

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)1296/07-08
(These minutes have been
seen by the Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/WS

Panel on Welfare Services

Minutes of meeting
held on Thursday, 14 February 2008, at 10:00 am
in Conference Room A of the Legislative Council Building

Members present : Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung (Chairman)
Hon CHAN Yuen-han, SBS, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Hon Albert HO Chun-yan
Hon LEE Cheuk-yan
Hon Mrs Sophie LEUNG LAU Yau-fun, GBS, JP
Hon LI Fung-ying, BBS, JP
Hon Frederick FUNG Kin-kee, SBS, JP
Hon Alan LEONG Kah-kit, SC
Dr Hon KWOK Ka-ki
Hon Mrs Anson CHAN, GBM, JP

Members absent : Dr Hon YEUNG Sum, JP
Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP
Hon LEUNG Kwok-hung

Public Officers attending : Item IV

Miss Christine CHOW
Secretary, Family Council

Ms Elaine MAK
Assistant Secretary, Family Council

Item V

Ms Irene YOUNG
Principal Assistant Secretary for Labour and Welfare (Welfare) 1

Mrs Anna MAK
Assistant Director of Social Welfare
(Family and Child Welfare)

Mr Tony TANG
Principal Assistant Secretary for Education
(Quality Assurance)

Dr Shirley LEUNG
Principal Medical and Health Officer
(Family Health Service)
Department of Health

Dr Aylwin CHAN
Senior Manager (Primary Care)
Hospital Authority

Item VI

Mr Matthew CHEUNG Kin-chung, GBS, JP
Secretary for Labour and Welfare

Mr Paul TANG, JP
Permanent Secretary for Labour and Welfare

Ms Carol YIP
Deputy Assistant Secretary for Labour and Welfare
(Welfare) 2

Miss Helen TANG
Principal Assistant Secretary for Labour and Welfare
(Poverty)

Mr FUNG Pak-yan
Deputy Director of Social Welfare (Services)

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

Hong Kong Society for the Protection of Children

Ms Susan SO
Director

Against Child Abuse

Ms Jessica HO
Supervisor

Mr Joseph WONG
Co-ordinator

Hong Kong College of Paediatricians

Dr Patricia IP
Member, Professional and General Affairs Committee

Item IV

Society for Community Organization

Miss SZE Lai-shan
Community Organizer

The Hong Kong Council of Social Service

Ms Elsa CHIU
Chief Officer, Service Development
(Family and Community Service)

The Boys' and Girls' Clubs Association of Hong Kong

Mr James LEUNG
Assistant Director

Ms FU Suk-yin
Supervisor

Hong Kong Committee on Children's Rights

Dr CHOW Chun-bong
Chairman

Ms Billy WONG
Executive Secretary

The Against Elderly Abuse of Hong Kong

Ms Kennex YUE
Chief Executive Director

Caritas – Hong Kong (Family Service)

Ms KWOK Chi-ying
Centre Supervisor

Hong Kong Committee for UNICEF

Miss LI Wai-chi
Project Officer

The Association for the Advancement of Feminism

Ms AU Mei-po
Organizer

Hong Kong Women's Coalition on Equal Opportunities

Ms CHUNG Yuen-yi

Hong Kong Association for the Survivors of Women Abuse
(Kwan Fook)

Ms LIU Ngan-fung
Chairperson

殘障人士及照顧者關注組

Ms HO Bo-ching

Ms CHENG Yee-man

1st Step Association

Miss NG Yan-yee
Senior Organizer

Item V

Hong Kong Paediatric Foundation

Dr CHAN Chok-wan
Board Chairman

The Hong Kong Paediatric Society

Dr YU Chak-man

Clerk in attendance : Miss Betty MA
Chief Council Secretary (2) 4

Staff in attendance : Mr Chris LAI
Senior Council Secretary (2) 7

Miss Maggie CHIU
Legislative Assistant (2) 4

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I. Confirmation of minutes

[LC Paper No. CB(2)976/07-08]

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 January 2008 were confirmed.

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

2. Members noted that no information paper had been issued since the last meeting.

III. Items for discussion at the next meeting

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)977/07-08(01) and (02)]

3. Members agreed to discuss the following items proposed by the Administration at the next meeting on 17 March 2008 at 10:45 am –

(a) Creation of an Assistant Director of Social Welfare post to take charge of the social security portfolio; and

(b) Welfare-related initiatives under the 2008-2009 Budget.

4. The Chairman advised that on 12 February 2008, Duty Roster Members, including himself, met with representatives from the Society for Community Organization (SOCO) on issues relating to the level of rent allowance under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme, and agreed that the matter be referred to the Panel for follow-up. The Chairman suggested and

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members agreed that the Panel should follow up the referral as early as practicable. Noting that SOCO was conducting a survey on the rental of cubicle flats which was expected to be completed by early March 2008, members agreed that the Panel would discuss the issue in March/April 2008, i.e. after the survey findings were available.

