

**立法會**  
**Legislative Council**

LC Paper No. CB(2)1873/05-06  
(These minutes have been  
seen by the Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/WS

**Panel on Welfare Services**

**Minutes of meeting**  
**held on Tuesday, 21 March 2006 at 9:30 am**  
**in the Chamber of the Legislative Council Building**

**Members present** : Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung (Chairman)  
Hon CHAN Yuen-han, JP (Deputy Chairman)  
Hon James TIEN Pei-chun, GBS, JP  
Hon LEE Cheuk-yan  
Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP  
Hon LI Fung-ying, BBS, JP  
Hon Albert CHAN Wai-yip  
Hon Frederick FUNG Kin-kee, JP  
Hon Alan LEONG Kah-kit, SC

**Members absent** : Hon Albert HO Chun-yan  
Hon Bernard CHAN, JP  
Hon Mrs Sophie LEUNG LAU Yau-fun, SBS, JP  
Dr Hon YEUNG Sum  
Hon LEUNG Kwok-hung

**Public Officers attending** : Items IV and V  
Mrs Mary MA  
Commissioner for Rehabilitation  
Health, Welfare and Food Bureau

Mr SIT Tung  
Assistant Director of Social Welfare  
(Rehabilitation & Medical Social Services)

Mrs Agnes LI CHAN Chui-ngan  
Chief Social Work Officer  
(Rehabilitation & Medical Social Services) 1  
Social Welfare Department

Item IV

Mr Paul TANG, JP  
Director of Social Welfare

**Deputations  
by invitation** : Items IV and V

1<sup>st</sup> Step Association

Ms TSO Wing-yu

Ms KWONG Suet-yi  
Programme Co-ordinator

The Parents' Association of Pre-School Handicapped  
Children

Mrs Julie LEE LAU Chu-lai  
Vice Chairperson

The Association of Parents of the Severely Mentally  
Handicapped

Ms CHENG Yee-man  
Vice Chairperson

Ms HO Wai-ngan  
Clerk

The Hong Kong Joint Council of Parents of the Mentally Handicapped

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Mr LAW Kin-ping  
Executive Committee Member

Item IV

The Hong Kong Council of Social Service

Mr KUO Chun-chuen  
Rehabilitation Officer

Department of Social Work and Social Administration, The  
University of Hong Kong

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Ms Phyllis WONG King-shui  
Fieldwork Supervisor

Rights and Service Advocacy Group of the Hong Kong Joint  
Council of Parents of the Mentally Handicapped

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Ms LAM Sai-deep  
Member

Concern Group on Private Hostel for People with  
Disabilities

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Miss WU Shim-man  
Representative

Item V

The Hong Kong Council of Social Service

Mr Philip YUEN  
Rehabilitation Chief Officer

**Clerk in attendance** : Ms Doris CHAN  
Chief Council Secretary (2) 4

**Staff in attendance** : Miss Mary SO  
Senior Council Secretary (2) 8

Miss Maggie CHIU  
Legislative Assistant (2) 4

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**I. Confirmation of minutes**  
(LC Paper No. CB(2)1388/05-06)

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 February 2006 were confirmed.

**II. Information paper(s) issued since the last meeting**

2. The Chairman suggested that the information paper entitled “Project for modification of Government offices to facilitate access of people with disabilities” (LC Paper No. CB(2)1438/05-06(01)) provided by the Administration be discussed at the regular meeting in June 2006 when the Panel would continue discussion on the consultancy study for the review of the Design Manual : Barrier Free Access 1997. Members agreed.

**III. Items for discussion at the next meeting**  
(LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1389/05-06(01) and (02))

3. Members noted that review of Disability Allowance under the Social Security Allowance Scheme had been scheduled for discussion at the next regular meeting to be held on 10 April 2006 at 10:45 am.

4. The Chairman reminded members that a special meeting of the Panel to discuss the Special One-off Grant had been scheduled for 30 March 2006. The meeting time had been changed from 2:30 pm to 4:30 pm to avoid clashing with the Chief Executive’s Question and Answer Session which would last from 2:30 pm to 4:30 pm on 30 March 2006.

