

**立法會**  
**Legislative Council**

LC Paper No. CB(2)526/03-04  
(These minutes have been  
seen by the Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/WS

**Panel on Welfare Services**

**Minutes of meeting**  
**held on Monday, 10 November 2003 at 10:45 am**  
**in Conference Room A of the Legislative Council Building**

**Members present** : Hon CHAN Yuen-han, JP (Chairman)  
Dr Hon LAW Chi-kwong, JP (Deputy Chairman)  
Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan  
Hon LEE Cheuk-yan  
Hon Fred LI Wah-ming, JP  
Hon Mrs Sophie LEUNG LAU Yau-fun, SBS, JP  
Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung  
Dr Hon YEUNG Sum  
Hon LI Fung-ying, JP  
Hon Henry WU King-cheong, BBS, JP  
Hon Michael MAK Kwok-fung  
Hon Albert CHAN Wai-yip  
Hon WONG Sing-chi  
Hon Frederick FUNG Kin-kee

**Members absent** : Dr Hon David CHU Yu-lin, JP  
Hon CHOY So-yuk

**Public Officers attending** : Item III  
Mr Paul TANG, JP  
Director of Social Welfare

Mr FUNG Pak-yan  
Assistant Director of Social Welfare (Family and Child  
Welfare)

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

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

**Deputations by invitation : Item III**

Concern Group on Single Parent Centres

Ms IP Lai-hing

Ms WONG Hoi-ling

Ms HO Foei-lin

Concern Alliance on the Development of Social Welfare

Ms CHENG Shuke-ching

Ms CHAN Ching-mei

Ms LEUNG Sau-chun

The Hong Kong Council of Social Service

Miss Betty WOO Shuk-sing

Miss Dora YEUNG Wai-han

Non-governmental Family Service Providers

Ms LAI Fung-yee

Mrs KWAN HO Siu-fong

Users of Integrated Family Service Centres

Mrs KONG

Ms CHENG Kwai-ying

Frontline Workers Providing Integrated Family Services

Ms WONG Mei-ching

Mr CHAN Chun-cheong

**Clerk in attendance** : Miss Mary SO  
Chief Assistant Secretary (2) 4

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**I. Information papers issued since the last meeting**

(LC Paper Nos. CB(2)172/03-04(01) and CB(2)214/03-04(01))

Members noted the following papers issued since the last meeting and did not raise any query -

- (a) Letter dated 15 October 2003 from the Social Work Assistant Branch of the Hong Kong Chinese Civil Servants' Association addressed to the Director of Social Welfare on the "Integrated Family Service Centre Delineation of Duties and Staff Establishment between Assistant Social Work Officer and Social Work Assistant Grade" and copied to members; and
- (b) A complaint considered by Duty Roster Members against the Administration's plan to re-engineer the existing family services prior to the expiry of the two-year evaluative study on the new Integrated Family Service Centre model in March 2004 and the Administration's response.

**II. Items for discussion at the next meeting**

(LC Paper No. CB(2)257/03-04(01))

2. Members agreed to discuss the following items proposed by the

Administration at the next regular meeting scheduled for 8 December 2003 -

- (a) Prevention measures against SARS among the elderly; and
- (b) Progress report on the Trust Fund for SARS.

Members further agreed that members of the Panel on Health Services should be invited to join the discussion of items (a) and (b).

3. Dr LAW Chi-kwong proposed to discuss the following items at future meetings -

- (a) Future directions on social welfare policies; and
- (b) Efficiency savings in relation to the provision of social welfare services.

4. Director of Social Welfare (DSW) responded that the issue of future directions on social welfare policies proposed by Dr LAW would be covered under social welfare planning mechanism, which was on the outstanding list of items for discussion. The Health, Welfare and Food Bureau was presently at work on the subject, which would be put to the Panel when ready. As regards the second item proposed by Dr LAW concerning efficiency savings in relation to the provision of social welfare services, DSW said that he would need to consult with the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau before reverting to members. The Chairman said that the Administration should brief members on these two items prior to the announcement of the annual budget by the Financial Secretary (FS) in March 2004, say, in January 2004. Members concurred.