Regular meeting in July 2008

5. The Chairman advised that the last Council meeting of the 2007-2008 legislative session would be held on 9 July 2008 and by then the Panel would have reported on its work to the Council. He sought members' view on whether the regular meeting scheduled for 14 July 2008 was necessary. Members agreed that the meeting should be cancelled. Members further agreed that a meeting could be arranged in early July 2008 if necessary.

Matter arising from the last meeting

6. The Chairman said that at the last meeting on 14 January 2008, Dr KWOK Ka-ki suggested that the Panel should hold a joint meeting with the Panel on Security in late February/early March 2008 to follow up the new measures drawn up by the Task Force headed by the Secretary for Justice to combat juvenile drug abuse. The Chairman informed members that the Chairman of Panel on Security had advised that the Administration planned to brief the Panel on Security on the work progress of the Task Force in April 2008, and members of the Panel on Welfare Services would be invited to attend the meeting. Members raised no objection to the arrangement.

IV. Establishment of the Family Council

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)977/07-08(03) and (04), CB(2)1037/07-08(01) to (03), CB(2)1058/07-08(01) to (03), CB(2)1080/07-08(01) and CB(2)1090/07-08(01)]

7. Secretary, Family Council (Secy/Family Council) briefed members on the establishment of the Family Council. She said that at the first meeting of the Family Council held on 14 December 2007, members exchanged views on their expectations of the work of the Council and the specific issues to be addressed in the months ahead. In view of the broad range of issues involved, the Family Council agreed to accord priority to the areas of work set out in paragraph 7 of the Administration's paper. Secy/Family Council added that the Family Council would seek to rationalize the work of the Elderly Commission (EC), the Women's Commission (WC) and the Commission on Youth (CoY) under the Family Council by March 2009 and it would explore ways to achieve more collaboration between the Council and the three commissions.

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Views of deputations

8. The Chairman welcomed the deputations to the meeting. The views of deputations are summarised below.

Hong Kong Society for the Protection of Children
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1058/07-08(01)]

9. While welcoming the establishment of the Family Council, Ms Susan SO expressed concern that the Council had not given due attention to the needs and interests of children. Having regard to the increasing numbers of child abuse cases and children living in cross-boundary families, Ms SO strongly urged the Administration to set up a Children's Commission to advise it on policies from the children's perspective and enhance inter-departmental efforts in promoting and protecting the rights of children.

Against Child Abuse
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1058/07-08(02)]

10. Ms Jessica HO expressed disappointment at the Family Council's failure to accord priority to the protection of children's rights and interests. She considered that the Administration should model on the experience of the United Nations Cyberschoolbus project and appoint a Commissioner for Children to listen to children's voices and to better understand their needs. Ms HO urged the Administration to view the subject matter from the children's perspective, and adopt a zero tolerance approach in formulating child protection policies and tackling family violence and child abuse cases.

Hong Kong College of Paediatricians
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1037/07-08(01)]

11. Dr Patricia IP supported in principle the setting up of the Family Council. However, she hoped that the Administration could make public the considerations behind the decision to establish the Family Council and maintain a high degree of transparency in the operation of the Council. Given that children were one of the most vulnerable groups amongst different age groups, in the absence of a Children's Commission to oversee the specific needs of children, the Administration and the Family Council should ensure that children's interests would be given due consideration in the course of achieving more collaboration between the Council and the three commissions. Dr IP added that the Family Council should not take over the work of the three commissions.

Society for Community Organization

12. Miss SZE Lai-shan welcomed the establishment of the Family Council.

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She hoped that the Family Council would enhance inter-departmental efforts in family support, and draw up a clear and wider definition of family. Miss SZE considered that the Family Council should accord priority to identify effective ways to tackle family violence and inter-generational poverty, and enhance support to cross-boundary families. She held the view that EC, WC and CoY should not be subsumed under the Family Council. In addition, a Children's Commission should be set up to better safeguard the well-being of children.

The Hong Kong Council of Social Service
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1037/07-08(02)]

13. Ms Elsa CHIU said that the Family Council should seek to enhance effective coordination of family policies across bureaux and departments. In respect of its work priority, the Family Council should first organize a summit in 2008 so as to provide a platform for the stakeholders to exchange views on promoting family-friendly employment practices, strengthening parental education and enhancing support to cross-boundary families. Ms CHIU further said that the Administration should introduce family impact assessment in policy formulation. Moreover, the Family Council should not take over the respective roles of EC, WC and CoY.

The Boys' and Girls' Clubs Association of Hong Kong

14. Mr James LEUNG agreed that the Family Council should accord priority to the identification of core family values. The Council should also step up efforts to promote family-friendly employment practices, especially in small and medium enterprises, initiate more studies on different family models and foster the introduction of family impact assessment in policy formulation. The Family Council should enhance transparency in its work in order to facilitate public engagement in the formulation of family policies. Mr LEUNG stressed that the Council should foster its collaboration with EC, WC and CoY, instead of replacing the three commissions.