5. Mr TAM Yiu-chung hoped that the holding of special meetings of the Panel could be kept to a minimum, in view of the heavy meeting commitments of members.

#### **IV. Private homes for people with disabilities**

(LC Paper No. CB(2)1389/05-06(03))

6. The Chairman expressed dissatisfaction that the Administration disclosed the contents of the Administration's paper about the measures the Administration intended to take with regard to private homes for people with disabilities (PWDs) one day before the same paper was provided to the Secretariat in the morning of 17 March 2006. As a result, he was unable to respond to the questions asked by the media on the matter on 16 March 2006. The Chairman pointed out that this was not the first time the Administration had released information to the media before providing it to Members, and urged the Administration not to do so in the future.

7. At the invitation of Chairman, Assistant Director of Social Welfare (Rehabilitation & Medical Social Services) (ADSW(R&MSS)) introduced the Administration's paper which set out the measures the Administration intended to take with regard to private homes for PWDs.

#### Deputations' views

8. Representatives from the following organisations gave their views on the quality of services in the private homes for PWDs, details of which were set out in their respective submissions -

- (a) Hong Kong Council of Social Service (HKCSS) (LC Paper No. CB(2)1501/05-06(01));
- (b) The Association of Parents of the Severely Mentally Handicapped (LC Paper No. CB(2)1501/05-06(02));
- (c) The Hong Kong Joint Council of Parents of the Mentally Handicapped (LC Paper No. CB(2)1501/05-06(03));
- (d) Department of Social Work and Social Administration, the University of Hong Kong (LC Paper No. CB(2)1501/05-06(04));  
and
- (e) Concern Group on Private Hostel for People with Disabilities (LC Paper No. CB(2)1501/05-06(05)).

9. Representatives of the 1<sup>st</sup> Step Association told the meeting of the poor quality of services in a private home for PWDs located in the New Territories occupying village houses, such as having only three staff to look after over 100

residents, cramped environment, poor ventilation and lack of ramps and space for wheelchairs to manoeuvre.

10. Mrs Julie LEE LAU Chu-lai of the Parents' Association of Pre-School Handicapped Children welcomed the Administration's plan to introduce a licensing scheme for subvented and self-financing homes for PWDs run by non-governmental organisations (NGOs), as well as private homes for this group of people. Mrs LEE also welcomed the Administration's plan to establish a designated team in April 2006 to map out measures to strengthen the monitoring of the quality of services in the private homes prior to the introduction of the licensing scheme. She hoped that stakeholders, such as parent associations and home operators, would be included in the team, and Social Welfare Department (SWD) staff, who had experience in the licensing of elderly homes, would also be enlisted to provide advice to the team. Mrs LEE urged the Administration to expeditiously come up with a timetable for implementing the licensing scheme for homes for PWDs, as well as formulating short/medium/long terms goals on addressing the residential needs of PWDs.

11. To better safeguard the welfare of residents currently living in private homes for PWDs prior to the implementation of the licensing regime for homes for this group of people, Mrs LEE said that SWD should arrange for its social workers to regularly visit these private homes to assess their quality of services and, to arrange, where appropriate, for the residents to receive vocational rehabilitation training or community support services under SWD. Consideration should also be given to providing on-site training to staff of the private homes.

12. Ms LAM Sai-deep of the Rights and Service Advocacy Group of the Hong Kong Joint Council of Parents of the Mentally Handicapped urged the Administration to expeditiously regulate private homes for PWDs in order to safeguard the welfare of the residents. Ms LAM said that under the existing standardised assessment mechanism for residential services for PWDs, the chance of her moderately mentally handicapped daughter being admitted to a subvented home was slim. The unsatisfactory condition of privately-run homes was a major concern to the parents of PWDs at present.

