

Panel on Welfare Services

List of outstanding items for discussion
(position as at 8 November 2007)

Proposed timing for discussion

1. Progress of the Community Investment and Inclusion Fund

The Administration would like to report on the progress of the Fund.

December 2007

2. Social security assistance for needy elderly in Hong Kong

Discussions were held at the Panel meeting on 13 June 2005. The Administration was requested to brief the Panel on its thinking on how better to provide retirement protection to the current and future generation of older persons.

1st quarter of 2008

The Administration has advised that the Government has launched a study on "Sustainability of the Three Pillars of Retirement Protection in Hong Kong", which is expected to be completed in 2007. The Government will consider the findings of the study in deciding the future course of action.

3. Report of the Subcommittee on Guardianship and Custody of the Law Reform Commission

At the meeting held on 11 March 2002, members agreed that the Administration should brief the Panel on the above report when it became available.

1st quarter of 2008

The Report on Custody and Access by the Subcommittee on Guardianship and Custody of the Law Reform Commission was released on 7 March 2005. The Administration is studying the recommendations carefully and will consider how to take forward the relevant recommendations together with the recommendations made in the other two earlier reports, namely, the Report on Guardianship of Children and Report on International Parental Child Abduction.

Proposed timing for discussion

4. Proposed establishment of the Family Council

At the Panel meeting on 13 October 2006, the Panel was advised that the Administration would study the feasibility of setting up a Family Commission. At the Panel on Home Affairs meeting of 8 December 2006 when the proposal to discuss the establishment of a Commission on Children was raised, members agreed with the Administration's suggestion that the issue should be followed up by the Panel on Welfare Services in the context of the proposed establishment of a Family Commission. Members of the Panel on Home Affairs will be invited to the future meeting of the Panel if the issue is discussed.

1st quarter of 2008

The subject had originally been scheduled for discussion by the Panel at the meeting in April 2007. At the request of the Administration, discussion on the item would be deferred to a future meeting. The Administration has advised that a steering committee has been formed to take forward the initiative set out in the Policy Address 2006-2007 to study whether a Family Commission should be set up.

At the meeting on 15 October 2007, the Administration advised that a high-level Family Council would be set up before the end of 2007-2008.

5. Infirmiry care in non-hospital setting

The Administration consulted the Panel in December 2004 on a proposal to launch a trial scheme to provide infirmiry care places for medically stable elders in a non-hospital setting. In the light of feedback from the Panel and the sector during the consultation process, the latest plan of the Administration is to upgrade some of the places in subvented residential care homes for the elderly to provide infirmiry care.

2nd quarter of 2008

Proposed timing for discussion

6. Improving the homes of elderly people living in poor conditions

The 2007-2008 Policy Address has earmarked an one-off funding of \$200 million to help improve the homes of elderly people living in poor conditions. The Administration is working out the implementation details.

2nd quarter of 2008

7. Latest situation on the implementation of review of family services

Item proposed by Hon Albert CHAN at the Panel meeting on 12 October 2004.

2nd quarter of 2008

The Administration has advised that transformation of all existing Family Services Centres/counselling units into 61 Integrated Family Services Centres was completed in March 2005. A review on the implementation of the aforesaid transformation will take place in 2008.

8. Subsidy arrangements for residential care services for frail elders

The Administration aims to report progress on the work relating to the feasibility of developing the proposed Fee Assistance Scheme for residential care services for frail elders, taking into account the suggestion of establishing a separate financial assistance scheme for elders and other views expressed by members on the matter on 12 May 2003.

To be decided

9. Setting up of a refuge centre for abused men

Referred for follow-up by Duty Roster Members following their meeting with a deputation on 13 June 2005.

To be decided

10. Developing strategy and measures to promote a self/mutual help culture in the community

Item proposed by Hon Mrs Sophie LEUNG.

To be decided

Proposed timing for discussion

11. Retirement protection

Item proposed by Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG.

To be decided

12. Residential care homes and private homes for the elderly and mentally disabled

Dr Hon KWOK Ka-ki has proposed to discuss measures to enhance the services of residential care homes and private homes for the elderly and mentally disabled.

To be decided

13. The disregarded earnings arrangement under the CSSA Scheme and other measures to encourage and assist CSSA recipients to move towards self-reliance

When the review of disregarded earnings (DE) under the CSSA Scheme was discussed at the Panel meeting on 12 April 2007, members raised concern about the effectiveness of the DE arrangements and other measures introduced to encourage and assist CSSA recipients to move towards self-reliance. Members agreed that as the subject of DE arrangements was related to the employment of CSSA recipients, a joint meeting could be held with the Panel on Manpower to discuss the subject and that the meeting would be arranged after the re-organisation of policy bureaux of the Government Secretariat in July 2007.