Hong Kong Committee on Children's Rights
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1037/07-08(03)]

15. Ms Billy WONG said that she spoke on behalf of the Hong Kong Committee on Children's Rights and the Alliance for Children's Commission which was committed to promoting the setting up of a Children's Commission to represent the interests of children. As the Family Council had not included safeguarding children's interests in its terms of reference, she doubted whether the children's perspective could be considered sufficiently throughout the discussion, not to mention any decision which might be made against their interests. Pointing out that a motion urging the Administration to set up a Children's Commission was passed at the Council meeting on 8 June 2007,

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Ms WONG said that the Administration should respond to the strong call from the community and establish a Children's Commission expeditiously. She added that the Family Council should work closely with EC, WC and CoY, but not replace the three commissions.

The Against Elderly Abuse of Hong Kong
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1058/07-08(03)]

16. In the absence of representatives of Legislative Council and labour unions in the Family Council, Ms Kennex YUE cast doubt about its representativeness. She was of the view that the Family Council should give due attention to the rights and needs of children in the family. She urged the Administration to provide more details about the plan for the Family Council to rationalize the work of EC, WC and CoY under the Council, and the definition of "core family values".

Caritas – Hong Kong (Family Service)
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1090/07-08(01)]

17. Ms KWOK Chi-ying welcomed and supported the establishment of the Family Council. She took the view that the Family Council should review the existing policies and come up with suggestions to enhance family support. The Council should also initiate family-related studies, promote family-friendly working environment, and organize a summit to solicit public views on family-related issues. Consideration should also be given to introducing a family impact assessment in policy formulation. Ms KWOK added that the Family Council, EC, WC and CoY should perform their respective roles independently. As such, the Family Council should study issues of common interests with the other three commissions, instead of integrating with them.

Hong Kong Committee for UNICEF

18. Miss LI Wai-chi said that Hong Kong Committee for UNICEF was a member of The Alliance for Children's Commission. Pointing out that the interests of children were not represented in the Family Council, Miss LI urged the Administration to safeguard the well-being of children and take into full account the children's interests when studying family policies.

The Association for the Advancement of Feminism

19. Ms AU Mei-po expressed dissatisfaction at the lack of public consultation prior to the establishment of the Family Council. She considered that the Family Council should spell out clearly the definitions of "family" and "core family values", and give due regard to the specific needs of different age groups in the family. Ms AU added that EC, WC and CoY should not be integrated

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with the Family Council, as each commission had been performing its specific role independently.

*Hong Kong Women's Coalition on Equal Opportunities
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1080/07-08(01)]*

20. Ms CHUNG Yuen-yi expressed reservations about the Administration's proposal to rationalize the work of WC and CoY under the Family Council. She said that according to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Government should establish an independent, high-level body to safeguard the well-being of women. It would undermine the importance of women's affairs if WC was put under the purview of the Family Council. She stressed that WC should remain as an independent body and be headed by the Chief Secretary for Administration (CS).

Hong Kong Association for the Survivors of Women Abuse (Kwan Fook)

21. Ms LIU Ngan-fung said that the interests of women and children were very often compromised in cases of family violence for the sake of family cohesion. Given that the interests of different age groups and gender sectors in the family were different, she considered that EC, WC and CoY should maintain the status quo to safeguard the well-being of specific groups. Ms LIU further said that under the policy of requiring applications for CSSA to be made on a household basis, some elderly were forced to move out of their families in order to meet the eligibility requirement, if their family members refused to apply for CSSA. This was in conflict with the policy of fostering family cohesion. As such, the Administration should relax the requirement of applying for CSSA on a household basis.

殘障人士及照顧者關注組

22. Ms HO Bo-ching expressed support for the establishment of the Family Council. Pointing out that there were about 340 000 families with disabled members in Hong Kong, she was disappointed at the Family Council's failure to accord priority to meet the needs of the disabled and their families. Ms HO considered that the Administration should enhance community support and rehabilitation services for the disabled and their families having regard to their special needs. She held the view that the Family Council should comprise members who represented the disabled and their families.

1st Step Association

23. Echoing the views of Ms HO Bo-ching, Miss NG Yan-yee said that the Administration should come up with measures to enhance support for carers of the disabled, especially those "hidden carers" who lacked support network. In

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this regard, the Administration and the Hospital Authority (HA) should strengthen the co-ordination and provision of assistance for paralysed patients, persons with mental illness and their carers, and expedite the establishment of service centres for paralysed patients. Miss NG added that the Family Council should foster the introduction of family impact assessment in policy formulation and spell out clearly the definition of "family" and "core family values".

