked full time, 20% took odd jobs, 10% lived on the streets, and the rest relied on loans or financial support from friends and relatives.

20. As to the problem of addicted street sleepers, DSW said that about 28.5% of the street sleepers were drug abusers. Many of these were also hard core cases under the CSSA system. She said that the problem would be tackled at the district level by SWD District Offices. For example, through the co-ordination of SWD, the Society for the Aid and Rehabilitation of Drug Abusers and service units of street sleeper services had been formalized to ensure that specialized drug treatment services would be provided to addicted street sleepers in need of treatment.

Action

21. Mr LAW Chi-kwong said that as some street sleepers in need of employment and financial assistance might have already registered with the Labour Department or SWD before they turned to street sleeping, early intervention by the relevant departments should make it possible to prevent them from street sleeping. Mr LAW observed that with the three NGOs continuing to follow up the increasing number of cases of street sleepers registered by the midnight outreaching teams, street sleepers' cases under SWD would gradually decrease. Mr LAW therefore enquired whether the Administration would consider reprovisioning of services for street sleepers so that NGOs would gradually become the agencies taking care of the majority of street sleeper cases.

22. DSW responded that as housing and job matching were beyond the scope of SWD, it was difficult for the department to follow through those cases of street sleepers referred to other departments for follow up. Nevertheless, DSW said that as only 70% of the capacity of the hostels for street sleepers under NGOs had been utilized, the Administration would make an effort to ensure that the 10% street sleepers quoting "homelessness" after discharge from hospitals, prisons and drug treatment centres as the reason for street sleeping would be provided with accommodation. DSW said that SWD would also look into the cases of the 10% of street sleepers who chose to street sleep because they could not afford rental expenses.

23. As regards the reprovisioning of services for street sleepers, DSW pointed out that the integrated services provided by the three NGOs, including counselling, arrangement for accommodation, advice on employment and arrangement of job placement, and provision of emergency fund, were conducive to the success of the projects. DSW said that the Administration would review its policy on support services to street sleepers, taking into consideration the assessment of the overall result of the three-year action plan to be completed in March 2004. In the meanwhile, SWD District Offices would continue to step up their efforts in assisting street sleepers.

24. Mr Frederick FUNG was of the view that the problem of street sleepers should be solvable if housing and unemployment were the major reasons for street sleeping. Mr FUNG pointed out that while the Housing Authority claimed that it would address the housing requirements of groups in special need so that no one would be deprived of a home, its policy to limit its provision of interim housing to the non-urban area had indirectly driven those street sleepers whose social links were in the urban area to street sleeping. Mr FUNG suggested that the Administration should consider transferring a number of housing units to SWD for its direct allocation to the needed. As regards the reasons for street sleeping, Mr FUNG said that he understood from past surveys that apart from financial, family or mental problems of the street sleepers, alcoholism and drug abuse were also among the reasons for street sleeping. Mr FUNG urged that inter-departmental efforts should be strengthened in order to solve the problem of street sleepers.

25. DSW responded that information from the Street Sleeper Registry indicated

Action

that the profile of the street sleepers had changed over time. While about 7.6% of the street sleepers were suspected to have mental problems, 88.8% of the street sleepers with known health condition were considered to be in normal health. The figures also showed that about 10% of the street sleepers indicated that family problem was the reason for street sleeping while about 23.4% said that it was due to personal choice. DSW agreed that the Administration should continue its effort in interfacing and strengthening co-operation among departments to provide services for street sleepers. In this connection, DSW said that she had held regular meetings with the Deputy Director of the Housing Department (HD) to enhance communication and co-operation between the two departments, SWD would continue to advise HD on applications for housing unit or split of tenancy for reasons of, for example, households with family problems. DSW said that in view of the recent increase in housing supply, HD had become more flexible in granting compassionate rehousing to those in need. SWD had currently utilized about 1 500 of the 2 000 annual quota for compassionate rehousing.

26. The Chairman enquired whether there were any street sleepers who had chosen to street sleep in the urban area because the housing unit allocated to them by HD were too far from their social links, she also wished to have the Administration's response to the problem of insufficient manpower of the midnight outreaching teams raised by Dr WONG in paragraph 8 above.

27. In response to the Chairman's first question, Dr WONG said that about 5.5% of the respondents said that they chose to street sleep because of housing redevelopment or evacuation by landlords. Dr Wong agreed with members that the Administration should evaluate its housing policy and consider the community factor in rehousing the public housing tenants. Dr WONG supplemented that about 60% of the street sleepers claimed economic reason as being the main reason for street sleeping and 25% claimed unemployment as the reason.