#### The Administration's response

13. Director of Social Welfare (DSW) responded as follows -

- (a) it would continue to be the Administration's policy to provide residential services for PWDs mainly through subvention to NGOs. Bid for additional resources would continue to be made to increase

subvented places to meet demand. In addition, the Administration would continue to encourage NGOs to provide self-financing places for PWDs;

- (b) despite (a) above, there were various reasons for the private homes to exist. Some residents were waiting for placement in subvented homes. Others stayed there because their family members might prefer the private homes' location and less restriction such as not being required to take the residents for home leave;
- (c) the condition of the private homes had been an issue of concern to the Administration. In the light of this, the Administration agreed in principle to introduce in the long run a licensing scheme for these homes in order to further safeguard the welfare of the residents. As homes for PWDs also included subvented homes and self-financing homes run by NGOs, it was understandable that any sort of licensing regime should also apply to the existing 232 subvented homes and self-financing homes run by NGOs. The Administration's direction in regulating homes for PWDs was supported by the Working Group on the Rehabilitation Programme Plan 2005;
- (d) the Administration would strive to expedite the regulation of homes for PWDs. Despite the existence of the Code of Practice for Residential Care Homes for Persons with Disabilities (Code of Practice) which served as a guide to operators on the minimum standard of services as well as a basis for SWD to provide advice and guidance to the private homes, two years were the minimum time required for introducing a bill on the licensing scheme into the Legislative Council (LegCo), for the reasons already given in paragraph 8 of the Administration's paper;
- (e) stakeholders, such as home operators and family members of service users, as well as LegCo Members would be consulted before deciding on the regulatory regime for PWDs;
- (f) it was hoped that members of the public would not only look to residential services as the only option in caring for the disabled, and ignore the wide range of support services available to the disabled living in the community. Funds had been allocated to provide convalescent and continuing rehabilitation day services to discharged patients with mental, neurological or physical impairments, and to strengthen training and support services for

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family members and carers of PWDs through various rehabilitation services programmes in 2006-07; and

- (g) prior to the implementation of a licensing scheme, a voluntary registration scheme (VRS) would also be implemented to encourage the operators to enhance the quality of their services. SWD would discuss with individual homes on improvements to be made and funding support might be considered, on a case by case basis, for individual private homes to carry out improvement works. For those private homes which had made such improvements, their names would be listed on SWD's home page to help the public to better identify suitable private homes for disabled family members and hopefully as an incentive to the homes to make improvements. To his understanding, some private homes were keen on improving their services.

Discussion

14. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan considered that the main reason why it would take the Administration two years before a bill on the licensing regime for homes for PWDs could be introduced into LegCo was because SWD needed to conduct a survey of the situation of all the 259 homes (232 subvention homes and self-financing homes plus 27 private homes). Mr LEE questioned the need for conducting the survey, as SWD should be well aware of the condition of these homes, the majority of which were subvented by the Department. Mr LEE wondered whether the reason for doing so was that the Administration would know the costs that would entail to bring the condition of these homes up to standards, prior to determining the licensing requirements. Mr LEE further asked whether additional resources would be allocated to SWD to provide more subvented places for PWDs so as to shorten the waiting time for placement in subvented homes.

15. DSW responded as follows -

- (a) the reason for conducting a survey of the situation of all the 259 homes was to find out whether, and if so, the extent of improvement works that needed to be carried out. Although subvented homes in general had no problem with their software, some of them, due to long years in service, might need to undergo renovation works or reprovisioning in order to comply with the latest buildings and/or fire safety requirements, among others;
- (b) two years were a realistic timeframe to come up with a bill on the

licensing regime for homes for PWDs, in order to work out the appropriate licensing requirements, taking into account the special situation of these homes, and to consult the home operators and parents of service users;

- (c) it should be pointed out that the licensing regime for elderly homes took some six years to set up. Although the number of elderly homes far exceeded that of homes for PWDs, different types of disabilities might have very different service needs which would make setting of licensing conditions more complicated; and
- (d) while efforts would continue to be made to bid for new resources to provide additional subvented residential places for PWDs, finding suitable premises for homes for PWDs was often met with resistance from residents living in the vicinity.

16. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan said that in order to speed up the long overdue regulation of homes for PWDs, the Administration should expeditiously lay down the licensing requirements for these homes for PWDs on its own. For those homes which were unable to fully comply with the licensing requirements, a conditional licence might be granted to allow time for these homes to upgrade their services and carry out the necessary improvement works for compliance with the licensing requirements.

17. DSW responded that to lay down the licensing requirements without first understanding the special situation of the homes subject to regulation would give rise to more problems in the end, if all or most of the homes were unable to fully comply with the licensing requirements. DSW further said that in view of the many different types of disabilities, the licensing requirements for homes for PWDs required time to hammer out so as to ensure that the licensing regime could help to raise the service quality of the homes and at the same time meet the needs of different types of disabled persons.

18. Mr LEE Chuk-yan asked the Administration whether it would give an undertaking that it would not provide an adaptation period for homes for PWDs to fully comply with the licensing requirements, if it insisted on conducting a survey of the situation of all the 259 homes. DSW responded that he could not give such an undertaking without conducting the survey and consulting the sector.

19. The Chairman said that he also could not understand why the Administration needed two years to introduce a bill on the licensing of homes for PWDs into LegCo, having regard to the fact that services provided by all the 232

subvented homes and self-financing homes were currently being monitored by SWD. Under the Funding and Service Agreements and the Service Quality Standards, a Code of Practice serving as a guide to operators on the minimum standard of service had been put in place. Moreover, there was experience gained from the licensing of elderly homes.

20. Mrs Julie LEE said that although she was very concerned that the regulation of private homes for PWDs should be implemented as soon as possible, careful consideration of the appropriate licensing requirements was more important. Mrs LEE hoped that a working group comprising all stakeholders, such as parent associations, on formulating the licensing requirements and related issues should be set up. Mrs LEE further said that she had reservation about SWD's plan to provide on-site training to staff of the private homes through its Home-based Training and Support (HBTS) Service, as this would undermine the service currently provided to PWDs living in the community and their families.

21. ADSW(R&MSS) responded as follows -

- (a) additional resources would be allocated if the HBTS service was engaged to provide on-site training to staff of the private homes. SWD was also considering providing training to staff of the private homes under the VRS through group training outside the homes and/or on-site training; and
- (b) a dedicated consultative group comprising all stakeholders, such as home operators and parents of PWDs, would be set up to give advice on the licensing requirements and related issues prior to the law drafting work on licensing rehabilitation homes.

22. Ms LI Fung-ying asked SWD to provide the timetable and the money involved in helping private homes for PWDs to enhance the quality of their services prior to the implementation of the licensing scheme, and the standards that these homes had to meet in the interim.

23. DSW hoped that all private homes could meet the minimum standard of service set out in the Code of Practice in order to be included in the VRS list. The preparation work for the VRS for the private homes would start immediately and it was estimated that the scheme could be implemented by end of 2006. Regarding the money involved in helping private homes to enhance the quality of their services, DSW said that it was very difficult to state an exact sum as the circumstances of each private home varied. SWD would discuss with individual homes on improvements to be made and funding support might be considered on a case by case basis for individual homes to carry out improvement

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works. To prevent people from operating private homes for PWDs because of the funding support which SWD might provide to help them carry out improvement works, DSW said that SWD would take this into account when devising the VRS for private homes.

24. Mr Albert CHAN asked about the measures which SWD would take to ensure that residents of the private homes would not be maltreated prior to the implementation of the licensing scheme.

25. ADSW(R&MSS) responded that SWD would increase the number of visits to private homes. He also pointed out that SWD would remove those private homes already on the VRS list from the list if they were later found to provide unsatisfactory services. If circumstances warranted, arrangements would be made for the maltreated residents of private homes, regardless of whether these homes had joined the VRS or otherwise, to move to another home.

26. Mr Albert CHAN queried how SWD would know whether the residents of private homes were being maltreated by the home operators without conducting surprise visits to private homes, as most of these residents were not capable of making their plight known to others, not least to their family members.