24. Responding to the views and suggestions made by the deputations, Secy/Family Council made the following points –

- (a) the Administration recognized that many complicated social problems often rooted in the family and that these problems needed to be tackled from the family perspective. The setting up of the Family Council aimed to establish a family-based support network and forge closer and harmonious relationships among family members. The Family Council would advise the Administration on the formulation of policies and strategies for supporting and strengthening the family as well as the development of related programmes and activities across different bureaux and departments, and monitor their implementation;
- (b) the Family Council agreed that the priority issues to be considered should include identification of core family values; ways to create a pro-family environment including work environment; and ways to enhance the effectiveness and co-ordination of family education in the months ahead;
- (c) one of the terms of reference of the Family Council was to take into account the needs of different age and gender sectors. With this in mind, groups in need, including children and disabled family members and their caretakers be duly considered in formulating the policy recommendations;
- (d) on matters relating to children's rights, the Children's Rights Forum currently under the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau served to provide a platform for exchanging views on matters concerning children's rights amongst non-governmental organizations (NGOs), children's representatives and the Government;
- (e) it would be a challenging task to strike a proper balance between the interests of individuals, families and community as a whole when considering matters relating to the interests of the family;

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- (f) the Family Council sought to rationalize the work of EC, WC and CoY under the Council by March 2009. The Council would carefully consider views of stakeholders in the process. Deputations' views on the work of the Family Council and its relationship with the three commissions would also be conveyed to the Family Council for consideration;
- (g) the Family Council comprised five officials responsible for social policies relating to family issues and welfare services, and 16 non-official members, who were appointed in their personal capacity, representing different sectors of the community. Members came with different expertise, knowledge and experience from their professions, including social welfare, professional, business, and academic, and would be able to provide advice to the Government from different perspective;
- (h) in response to the suggestion of introducing family impact assessment in policy formulation, the Family Council considered that one of its priority tasks was to foster a family perspective among policy makers. Introduction of family impact assessment in policy formulation in long run was one of the options for consideration; and
- (i) the Family Council recognized the need and importance of public engagement in its work. The issue was raised at its first meeting and the Council would deliberate how best to engage stakeholders and work closely with them to promote a family-friendly environment and enhance coordination of family-related services.

Discussion

25. While welcoming the establishment of the Family Council, Miss CHAN Yuen-han shared the concerns raised by the deputations, in particular the composition of the Family Council, and the collaboration between the Council and the three commissions. In the absence of representatives from frontline social workers in the Family Council, Miss CHAN was concerned how the Council and the Administration could understand fully the problems and difficulties faced by the grassroots. Given that the Family Council had yet to draw up an action plan, Miss CHAN considered that a subcommittee should be formed under the Panel in the next term to follow up the work of the Family Council.

26. Ms LI Fung-ying took the view that the Administration should consider seriously the views and suggestions raised by deputations that the Family

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Council should come up with concrete recommendations to meet the needs of individual groups, especially children and the disabled. Noting that the Family Council sought to rationalize the work of EC, WC and CoY under the Council by March 2009, Ms LI asked why the Family Council would take more than one year to study the matter. She further asked about the meeting schedule of the Family Council and how the Council would promote better work-life balance having regard to the long working hours of low-income workers.

27. Secy/Family Council responded that as the Family Council had held its first meeting in December 2007, it would take some time to explore ways to achieve more collaboration between the Council and the three commissions. It sought to rationalize the work of these commissions by March 2009. In line with the practice of other commissions, the Family Council would meet on a quarterly basis. As regards concerns about the work environment and working hours and the impact on the family lives of employees, one of the priority tasks of the Family Council was to identify ways to promote family-friendly employment practices and work-life balance. In considering how to enhance a pro-family environment and strengthen family support measures, the Family Council would also take into account subjects including the families with special needs, e.g. families with disabled family members and children.

Admin

28. The Chairman took the view that the Family Council should take into account the specific needs of individual family members, in particular the disabled and children, in the course of working on fostering a family perspective among policy-makers. Secy/Family Council undertook to convey the views to the Family Council.

29. Mr Albert HO said that despite the strong call from the community for setting up a Children's Commission, the Administration had not provided a positive response and decided to establish a Family Council instead. He enquired about the rationale for the decision. Mr HO considered it unacceptable for the Family Council to assume the overall responsibility of rationalization of the work of various commissions currently responsible for handling issues regarding different age groups and genders. The Administration should account for the arrangement, particularly whether bringing WC under the Family Council would contravene with CEDAW under which the Government should establish an independent body to deal with matters relating to the interests of women.

30. Mrs Anson CHAN shared the depositions' views that EC, WC and CoY were performing different roles to meet the specific needs of elderly, women and youth, and should not be brought under the Family Council. There was an imminent need for the establishment of a Children's Commission. Pointing out that the terms of reference of the Family Council were indeed very broad and covered a wide range of topics, Mrs CHAN considered that the Family Council should set out its specific work plan in the coming six to nine months, and accord

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top priority to enhance inter-departmental efforts in handling issues regarding family support.

31. Secy/Family Council reiterated that the Administration was open-minded on the views raised by members and deputations. The Family Council would consider carefully how to rationalize the work of EC, WC and CoY and achieve more collaboration between the Council and the three commissions.

32. Mr Albert HO and Mr LEE Cheuk-yan disagreed with the Administration's remarks that the root of many complicated social problems often lay at home. On the contrary, many family problems originated from social problems, such as cross-boundary marriages. It was the Administration's responsibility to solve the social problems at root. Noting that the Family Council would identify ways to enhance family-friendly employment practices, Mr LEE was disappointed at the lack of representatives from the labour sector in the Family Council. Since the Family Council would meet every three months, he was concerned about the work progress and targets of the Family Council.