**III. Interim report on the implementation of the review of family services**  
(LC Paper Nos. CB(2)257/03-04(02) to (05), CB(2)277/03-04(01) and (02) and CB(2)291/03-04(01))

5. At the invitation of the Chairman, Assistant Director of Social Welfare (ADSW) took members through the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. CB(2)257/03-04(02)) detailing the progress of consultations with the welfare sector on matters arising from the Interim Report on the Implementation of the Review of Family Services (the Interim Report) which was discussed at the last meeting on 7 July 2003.

6. The Chairman then invited deputations to give their views on the re-engineering of existing family service centres (FSCs)/counselling units into

Integrated Family Service Centres (IFSCs).

*Meeting with deputations*

Concern Group on Single Parent Centres (the Concern Group)  
(LC Paper No. CB(2)291/03-04(01))

7. Representatives of the Concern Group took members' through their submissions which opposed the Administration's plan to discontinue its funding to Single Parents Centres (SPCs). In view of the distinct needs of single parents, they were of the view that IFSCs could not replace the functions of SPCs which were specifically set up to target at single parent families in need. They pointed out that through these Centres, many single parents were able to overcome problems arising from single parenthood, restore resilience, build up a social and mutual help network, and improve their capability for self-reliance. Given the positive outcomes of SPCs, they urged the Administration to continue to fund SPCs and not to view funds allocated to SPCs as costs but social capital.

Concern Alliance on the Development of Social Welfare (the Concern Alliance)  
(LC Paper No. CB(2)257/03-04(04))

8. Ms CHENG Shuke-ching presented the views of the Concern Alliance as set out in its submission. Notably, the Concern Alliance opposed the pooling of resources from community centres with those from FSCs/counselling units to form IFSCs, having regard to the fact that the functions of community centres were distinctly different from that of FSCs/counselling units. There was the concern that merging of the units would lead to the erosion of the identity and the original functions of the community-based programmes. For example, social workers of community centres felt that the traditional mission of community work would be eroded and their community work practices and approaches, such as organising local residents for empowerment and advocacy, would be cutback. Moreover, the merits or otherwise of pooling resources from community centres into IFSCs had not undergone any evaluative study. The Concern Alliance however would accept agencies operating FSCs/counselling units to pool partial resources from community centres only if they did not have sufficient family services resources to form IFSCs and could meet the following criteria -

- (a) No service gaps would occur as a result of pooling of partial resources from community centres for the formation of IFSCs; and
- (b) Thorough consultation with staff and other stakeholders concerned should be conducted to obtain their support before implementation.

9. Ms LEUNG Sau-chun said that as a user of community centre, she was not aware that the Social Welfare Department (SWD) had consulted users of community centres on the pooling of resources from community centres to form IFSCs. Ms LEUNG opposed any integration of family and community-based services, having regard to the fact that the functions of these services were entirely different.

The Hong Kong Council of Social Service (HKCSS)  
(LC Paper No. CB(2)257/03-04(05))

10. Representatives of HKCSS highlighted the following views of HKCSS (represented by 12 non-governmental agencies (NGOs) operating FSCs/counselling units) as set out in its submission -

- (a) The use of the new IFSC model for the delivery of family service was a move in the right direction. Preparation should start now with target implementation date to be tentatively scheduled on 1 April 2004 if possible for some agencies;
- (b) Formation of IFSCs should be limited to agencies with FSCs/counselling units;
- (c) Merging and self-transformation should be used for the formation of IFSCs;
- (d) A bottom-up approach should be adopted in the pooling of resources for the formation of IFSCs;
- (e) Agencies operating FSCs/counselling units should be allowed to pool partial resources from community centres only if they did not have sufficient resources to form IFSCs. In so doing, every effort should be made to obtain the support of staff and stakeholders and that no service gap would occur as a result;
- (f) Services provided by IFSCs should be based on the needs of the districts they served; and
- (g) The formation of IFSCs should not obviate the need for specialised services to cater for a particular group in need, and the re-engineered IFSCs should continue to work in close partnership and collaboration with different community groups and service units to best meet the needs of the districts.