27. DSW responded that prior to the implementation of the licensing scheme for homes for PWDs, the frequency of regular liaison visits to the private homes would be increased from two to four times per year. In addition, ad hoc and unscheduled visits would be conducted as and when necessary, for instance, in response to complaints. DSW further said that in considering conducting unscheduled visits to private homes, due regard would have to be given to maintaining a partnership with the operators in implementing a licensing scheme. SWD considered it important for the public and family members of service users to report any maltreatment cases to SWD. To that end, a plan was underway to set up a hotline for complaints against the operation of homes for PWDs.

28. Mr Albert CHAN maintained his view that regular liaison visits to the private homes were not effective in preventing maltreatment of residents living in these homes. Mr CHAN requested SWD to provide information on the advice given to private homes during their regular liaison visits to these homes in the past year. DSW agreed to provide the information after the meeting.

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29. Miss CHAN Yuen-han shared members' view that taking at least two years to introduce a bill on the licensing regime for homes for PWDs into LegCo was unacceptably long. Miss CHAN urged the Administration to speed up the formulation of licensing scheme for homes for PWDs by drawing reference from overseas jurisdictions which had a long history of regulating these homes.

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Miss CHAN concurred with Mr Albert CHAN that increasing the frequency of regular liaison visits to the private homes from two to four times in a year was far from effective to deter these homes from maltreating their residents, if these visits were not interspersed with unannounced ones. This was evidenced by the fact that most of the problems occurred in the private homes were exposed by the media rather than by SWD through its visits to these homes. Miss CHAN further urged SWD to intervene, if a particular private home was found to provide unsatisfactory services.

30. DSW responded as follows -

- (a) before a licensing scheme was in place, SWD considered the existing approach of encouraging private homes to enhance the quality of their services far more effective. If a private home was unwilling to enhance the quality of its services, it would not be able to meet the eventual licensing requirements or would be driven out by market force;
- (b) any complaints against a private home for PWDs that had a criminal element would be dealt with seriously, and referral to the Police would be made; and
- (c) SWD would also draw reference from overseas experience on regulating homes for PWDs, but it should be pointed out that not all overseas experience could be applied to Hong Kong. An example was that due to land constraint, homes for PWDs in Hong Kong might be provided in multi-story buildings.

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31. At the request of Miss CHAN Yuen-han, DSW undertook to provide a timetable on the licensing scheme for rehabilitation homes for PWDs and the relevant actions to be taken in the coming two years before the draft bill is introduced into LegCo.

32. Mr Frederick FUNG echoed members' concern about the long lead time required to implement the licensing regime for homes for PWDs, and suggested that the Administration should enact legislation to regulate homes for PWDs within one year and allow another year for homes to adapt to the licensing requirements. Prior to the implementation of the licensing scheme, Mr FUNG suggested that SWD should publicise those homes which could meet the minimum standard of services and those which could not, and buy places from reputable homes to accommodate people who had been maltreated in private homes.

33. DSW responded as follows -

- (a) the reasons for the time required to regulate homes for PWDs had already been given in paragraph 15 above. Nevertheless, the Administration would strive to compress the time required as far as practicable;
- (b) legal opinion needed to be sought on the suggestion of publicising those homes for PWDs which could not meet the minimum standard of services as set out in the Code of Practice or failed to provide satisfactory services, in view of the fact that at present there was no legislative provision for this. Consideration could however be given to publicising those homes for PWDs which could meet the minimum standard of services or providing satisfactory services; and
- (c) there was no plan at this stage to implement the bought place scheme for homes for PWDs as had been done for the elderly homes, as this involved a major policy change, albeit the necessity of such a move could not be completely ruled out in the long run.

34. Mr Alan LEONG noted that for those private homes which had made improvements to enhance the quality of their services under the VRS, their names would be listed in SWD's home page to help the public to better identify suitable private homes for their disabled family members. Mr LEONG asked whether consideration could be given to listing the aforesaid homes in places other than on SWD's home page so as to increase public awareness of the list. Mr LEONG further asked the Administration whether it had made any assessment on the number of homes for PWDs which were unable to meet the eventual licensing requirements. If the number was on the high side, whether the Administration had any plan to tackle such a situation.