33. Secy/Family Council said that the provision of family support work spanned various Government bureaux and departments. The Family Council was set up with a view to bringing together efforts of different bureau/departments in the provision of family support work. Official members of the Family Council could help contribute to the better coordination of various policies and measures related to the family. The Family Council had agreed to accord priority to specific issues to be addressed in the months ahead, as set out in paragraph 7 of the Administration's paper.

34. While agreeing with the need to identify core family values and ways to create a pro-family environment, Dr KWOK Ka-ki considered it equally important for the Family Council to draw up plans and measures to enhance support to families in need, especially those families having children with specific learning difficulties and disabled members. He urged the Family Council to accord priority to formulate an action plan.

35. Secy/Family Council responded that the Family Council would advise the Government on the integration of family policies and related programmes and assured members that the Family Council aside, on-going work by different bureaux and departments to address the needs of families and family members/individuals/groups in different manners would certainly continue. As the Family Council had just been established, the detailed work plan had yet to be worked out at this juncture.

36. To keep members abreast of the Family Council's work progress, Dr KWOK Ka-ki and the Chairman requested the Administration to provide papers and minutes of meetings of the Family Council to the Panel.

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Admin

Secy/Family Council undertook to convey members' request to the Council for consideration.

37. The Chairman said that while members expressed general support for the establishment of the Family Council, they had consensus views that EC, WC and CoY should not be subsumed under the Family Council having regard to the fact that the three commissions were currently responsible for specific issues regarding different age groups and genders. In addition, members strongly urged the setting up of a Children's Commission expeditiously. The Chairman further said that consideration should be given to expanding the membership of the Family Council to include representatives from the labour sector and disabled. The Chairman added that the specific issues to be addressed by the Family Council involved policy considerations and would impact on policy formulation. In this regard, the Family Council should draw up its targets, especially on how to foster the collaboration among different bureaux and departments on family support work. The Administration should revert to the Panel on the work progress of the Family Council.

38. Mr Albert HO was of the view that the Panel should further discuss the matter at a future meeting, and CS, as Chairman of the Family Council, and members of the Council should be invited to attend the meeting. Echoing Mr HO's suggestion, the Chairman said that the meeting should be held after the announcement of the 2008-2009 Budget so that CS could take the opportunity to brief the Panel on family and welfare-related initiatives under the Budget. Miss CHAN Yuen-han suggested that CS and members of the Family Council should be invited to brief the Panel on the Family Council's work plan in April/May 2008. Members agreed.

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39. In concluding discussion, the Chairman said that the Administration should revert to the Panel on the work progress of the Family Council in April/May 2008, and CS and members of the Family Council should be invited to attend the meeting.

V. Progress report on the implementation of Comprehensive Child Development Service

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)977/07-08 (05) and (06), CB(2)1037/07-08(04) and (05), CB(2)1058/07-08(04) and (05) and CB(2)1077/07-08(01)]

Views of deputations

40. The Chairman welcomed the deputations to the meeting. The views of deputations are summarised below.

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Hong Kong Society for the Protection of Children

41. While welcoming the implementation of the Comprehensive Child Development Service (CCDS), Ms Susan SO said that the Administration should review its service coverage. For instance, children under one year old and their families would be assessed for psychosocial needs in the Maternal and Child Care Centres (MCHCs), but such needs might arise only when the children grew older. Ms SO noted with concern that about 35% of families assessed for psychosocial needs declined referral to the Integrated Family Service Centres (IFSCs)/Integrated Services Centres (ISCs) for follow up, and the number of pre-primary children with physical, developmental or behavioural problems referred by pre-primary institutions to MCHCs for assessment was on the low side. She considered that the Administration should streamline the referral procedures with a view to encouraging more families in need to make use of the services. Ms SO added that consideration should be given to stationing a social worker in each pre-primary institution to facilitate early referral of children to MCHCs for assessment.

Against Child Abuse

[LC Paper No. CB(2)1058/07-08(04)]

42. Ms Jessica HO said that Against Child Abuse had made a number of suggestions repeatedly to further improve the pilot CCDS and other child services, but the response from the Administration was lukewarm. She urged the Administration to reconsider the suggestions. In gist, it should formulate a set of development indicators for children, establish a Children's Commission, allocate more resources for IFSCs and ISCs to alleviate the work pressure faced by frontline social workers as a result of an increase in referrals from MCHCs, enhance support for cross-boundary families, and mobilize community resources to reach out families who were unwilling to seek help.

Hong Kong College of Paediatricians

[LC Paper No. CB(2)1037/07-08(04)]

43. Dr Patricia IP considered the progress in implementing CCDS was satisfactory. She said that the Administration should further improve CCDS by widening the scope of at-risk categories to include victims of intimate partner violence and enhancing support to mothers who were drug abusers and children whose mothers were Mainlanders. Noting that some families declined referral for follow up, Dr IP considered that the provision of one-stop service by, say, stationing social workers in MCHCs could enhance reaching out to the at-risk families. Moreover, the Administration should improve the communication between different service providers and expedite the extension of CCDS to other districts within the coming two years.