Non-governmental Family Service Providers  
(LC Paper No. CB(2)277/03-04(01))

11. Introducing their submission, representatives of the Non-governmental Family Service Providers said that they were in support of the following recommendations made by the Working Group on the Implementation of the Review of Family Services on Re-engineering (the Working Group) in September 2003 -

- (a) Preparation for re-engineering should start now and a tentative implementation date, say, April 2004 should be set. The aim was to work out a blue print for the entire re-engineering exercise by that date;
- (b) Priority should be given to agencies operating FSCs/counselling units to be transformed into IFSCs;
- (c) Merging and self-transformation should be used for the formation of IFSCs. Partial integration should however also be allowed but only for community centres (given its strength of manpower) on a case-by-case basis and with strong justifications to be provided by the agencies concerned. Should partial pooling be considered, the operating agency had to ensure that there would not be overlapping in the functions and services of the remaining community centre and those of the transformed IFSC; and
- (d) SWD should maintain an open mind in considering agencies' proposal of pooling of resources, and flexibility should also be given to pooling of resources beyond family services on individual request.

Representatives of the Non-governmental Family Service Providers also urged for the early re-engineering of family services into IFSCs, as any further delay would undermine the morale of family service workers who had expressed readiness for the re-engineering to provide better support to families in Hong Kong.

Users of Integrated Family Service Centres  
(LC Paper No. CB(2)277/03-04(02))

12. Referring to their submission, representatives of the Users of Integrated Family Service Centres expressed support for the plan to re-engineer existing FSCs/counselling units into IFSCs, as they found IFSC was a more user-friendly and effective mode of family service than conventional FCS.

### Frontline Workers Providing Integrated Family Services

13. Representatives of Frontline Workers Providing Integrated Family Services fully agreed that IFSC was a more desirable mode of service delivery than the traditional FSCs, as evidenced by the improved accessibility, availability of a continuum of services in an integrated manner, and greater user satisfaction and participation.

#### *Discussion*

14. Referring to the comments made by Ms LEUNG Sau-chun in paragraph 9 above that SWD had failed to consult users of community centres on the re-engineering of family services, Mrs Sophie LEUNG opined that the responsibility of conducting consultation should not solely lie on the Administration. It was also incumbent upon the agencies concerned to do the same. Given that IFSC was generally agreed as a better mode of service delivery for helping family with needs, Mrs LEUNG asked Ms LEUNG Sau-chun what her worries were in this regard and how the formation of IFSCs would affect the services which she could receive from a community centre.

15. Ms LEUNG Sau-chun responded that she did not oppose the formation of IFSCs. She however was concerned that integration of family and community-based services would undermine or deprive her of the opportunity to participate in community work, which had been integral to her regaining self-confidence and self-worth.

16. DSW pointed out that although agencies operating FSCs/counselling units would be asked to pool family service resources primarily for the formation of IFSCs, SWD would maintain an open mind in considering agencies' proposal of pooling resources beyond family service resources, such as those from community centres. If pooling of resources beyond family service resources was proposed, the agencies concerned should provide strong justifications, conduct thorough staff consultation and solicit adequate buy-in of stakeholders before making their proposals.

17. On the question raised by the Chairman as to whether resources from SPCs would be considered resources beyond family service resources, DSW replied in the negative. DSW explained that resources beyond family service resources were those such as Neighbourhood Level Community Development Projects (NLCDPs) and community centres.

18. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan said that the Administration should have regard to the concerns expressed by users of SPCs. Noting that the annual recurrent



expenditure of the existing five SPCs was in the region of \$8.5 million, Mr LEE asked whether this sum would be deployed to IFSCs for providing services to single parents.