35. DSW responded as follows -

- (a) SWD would consider publicising the list of private homes which were recognised by SWD as suitable homes for the disabled under the VRS in places other than on SWD's home page; and
- (b) it was very difficult to estimate at this stage how many homes for PWDs could not meet the eventual licensing requirements. SWD should be in a better position to come up with such an estimate after it had conducted a survey of the situation all the 259 homes and had worked out proposed licensing requirements. However, it was

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envisaged that some private homes would choose to close down rather than undergoing improvement works to meet the licensing requirements.

36. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan asked SWD whether consideration could be given to conducting two regular liaison visits and two unannounced visits to each private home in a year prior to the implementation of the licensing scheme for homes for PWDs.

37. DSW reiterated that SWD would stick to its plan of conducting four regular liaison visits to each private home in a year. Ad hoc and unscheduled visits would be conducted as and when necessary.

Admin 38. In summing up, the Chairman urged the Administration to -

- (a) expeditiously set up a consultative group comprising all stakeholders on the formulation of the licensing scheme for homes for PWDs; and
- (b) prior to the implementation of the licensing scheme, SWD should visit the some 1 200 residents currently living in the private homes to find out their physical, mental and psychological conditions so that appropriate follow-up actions could be taken.

The Chairman further requested the Administration to take up with the Hospital Authority (HA) on reinstating the outreach mental health service to all homes for PWDs, and provide a progress report on the implementation of the VRS for the private homes by the end of the year.

39. DSW agreed to provide a report on the progress made on the regulation of homes for PWDs by the end of the year. As regards HA staff making visits to all homes for PWDs to check on the mental well being of the residents, Commissioner for Rehabilitation (C for R) said that she could not give any undertaking in this regard as such a move would entail very significant resources. At present, HA would do so only for the severely disabled with mental problems in subvented homes. On the suggestion of visiting the some 1 200 residents currently living in the private homes to find out their physical, mental and psychological conditions so that appropriate follow-up actions could be taken, C for R said that majority of the inmates were receiving out-patient medical services at HA clinics; furthermore, SWD staff should be able to have a general understanding on the conditions of the residents during their four regular liaison visits to each private home per year.

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**V. Progress report on the standardized assessment mechanism for residential services for people with disabilities**  
(LC Paper No. CB(2)1389/05-06(04))

40. ADSW(R&MSS) briefed members on the Administration's paper updating the implementation and review of the Standardised Assessment Mechanism for Residential Services for People with Disabilities (the Mechanism) since its inception on 1 January 2005.

Deputations' views

41. Mr Philip YUEN of HKCSS and Ms HO Wai-ngan of the Association of Parents of the Severely Mentally Handicapped presented their respective submissions tabled at the meeting (LC Paper Nos. 1501/05-06(01) and (07)). Mr YUEN also expressed regret that HKCSS and other NGOs which had been involved in the development of the Mechanism and the Standardised Assessment Tool (the Tool) were not informed of the establishment of the Review Working Group in October 2005 to review the practicality and adequacy of the Tool and the operation of the Mechanism, and hoped that HKCSS and other NGOs could be represented on such.

42. Mrs Julie LEE of the of the Parents' Association of Pre-School Handicapped Children said that -

- (a) the existing manpower of various types of residential homes for PWDs should be reviewed to ensure its adequacy, having regard to the fact that the functional impairment and the challenging behaviour of the PWDs admitted to the residential homes following the implementation of the Mechanism were generally more serious than those PWDs admitted to the same homes prior to the implementation of the Mechanism;
- (b) action should be taken to ensure the adequacy of the hostels for the moderately mentally handicapped and supported hostels to meet demand for these services, having regard to one of the observations made by the Review Working Group that the assessment mechanism had re-aligned the demand for residential services in which more applications had shifted to hostels for the moderately mentally handicapped and supported hostels; and
- (c) there was mismatch in the provision of vocational rehabilitation services for PWDs receiving residential services, which should be rectified. For instance, prior to the implementation of the

Mechanism, PWDs living in hostels for moderately mentally handicapped persons were often enrolled in sheltered workshops (SWs), whereas PWDs living in hostels for severely mentally handicapped persons were often enrolled in day activity centres. However, after the implementation of the Mechanism, PWDs enrolled in SWs were sometimes recommended for placement in supported hostels and PWDs enrolled in day activity centres were sometimes recommended for placement in hostels for moderately mentally handicapped persons.