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Hong Kong Paediatric Foundation
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1058/07-08(05)]

44. Dr CHAN Chok-wan was disappointed at the Administration's reluctance to adopt the recommendations made by the Hong Kong Paediatric Foundation's at the Panel meeting on 12 April 2007. He hoped that the Administration would reconsider positively the recommendations following the re-organization of the Labour and Welfare Bureau (LWB) in July 2007. Pointing out that the Steering Committee had not met for some time, Dr CHAN expressed concern whether it was still overseeing the implementation of CCDS. To run CCDS effectively, Dr CHAN urged the Administration to allocate additional resources to strengthen training for frontline workers and enhance the manpower in midwifery, child psychiatrists, psychologists and community nurses. Dr CHAN added that the Administration should provide a concrete timetable and plan to extend CCDS to all districts by 2012.

The Hong Kong Paediatric Society
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1077/07-08(01)]

45. Dr YU Chak-man said that the Hong Kong Paediatric Society supported the underpinning philosophy of the CCDS programme and had made seven recommendations on further implementation of CCDS as set out in its submission. He highlighted that the Administration should allocate additional resources to strengthen the training for frontline staff and manpower in clinical psychology for counselling work at MCHCs, and improve communication among different service units. Dr YU also urged the Administration to enhance publicity to arouse public awareness of CCDS and extend the programme to all districts by 2009.

Discussion

46. Regarding the issues of concern raised by the deputations, Principal Assistant Secretary for Labour and Welfare (Welfare)1 (PAS/LW)(W)1 made the following responses –

- (a) CCDS aimed to identify and meet, at an early stage, the varied health and social needs of children aged between zero and five and those of their families. Apart from MCHCs, CCDS used other service units, including IFSCs/ISCs and pre-primary institutions, as a platform to identify children and families with such needs;
- (b) as regards families declining referral by MCHCs, additional resources had been allocated to IFSCs and other service units for launching a Family Support Programme in mid 2007 to reach out to vulnerable families who were unwilling to seek help. About 2 000

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volunteers had been recruited and trained to become Family Support Persons under the Programme;

- (c) a total of \$30 million had been allocated for the implementation of the pilot CCDS. In view of the encouraging review findings of the pilot service, the Administration decided to regularize the pilot services and extended CCDS to two additional MCHCs in Tung Chung and Yuen Long in 2007. CCDS would be extended fully to the two MCHCs in Kwun Tong in the first quarter of 2008, and further extended to Tsuen Wan and Kwai Tsing in 2008-2009. The Administration would continue to monitor its implementation and fine-tune the CCDS model as appropriate;
- (d) additional resources had been allocated to enhance the manpower and staff training of different service units under CCDS;
- (e) it had become a standing practice for details of implementation to be discussed at the District Coordinating Committee led by the Department of Health (DH) prior to the extension of CCDS to a new MCHC; and
- (f) to enhance the communication on service referrals among different service providers under CCDS, DH, in collaboration with HA and the Social Welfare Department (SWD), was developing a computer system, i.e. an e-bulletin board. The e-bulletin board would be piloted in Tseung Kwan O by 2009-2010.

47. Principal Medical and Health Officer (Family Health Service), DH added that DH had developed a structured 12-hour programme to consolidate the skills of nurses and doctors of MCHCs in identifying and managing mothers with postnatal depression.

48. Regarding the concerns about parents who declined referral for follow up, Assistant Director of Social Welfare (Family and Child Welfare) advised that social workers of IFSCs would meet parents at the MCHCs and had outreached to MCHCs to enhance public awareness of the CCDS programme.

49. Senior Manager (Primary Care), HA supplemented that professional support was provided by visiting psychiatrists teams from HA to MCHC staff in identifying and managing parents with psychosocial needs. To further reduce the psychological barrier for mothers in need of psychiatrist services, visiting psychiatrists from HA had started to provide consultation sessions in MCHCs in Yuen Long, Tuen Mun and Tseung Kwan O since mid 2007. Similar arrangements would be extended to other districts depending on their service needs. He said that in partnership with some NGOs in Sham Shui Po, more

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mothers who were drug abusers were identified at an early stage and they showed improvements in their behaviour after using CCDS.

50. Noting that there was a marked increase in the number of families identified in MCHCs to be in need of social services, Mr LEE Cheuk-yan expressed concern about the impact on other service units, such as IFSCs and psychiatrist teams. He considered that additional resources should be allocated to the service units implementing CCDS to ensure that prompt follow-up services could be provided. Miss CHAN Yuen-han expressed a similar concern. She said that in view of the improving fiscal position of the Government, the Administration should allocate more resources for the implementation of CCDS, in particular in enhancing the manpower of doctors and registered nurses in MCHCs.