19. DSW responded that IFSCs could meet the needs of single parents, as evidenced by the findings of the 15 pilot IFSC projects which revealed that many of the users were widowed, divorced or separated. Moreover, given the varied and comprehensive family services provided by IFSCs, single parents were able to receive more services than they could receive at SPCs, e.g. more in-depth counselling. DSW further said that SWD was in discussion with some agencies operating SPCs on transforming SPCs into self-financing units providing mutual help services to the needy.

20. As regards pooling of resources from SPCs into IFSCs, DSW pointed out that the existing five SPCs were only time-limited projects and any pooling of their resources would be temporary. ADSW supplemented that SWD had made clear with the agencies concerned from the outset that funding to SPCs was limited to three years from 1 February 2001 to 31 January 2004. It was the Administration's aim for support services for single parent families to be integrated with mainstream family services in the long run. The University of Hong Kong (HKU), which was commissioned by SWD to conduct a eight-month study on review of family welfare services in August 2000, also recommended, amongst others, that a new service delivery model of IFSCs should be adopted to address service fragmentation and overlapping. To take forward the IFSC model recommended by HKU, a total of 15 pilot IFSC projects were selected by the Working Group in January 2002, to be implemented for two years, from April 2002 to March 2004. From the experience of the pilot projects, it was revealed that this new service delivery model was well received by the widowed, divorced or separated who made up 30% of the total number of IFSC users. With the full implementation of the review of family services, about 60 IFSCs would be set up across the territory, which would greatly improve the coverage and accessibility to single parents. Moreover, an IFSC would have a minimum staff provision of at least 12-14 social workers, as opposed to only five staff at each SPC, not to mention that an IFSC could provide single parents with more comprehensive and integrated support than that could be provided by a SPC.

21. ADSW then briefed members on a series of tide-over measures to help SPCs to transform into self-financing units providing mutual help services to the needy. For instance, SWD would extend its funding to these SPCs for two more months until end of March 2004. Any surplus accrued after that date could be retained by the SPCs concerned. With the surplus, some SPCs could continue to operate for another two months to one year. If they so wished, the transformed self-financing units could use the premises previously occupied by SPCs and apply

for reimbursement of rent/rates/Government rent under a subsidy scheme. To his knowledge, only one SPC would vacate from its premises to make way for the setting up of an IFSC, while four SPCs had plans to keep the premises for providing self-financing services for the needy. SWD would also continue to pay the salaries of the programme assistants employed by SPCs till May 2004. SPCs might also develop employment programmes for the needy (including single parents) and in this connection, apply for funding support under the Intensive Employment Assistance Project (IEAP). To date, one SPC had successfully obtained funds to run an IEAP. Assistance would also be considered if SPCs wished to apply for the Community Investment and Inclusion Fund (CIIF) for running projects that aligned with the ambit of the Fund in promoting social capital. ADSW further said that transforming subvented service units into self-financing units as a result of re-engineering was not unprecedented. For instance, as a result of the recent re-engineering of community support services for elders, about 40 social centres for the elderly were transformed to self-financing units with no problems encountered by them thus far.

22. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan maintained his view that the re-engineering of family services was about cost savings, and urged the Administration to re-consider its plan to close down the existing five SPCs. Mr Albert CHAN echoed similar views, and strongly reprimanded the Administration for imprudent use of taxpayers' money by ceasing to fund SPCs beyond March 2004 and instead subsidising \$80 million for the "Hong Kong Harbour Fest". The Chairman said that to allay public concern about the Administration using re-engineering of welfare services to save costs, the Administration should expeditiously brief members on the future directions of social welfare policies.

23. ADSW stressed that the Department had clarified and assured that the issue of efficiency savings would be considered separately from this exercise. As mentioned at the last meeting of the Panel on 7 July 2003, the re-engineering exercise would not reduce allocation of resources to the welfare sector.

24. Ms LI Fung-ying said that staff of FSCs/counselling units were supportive of the new service delivery model of IFSCs, but some of them, particularly those from the smaller operating agencies, were very concerned that they would be made redundant as a result of the re-engineering exercise. In the light of this, Ms LI asked about the measures which would be taken to ensure that this would not happen.