28. In response to the Chairman's second question, DSW said that as the eight staff members of the SWD street sleeper outreaching teams were responsible for the provision of territory-wide services for street sleepers, it was unlikely that SWD could divert its manpower to assist the midnight outreaching teams. DSW said that out of the \$8.73 million Lotteries Fund allocated for the action plan, about \$800,000 was for contingency purpose and hence could be used in strengthening the manpower of the outreaching team if needed. In this connection, Dr WONG said that in view of the continuous rise in the unemployment rate, there was a need to increase the number of outreaching team members to follow up the cases of street sleepers. As the number of cases was expected to rise, Dr WONG said that the family services units of SWD and other NGOs could also assist in referring new cases to the midnight outreaching team for follow-up.

Adm 29. In summing up, the Chairman requested the Administration to continue monitoring the provision of services to street sleepers and assess the result of the action plan.



**V. Conversion of Fanling Hospital into a rehabilitation complex**  
(LC Paper No. CB(2)2164/01-02(06))

30. At the invitation of the Chairman, DSW gave a powerpoint presentation on the conversion of the Fanling Hospital into a new rehabilitation facility and the latest development of the relevant rehabilitation services, which were detailed in the Administration's paper and in the hard copy of the presentation materials. DSW said that the new rehabilitation facility required an annual subvention of about \$20.58 million as operation cost and funding approval would be sought from the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council on 21 June 2002.

31. Mr WONG Sing-chi expressed support for the Administration's plan to convert the Fanling hospital into a new rehabilitation facility as it was an expedient way to provide day and residential facilities for people with disabilities. Mr WONG enquired about the basis for the Administration's estimation of staff cost and whether there was a mechanism to monitor the annual subvention allocated to the selected NGO operator to ensure that the operator would not use the funding for purposes other than those approved by the Administration.

32. DSW responded that the cost of personal emoluments of the new rehabilitation facility was estimated according to the notional staffing by SWD and the mid-point salaries of the comparable civil service rank but under the lump sum grant subvention system. The operating NGO was given flexibility to deploy resources provided that the prescribed requirements were met. Under the revised framework for allocating new social welfare units, the operation of this new rehabilitation facility would be allocated through a competitive quality-based system under which NGOs would be invited to submit quality proposals for its operation. In the process, SWD would look for innovation in service mode and value added services for users and the community in the evaluation of the proposal received. As regards details of the notional staffing of the new rehabilitation facility, Assistant Director of Social Welfare (Rehabilitation & Medical Social Services) (ADSW) said that the new facility required a total of 101 professional, care and ancillary staff, including senior social workers of diploma level, social workers of degree level, allied health personnel and personal care staff etc. ADSW said that SWD District Office and the SWD Service Performance Section at Headquarters would closely monitor the performance of the NGO operator and ensure that its operation was in accordance with the quality proposal.

33. As regards the implementation of Lump Sum Grant (LSG), DSW pointed out that the agency-based Funding & Service Agreements (F&SA) between the Administration and NGOs were to align service monitoring with the flexibility of agencies to deploy their resources allowed under LSG. DSW said that SWD would closely monitor the service output of the selected NGO operator of the new rehabilitation facility to ensure that the service provided was of high quality.

Action

34. In response to Mr WONG's further question regarding the monitoring of the annual subvention granted to the selected NGO operator, DSW said that although the NGO could set aside surplus of operational cost as reserve according to the F&SA, the amount of cumulative surplus was limited by the 25% ceiling. SWD would examine NGO's annual financial reports to guard against any anomalies and seek the advice of the Lump Sum Grant Steering Committee. DSW said that SWD would closely monitor the matter to ensure that the new facility would be operated in accordance with the required service standards.

35. Mr LAW Chi-kwong welcomed the briefing by DSW on the latest development of the relevant rehabilitation services, in particular, the introduction of the seven major service programmes to provide community support network services for people with disabilities. However, as the provision of services for people with disabilities was one of the outstanding items to be discussed, Mr LAW was of the view that the issue should be further discussed in detail at a subsequent meeting.

36. The Chairman concurred with Mr LAW's view that the issue should be further discussed and agreed that the Administration should provide more elaboration on details such as the seven major service programmes. In this connection, the Chairman expressed concern that not many disabled persons would be able to benefit from the respite services programme due to the limited provision of day care places. In addition, the disabled persons and their families might not be able to afford the hourly charges of the home respite project or the daily charges of the link project. The Chairman also said that more publicity was needed to promote the respite services to ensure that those in need of the services were informed.

Adm

37. In response, DSW clarified that the preliminary report on the latest development of the relevant rehabilitation services was aimed to provide members with the most updated information on community and home-based services for people with disabilities to supplement residential service proposed in the Fanling Hospital facility. DSW said that the Administration would be happy to provide a paper on the issue for detailed discussion at a subsequent meeting. DSW concurred with the Chairman's views that publicity was needed to promote the services of SWD. She pointed out that staff of SWD had already conducted many briefing sessions for frontline staff, parents, special schools and other rehabilitation service units.

38. In summing up, the Chairman said that the provision of services and support for people with disabilities would be further discussed in the next legislative session.

**VI. Any other business**

39. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 12: 50 pm.

Action

Legislative Council Secretariat  
5 July 2002