51. Pointing out that the Administration planned to complete the territory-wide extension of CCDS by 2012, Mr LEE Cheuk-yan considered the pace of extension too slow. Echoing Mr LEE's view, Miss CHAN Yuen-han was concerned that the pace of extension to other districts would be behind schedule as it would be contingent on the operational readiness of the various implementing agencies. Mr LEE and Miss CHAN said that the Administration should bid for additional resources to expedite the plan to extend CCDS to other districts.

52. Dr KWOK Ka-ki said that while he did not object to the implementation of CCDS, he was concerned about the effectiveness of the programme. Dr KWOK pointed out that as there was inadequate provision for psychiatric services, only 3.1% of mothers identified with serious postnatal depression in MCHCs were referred to psychiatrists in hospitals under HA for consultation and medication. The provision of psychiatric services in HA was further stretched following the introduction of visiting psychiatrists from HA to provide consultation sessions in MCHCs. To resolve the problems, the Administration should allocate more resources for CCDS and psychiatric services. Moreover, as children with learning disabilities might not be able to be identified in the ages of zero to five, CCDS should be expanded to cover children aged above five.

53. Mrs Sophie LEUNG said that since the pilot CCDS had been launched for about three years, the Administration should take into account the operational experience and review the project with a view to identifying service gaps and formulating long-term policy on child development. As a complementary measure to promote child development, parental education should be provided to all newly married couples.

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54. Mr Albert HO pointed out that children in the ages of five to seven were not being looked after under CCDS nor the Student Health Service for primary students. He considered that the coverage of CCDS should be expanded to bridge the service gap for these children.

55. Responding to members, PAS/LW(W)1 said that additional resources would be allocated for IFSCs and ISCs to strengthen the follow-up services for at-risk families identified in MCHCs. The Administration had also provided more resources to strengthen the manpower support for CCDS, such as psychiatric nurses. PAS/LW(W)1 pointed out that the primary objective of CCDS was to facilitate early identification and management of children and families at risk. In addition to IFSCs and ISCs, the Integrated Children and Youth Services Centres offered a wide range of services for children and their families, and different bureaux and departments were carrying out various initiatives to enhance family support. PAS/LW(W)1 said that children attending primary schools could join the Student Health Service which provided free annual health assessment for the participants.

56. PAS/LW(W)1 added that subject to resource availability and the operational readiness of the implementing agencies, the Administration hoped to extend CCDS to other districts in phases. She said that the Administration would continue to monitor the implementation of CCDS and fine-tune the CCDS model as appropriate.

57. In closing, the Chairman said that while members were supportive of the implementation of CCDS, they were concerned about the pace of extension and the adequacy of resources for follow-up services. Members would support funding proposals, if any, to bid for additional resources to expedite the pace of extension of CCDS and further improve the service. To strengthen the support to families in need, the Chairman said that the Administration should enhance the collaboration among different service units and implementing welfare agencies. PAS/LW(W)1 said that the Administration would keep members abreast of the implementation of CCDS in due course.

VI. Further discussion on the Child Development Fund

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)977/07-08(07) and CB(2)1037/07-08(05)]

58. The Chairman said that the meeting would follow up the discussion on the Administration's proposal to set up the Child Development Fund (CDF). Members noted that the Hong Kong Society for the Protection of Children had provided a written submission (LC Paper No. CB(2)1037/07-08(05)), but had not sent any representative to make oral representations at the meeting.

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59. Secretary for Labour and Welfare (SLW) said that subsequent to the meeting of the Panel on 14 January 2008, the Administration had provided supplementary information on the asset-building component of CDF, the age requirement of target participants and the number of participants, as detailed in its paper. Having regard to members' views, SLW said that the Administration proposed to revise its proposal as follows –

- (a) to lower the age requirement from 12-16 to 10-16. Priority should be given to youngsters aged 14-16 as some students might choose to receive vocational training or join the labour market after completing senior secondary education, and they had a more urgent need to learn how to formulate and implement their personal development plans. As such, the Administration proposed that children aged 10 to 13 should constitute no more than 30% of the participants in each pioneer project;
- (b) while the seven CDF pioneer projects would involve a minimum of 700 participants, the operating NGOs would be welcome and encouraged to provide a higher number of participants in their proposals; and
- (c) while the savings target would be set at \$200 per month, flexibility would be allowed to address the special needs or circumstances of individual participating children and their families. Participating children and their families, together with the operating NGOs, could agree to set a lower savings target.

SLW added that apart from encouraging children from a disadvantaged background to develop an asset-building habit and to accumulate financial assets, CDF also aimed to encourage participating children to accumulate non-financial assets, such as right attitudes and a proper mindset, personal resilience and capacities as well as social networks, instead of just focusing on the amount of savings to be achieved. To this end, the Administration had proposed to set aside \$15,000 to provide training/programmes for each participating child. Appropriate training and guidance would be provided to the mentors recruited. The Administration would monitor closely and evaluate the implementation of CDF throughout the process. The evaluation results would be taken into account in considering the long-term model.