To be decided

14. Public dental care services for the needy

At the meeting of the Subcommittee on Review of the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme on 2 April 2007, the provision of public dental care services for the needy, including CSSA recipients, was discussed.

To be decided

As the subject of public dental care services for the needy was beyond its purview, the Subcommittee agreed that the matter should be referred to the Panel on Welfare Services and the Panel on Health Services for follow-up, and a joint meeting of the two Panels could be held as appropriate.

Proposed timing for discussion

15. Charitable fund-raising activities

The existing framework for the monitoring of charitable fund-raising activities was discussed at the meeting on 11 June 2007. Members agreed to further discuss the matter in the 2007-2008 session, especially the monitoring of the use of income generated from public charitable fund-raising activities.

To be decided

The Administration has advised that the subject matter involved various bureaux, namely the Home Affairs Bureau, the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau and the Labour and Welfare Bureau. As the Law Reform Commission is now studying this subject, the Administration has suggested deferring Panel discussion to after the completion of the study.

16. A solution-focused approach in the provision of welfare services

Item proposed by Mrs Sophie LEUNG at the Panel meeting on 9 July 2007.

To be decided

17. Provision of welfare services for high-risk families in Tin Shui Wai

At the Panel meeting on 30 October 2007, members raised concern about the inadequate provision of welfare services and community facilities by the Government for high-risk families in Tin Shui Wai. The Administration was requested to provide a consolidated response to the areas of concern raised by members and deputations at the meeting, and revert to the Panel on the progress of enhancing the welfare services for high-risk families in Tin Shui Wai by the end of January/early February 2008.

To be decided

18. Support services for young drug abusers

The subject was discussed by the Panel at the special meeting on 3 July 2007. Dr KWOK Ka-ki suggested that discussion on the subject should be followed up by the Panel at a future meeting. Members agreed that it would be for the Panel to decide the timing for following up the matter in the 2007-2008 session.

At the Panel meeting on 11 October 2007, Dr KWOK Ka-ki suggested that a joint meeting be held with the Panel on Security to further discuss the support services for young drug abusers, having regard that the Chief Executive announced in the Policy Address 2007-2008 the establishment of a high-level inter-departmental task force headed by the Secretary for Justice to combat juvenile drug abuse.

The Administration has advised that as the issue of drug abuses is under the policy purview of the Security Bureau (SB), the Social Welfare Department (SWD) works for SB to provide preventive and rehabilitative services dedicated to drug abusers through non-medical voluntary drug treatment and rehabilitation centres (DTRCs), counselling centres for psychotropic substance abusers, social clubs and halfway houses for dischargees from DTRCs. On the other hand, SWD works for the Labour and Welfare Bureau for general welfare services to all needy youth, including drug abusers, through for example services at the Integrated Children and Youth Services Centres, outreaching work for youth at risks and probation services for offenders.

The Panel on Security discussed the problem of juvenile drug abuse at its special meeting on 30 October 2007 and has decided to hold a follow up discussion around Budget time. The Administration has suggested that the subject should be followed up by the Panel on Security.

**Proposed timing for
discussion**

**19. Establishing formal arrangements on adoption with
the Mainland**

At the request of the Bills Committee on Adoption (Amendment) Bill 2003, the Administration undertook to study the need to establish formal arrangements on adoption with the Mainland and consult the relevant Panels in due course.

The Administration has raised this with the Ministry of Civil Affairs (MCA). The Central People's Government (CPG) has already put in place legislation and mechanism to handle adoption of Mainland children by Hong Kong people. As regards adoption of children in Hong Kong by Mainlanders, the CPG does not see an urgent need for it at the moment because there is little demand, according to the MCA. The CPG may consider adoption by close relatives on a case-by-case basis.

The Administration has advised that there are no specific issues to address. It will liaise with the CPG as and when necessary and revert to the Panel when there are developments.

20. Incorporating the posts of programme assistant, youth ambassador, peer counsellor and other similar temporary frontline posts into the staff establishment of the subvented organisations providing welfare services

The Panel was requested by Duty Roster Members to follow up the matter with the Administration. ---

The Administration's position on the issue had been sent to the Panel vide LC Paper No. CB(2)1022/04-05(01) on 8 March 2005 (Chinese version only).

In 2007-2008, SWD regularized 1 383 temporary posts under its schedule. Of the remaining 1 690 positions, 1 590 (i.e. 1 440 Youth Ambassadors and 150 Peer Counsellors) will not be extended. As regards the other 100 Community Work Organizer posts, 39 and 61 would be extended till the end of March and July 2008 respectively.

It was stated in the 2007-2008 Policy Address that the Administration will buttress the employment support for young people by providing 3 000 three-year employment opportunities for those aged between 15 and 29. The Panel on Manpower was briefed on this initiative at its meeting on 18 October 2007. The Administration has suggested to refer further discussion on the subject of temporary positions to the Panel on Manpower, if necessary.