25. ADSW responded that the implementation of the re-engineering of family services would not give rise to staff redundancy in SWD. As regards the concern that staff working at smaller agencies providing family services would be made redundant because of larger agencies taking up all the formation of IFSCs, ADSW

said that there was no question of such a situation. ADSW pointed out that in order to help those smaller agencies not having sufficient FSCs/counselling units resources to form an IFSC, the Administration had proposed to allow them to pool other family service resources and/or resources beyond family services on request.

26. Mr Albert CHAN hoped that the Administration would give due weight to the concerns of affected staff to avoid turning the re-engineering of family services from a good thing to a bad thing. Mr CHAN further said that although the re-engineering was a move in the right direction, it still lagged far behind the desired model of full integration of delivery of social welfare services. In the light of this and given that each IFSC would serve a large population ranging from 100 000 to 150 000, Mr CHAN asked for a blueprint on the types of family services to be provided by IFSCs in each SWD district and the benefits to users and stakeholders.

(The Chairman sought members' view at this juncture on deferring the discussion of the next agenda item on "A report of the study to evaluate the effectiveness of Social Welfare Department's enhanced District Social Welfare Office Functions" to the next meeting in December 2003, due to time constraint. Members agreed.)

27. DSW responded that thorough consultation with staff and stakeholders on the re-engineering exercise had been carried out during the past few months. Appreciating the Department's efforts in consulting concerned organisations and achieving consensus with the NGO family service providers, the Social Welfare Advisory Committee (SWAC) was of the view that for the interest of service users and for more effective and efficient use of resources, service integration should be the right direction. It followed that preparation for transformation should start now with a view to working out a blue print for the entire re-engineering exercise by April 2004. Regarding the concerns of frontline staff, SWAC advised that the NGO boards/management committees should take the management responsibility to get buy-in of their staff and other stakeholders concerned before they put up their re-engineering proposals. To ensure that IFSCs could achieve the desired effects, SWD was also advised to conduct more sharing sessions, training seminars, etc. to help the sector get more familiar with the IFSC model and approach and to facilitate change of mindset, so as to better prepare the sector for the changes which would be brought about by this re-engineering exercise. SWD headquarters and District Social Welfare Officers (DSWOs) would also get in touch with the agencies operating FSCs/counselling units to discuss their proposals with a view to avoiding service gaps and preventing duplication of resources.

28. Dr LAW Chi-kwong said that at a briefing meeting held in June 2003, it was said that FSCs/counselling units not having sufficient resources to form an

IFSC would be allowed to pool resources from other family services such as Post-migration Centres (PMCs) and SPCs. At the meeting of this Panel in July 2003, the then DSW further said that as some family service units were time-limited projects, preparation for the re-engineering exercise should not be further delayed lest the agencies concerned could not pool the resources from the time-limited projects to form IFSCs. In the light of this, Dr LAW considered it inconceivable that if it had all along been the position of SWD not to deploy funds, previously used on SPCs, to NGOs operating IFSCs.

29. ADSW responded that the Administration had never promised that funds of time-limited projects could be deployed for operating IFSCs on a permanent basis. ADSW referred members to paragraph 18(d) of the Administration's paper to the Panel on 7 July 2003 entitled "Interim Report on the Implementation of the Review of Family Services" (LC Paper No. CB(2)2750/02-03(04)) which read "FSCs/counselling units not having sufficient resources to form an IFSC will be allowed to pool resources from other family services including Family Life Education units, Family Aide service, Family Support and Resource Centres, PMCs and SPCs, noting that four PMCs and five SPCs are only time-limited projects and any pooling of their resources is temporary". ADSW further said that in the briefing held in June 2003, the Administration had not promised to turn the time-limited funding to SPCs into a permanent one.

30. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung said that as there must be good reasons for setting up the five SPCs in the first place, it was reprehensible that the Administration should decide not to continue to fund these Centres after the expiry of their three years' funding period without first evaluating their effectiveness. Mr Frederick FUNG echoed similar views. Mr LEUNG then asked the Administration to give an undertaking that the re-engineering of family services would not take away resources from community centres and NLCDPs.

31. DSW responded that the Report on the Review of Family Services in Hong Kong (2001) conducted by the Consultants from HKU recommended to adopt the new service delivery model of IFSCs to address service fragmentation and overlapping. Besides, it was questioned if a separate centre with a small number of staff was cost-effective. The intention of the re-engineering of family services was not to save resources, but to ensure that existing resources were used in a more cost-effective manner. DSW further said that the Administration believed that helping service users of SPCs to form mutual help groups should address their call for maintaining their own social and mutual help network after the closing down of SPCs.

32. On pooling of resources from community centres and NLCDPs to form IFSCs, ADSW reiterated that as a rule of thumb, family service resources would

be pooled primarily for the formation of IFSCs. However, agencies operating FSCs/counselling units and not having sufficient family service resources to form IFSCs would be allowed to pool resources beyond family service including partial pooling of resources from community centres. The concerned NGOs should provide strong justifications, conduct thorough staff consultation and solicit adequate buy-in of stakeholders before making their proposals to SWD for pooling of resources beyond family service resources. ADSW further said that to date, no NGOs had proposed to pool resources from NLCDPs to form IFSCs and only two NGOs had indicated their intention to pool resources from community centres to form IFSCs.

33. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung was of the view that if an agency did not have sufficient resources to form an IFSC, the Administration should provide it with the shortfall instead of allowing the agency concerned to pool resources from community centres. Mr LEUNG further said that the Administration should not readily accept the views of the Consultants commissioned to review family services that the IFSC was a more effective model for the delivery of family services, without first evaluating the effectiveness of SPCs.

34. ADSW responded that the Administration had made clear from the outset that the re-engineering plan would not involve additional resources, nor would it be for cutting back expenditure. Although no additional resources would be given to agencies operating FSCs/counselling units to form IFSCs, it was envisaged that the re-engineering exercise would result in more efficient use of resources through removal of service duplication. As to whether SWD would approve the proposals of pooling resources from community centres to form IFSCs, ADSW said that this would depend on whether the agencies concerned could provide strong justifications to do so. To his understanding, one of the reasons for consideration of pooling community centre resources by agencies concerned was where services provided by community centres and IFSCs were located at the same premises and operated by the same agencies. The purpose was to remove service overlapping, deploy resources in a more efficient manner, and reduce confusion to service users.

35. Dr Joe LEUNG of HKU said that although the adoption of the new IFSC model was recommended by the Consultants commissioned by SWD to review family services, findings of the evaluative study on the 15 pilot IFSCs confirmed that IFSCs could meet the needs of vulnerable populations. Focus groups with users also revealed high user satisfaction. Most noticeable was that users no longer felt inhibited to come forward to seek assistance for fear of being viewed as weak and useless. Dr LEUNG pointed out that the present evaluative study on the 15 pilot IFSCs did not cover SPCs, therefore the consultants did not have the mandate to make recommendations on closing down of the five SPCs after the

expiry of their three years' funding period. Dr LEUNG however pointed out that many IFSC users were widowed, divorced or separated, who found the services they received from IFSCs could better meet their needs than from existing units providing family services. Moreover, given the wide coverage of IFSCs upon full implementation, needs of single parents should be better met than by the existing five SPCs.

36. On the issue of pooling of resources from community centres to form IFSCs, Dr LEUNG said that many community centres had initially expressed interest to pool their resources with that of family service units to form IFSCs. However, once they realised that family services would be the core business of IFSCs, they lost interest in integrating into IFSCs. Dr LEUNG further said that if the welfare sector could not take up the planned number of IFSCs to be operated by NGOs, SWD could always make up the shortfall on its own.