60. Miss CHAN Yuen-han welcomed the Administration's revised proposal. She considered that the individual development plans under the CDF projects should aim to develop the full potential of the participating children in all aspects, instead of just preparing them for employment. As such, the age requirement of target participants should be further lowered. Miss CHAN added that the

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Administration should make matching contributions on behalf of those participating children and families who were too poor to save. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan made a similar suggestion. He said that setting a savings target would exert undue pressure on those children and their parents who earned a meagre monthly income.

61. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan expressed disappointment at the limited number of children (about 13 600) to be benefited from CDF. Given that there were over 230 000 children living in low-income households, Mr LEE considered that the Administration should come up with a long-term plan to bring these children under the CDF projects. Miss CHAN Yuen-han and Dr KWOK Ka-ki expressed similar views.

62. Mr Frederick FUNG supported in principle the proposal to set up CDF. However, he disagreed with the proposed mode of operation, which, in his view, deviated from the Commission on Poverty's proposal, i.e. the launching of a long-term CDF targeted at children aged between zero and 18. Mr FUNG expressed reservations about the proposal to lower the age requirement of the CDF pioneer projects from 12-16 to 10-16, as children aged between 10 and 12 might not be mature enough to make their own personal development plans. For children of younger age, their needs for personal development could be met by regularizing extra-curricular activities in formal education. Mr FUNG expressed concern about the effectiveness of the mentorship programme under CDF, if the interaction between the mentors and participating children was limited.

63. While welcoming the proposed establishment of CDF, Dr KWOK Ka-ki cast doubt about the usefulness of the CDF projects in assisting the participating children to achieve their longer-term development plans, in the light of the limited amount of financial assets to be accumulated under CDF. Moreover, the effectiveness of the projects would depend largely on the availability of qualified personal mentors for each participating child. Dr KWOK considered it equally important for the Administration to introduce measures to ensure that the basic needs of children from a disadvantaged background could be met fully. Given that families having children with learning difficulties or mental illness usually lacked support network, Dr KWOK strongly urged the Administration to come up with concrete measures to enhance support for these families in a timely manner.

64. Recognizing the merits of CDF, Mr Albert HO said that the Democratic Party had put forward a similar proposal two years ago for the Administration's consideration. He urged the Administration to take note of the concerns raised by deputations at the last meeting and formulate measures to provide comprehensive support to children in need, especially those with learning difficulties. Mr HO took the view that participating children should make

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contribution to the Fund so as to boost their sense of commitment. In the light of the financial difficulties faced by children and families from a disadvantaged background, participants could be encouraged to take part in community services or take up part-time jobs in the donors' companies in lieu of making contribution to the Fund.

65. Responding to members' views, SLW made the following points –

- (a) the launch of the CDF pioneer projects was the first step to try out a new model for promoting the longer-term personal development of children from a disadvantaged background. The CDF aimed to encourage children from a disadvantaged background to build up both financial and non-financial assets, such as right attitudes and a proper mindset, and personal resilience and capacities. The Administration would monitor the implementation of the first batch of pioneer projects to see if modifications/improvements to the design or arrangements were required for subsequent batches of projects;
- (b) if the proposed model of the first batch of pioneer projects was to be adopted, at least 13 600 children would benefit from CDF. The Administration would take into account the practical experience in the implementation of the CDF pioneer projects in considering the long-term model;
- (c) the initial feedback from the business sector on CDF, including matching contributions and mentorship programme, was encouraging;
- (d) the participating children and their families were allowed to set a lower savings target under the revised proposal. The operating NGOs would seek partnership from the business sector and individual donors to provide matching contribution to the lower savings target;
- (e) apart from providing special financial incentive (\$3,000) for each participating child upon completion of the savings programme, the Administration had proposed to set aside \$15,000 for the provision of training to each child to facilitate the development and achievement of his/her personal development; and
- (f) about 10% of the provisions for the training programme would be set aside as administrative cost for operating NGOs.

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66. Responding to the Chairman, SLW said that the Administration planned to submit the funding proposal to the Finance Committee (FC) for consideration at its meeting on 25 April 2008. He said that subject to the approval of FC, the Administration would proceed with the preparation work for the implementation of CDF. Promotion of the CDF pioneer projects was expected to commence from July 2008.

67. Mrs Anson CHAN asked when the Administration would conduct an overall evaluation and whether it would revert to the Panel on the evaluation results.

68. SLW responded that a Steering Committee, comprising largely unofficial members, would be set up under LWB to oversee and monitor the implementation of CDF. The implementation of CDF would be closely monitored. An overall evaluation would be conducted after completion of the first batch of the seven pioneer projects, and the results would be taken into account in considering the long-term model.

69. Permanent Secretary for Labour and Welfare supplemented that the Administration would commission an institution to conduct a comprehensive evaluation on the CDF projects. SLW assured members that the Administration would make periodic progress report to the Panel.

70. In closing, the Chairman said that members expressed general support for the Administration's funding proposal. He requested the Administration to revert to the Panel on the progress of the pioneer projects six months after implementation.

VII. Any other business

71. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 1:11 pm.