The Administration's response

43. ADSW(R&MSS) said that SWD would -

- (a) carefully consider the views/suggestions made by deputations to see how better to improve the Tool and the operation of the Mechanism;
- (b) invite HKCSS to join in the review on the Mechanism; and
- (c) review the provision of different types of matching day training services for PWDs living in residential homes, after gathering more information on the practicality and adequacy of the Tool in confirming the residential care needs of the mentally handicapped/physically handicapped persons and their matching types of services.

ADSW(R&MSS) further said that he did not consider the Tool too stringent, having regard to the general acceptance of the Tool by parents of PWDs.

44. Chief Social Work Officer (R&MSS)<sup>1</sup> supplemented that -

- (a) to address the de-link of day training services with residential services for PWDs following the implementation of the Mechanism, arrangements had been made for PWDs concerned to enroll in integrated rehabilitation services centres where appropriate as far as practicable; and
- (b) there were adequate safeguards and flexibility built in the Mechanism to cater to those applicants whose circumstances might warrant special consideration in determining the exact type of residential service. For instance, the Tool allowed assessors to provide justifications in Section VII.E.3. If justified, their recommendation would be accepted despite deviation from the

assessment results. Similarly, recommendations from parents of the applicants, if justified, would also be accepted despite deviation from the assessment results.

Discussion

45. Ms LI Fung-ying noted that 380 new residential places for PWDs were provided in 2005-06, whereas only 270 new residential places for PWDs would be provided in 2006-07. Ms LI asked why this was the case, having regard to the facts that the Government had restored its fiscal balance and a surplus had been recorded in both the Operating and Consolidated Accounts. Noting that 1 097 applicants had been assessed under the Tool to be in need of various types of residential services, Ms LI urged the Administration to set out the performance pledge of providing residential placement to eligible PWDs, so as to reduce the present long waiting time which averaged four to six years.

46. C for R responded that the Administration would continue to bid for new resources to provide additional residential places for PWDs. It should however be pointed out that the provision of such was dependent on the availability of suitable sites. In parallel, efforts would continue to be made to bid for new resources for day training and community support services for PWDs.

47. The Chairman said that even if the Administration could not tell whether it could identify suitable sites for new residential homes for PWDs, it should at least come up with a plan on the number of residential places it could provide to PWDs each year to shorten the waiting time.

48. Mr Philip YUEN hoped that the Administration would strive to improve the existing long waiting time for residential services for PWDs, despite the difficulty of finding suitable sites.

49. Miss CHAN Yuen-han said that the Administration should include the provision of residential homes for PWDs in its town planning to address the shortage of suitable premises.

50. C for R responded that attempts had been made by SWD in the past to turn vacant premises in public housing estates into homes for PWDs, but such proposals were often met with opposition from people in the districts. Hence, SWD often had to turn to idle properties, such as empty schools and staff quarters, located in the remote areas of Hong Kong for constructing homes for PWDs.

51. Miss CHAN Yuen-han remarked that the fact that the Administration had to look for idle premises to accommodate PWDs was a testament of the need to

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include the provision of residential places for PWDs in the future town planning.

Admin 52. In closing, the Chairman requested the Administration to provide a response in writing to the following -

- (a) ways to address the shortage of suitable sites for residential homes for PWDs;
- (b) information on the average waiting time for admission to various types of residential and day training services for PWDs;
- (c) information on the average time required for PWDs to undergo assessment for residential services and the number involved; and
- (d) plan to resolve the shortage of day training and residential places for PWDs in five years' time.

The Chairman also hoped that apart from HKCSS, more parent associations would be invited to join in the review of the Mechanism.

53. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 12:38 pm.

Council Business Division 2  
Legislative Council Secretariat  
3 May 2006