37. Mr Frederick FUNG said that pooling resources from NLCDPs to form IFSCs should not be allowed, as community development was entirely different from helping family in crisis. In the light of this, Mr FUNG asked whether SWD could give a guarantee that it would not support proposals from agencies of pooling of resources from NLCDPs to form IFSCs if this was strongly opposed by the staff concerned. In response, DSW said that SWD would consider each proposal for the pooling of resources beyond family services very carefully, including views from the staff concerned.

38. Ms Cyd HO said that it was doubtful whether IFSCs could replace SPCs, as the relationship which the social workers had struck with single parents and the social and mutual help network which single parents had developed amongst themselves could not be so easily transplanted and taken root at IFSCs. Mr WONG Sing-chi expressed similar views. He further said that the measures mentioned in paragraph 21 above to help SPCs to transform into self-financing units was unsatisfactory, and some measures, such as funding from CIIF, were time-limited. The Chairman shared the concern expressed by Mr WONG.

39. ADSW reiterated that as revealed in the Interim Report, users of the 15 pilot IFSCs mainly consisted of new arrivals, low-income families and the widowed/divorced/separated, with the latter making up some 30% of the total number of users. Based on feedback from users through focus group meeting, the positioning of IFSCs targetting at the vulnerable populations had been confirmed.

40. Mr WONG Sing-chi expressed concern as to whether SWD could effectively monitor the operation of IFSCs to ensure they could meet local district needs under the existing Lump Sum Grant arrangement.

41. Dr Joe LEUNG said that he was not in a position to comment on the monitoring of the operation of IFSCs. However, he believed that DSWOs would play an important role in identifying local district needs and in mobilising IFSCs in their respective districts to meet such needs. Dr LEUNG further said that as there would generally be three to four IFSCs in each district, co-ordination of services amongst them was essential. Dr LEUNG pointed out that at present, there was much service overlapping in the provision of family services, as different operating agencies and SWD had their own service boundaries. This however would not be the case under the IFSC model, as each IFSC would have a clear and independent service boundary. Moreover, unlike the existing FSCs which were casework-dominated, remedial in nature and relying too much on professional input in a formalised office setting, IFSCs would adopt a more proactive and diversified approach to reach the hard-to-reach groups, develop stronger networks and ties with other community-based service units in exploring more informal but equally effective approaches and resources to support families.

#### *Conclusion*

42. The Chairman said that members did not object to the pooling of resources from FSCs/counselling units to form IFSC, but they were of the view that services currently received by users of SPCs should be allowed to continue after the expiry of their three years' funding period. The Chairman sought members' view on how they would like to take the matter forward.

43. Mr Albert CHAN was of the view that the five SPCs should be integrated with IFSCs in their respective district, with the Administration continuing to provide resources for them under IFSCs.

44. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan was of the view that the Administration should continue to fund the five SPCs for another three years. In the interim, SWD should conduct a study to find out which services provided to single parents under SPCs and IFSCs were more better received by users.

45. Dr LAW Chi-kwong said that in principle, he had no objection to incorporating SPCs into IFSCs, on the condition that resources from SPCs would be pooled into IFSCs. More importantly, the level and quality of services received by users of SPCs could be continued under IFSCs. Dr LAW however pointed out that of all the operating agencies of the five SPCs, only one had the resources to form an IFSC.

46. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung said that he had no objection to the formation of IFSCs, but was adamant that in so doing, funding to specialised service resources,

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say, from community centres, NLCDPs and SPCs should not be affected.

Clerk

47. In summing up, the Chairman said that members were supportive of the new IFSC model, but funding to SPCs should continue until there were findings to support that IFSCs could meet the needs of single parents. The Chairman suggested and members agreed that the Chairman should, on behalf of the Panel, write to DSW conveying members' views on the handling of SPCs. Members further agreed that the letter to DSW should be copied to FS. The draft letter would be circularised to members for consideration before sending out to DSW.

*(Post-meeting note : The letter to DSW and copied to FS was issued on 26 November 2003.)*

#### **IV. Any other business**

48. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 1:20 pm.

Council Business Division 2  
Legislative Council Secretariat  
5 December 2003