

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)1190/07-08

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seen by the Administration)

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Panel on Welfare Services

Subcommittee on Elderly Services

**Minutes of the second meeting
held on Tuesday, 18 December 2007, at 10:45 am
in Conference Room A of the Legislative Council Building**

Members present : Hon Frederick FUNG Kin-kee, SBS, JP (Chairman)
Hon Albert HO Chun-yan
Hon CHAN Yuen-han, SBS, JP
Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP
Hon LI Fung-ying, BBS, JP
Hon Alan LEONG Kah-kit, SC
Hon LEUNG Kwok-hung
Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung

Member absent : Hon LEE Cheuk-yan

Public Officers attending : Item II

Ms Carol YIP, JP
Deputy Secretary for Labour & Welfare (Welfare) 2

Mr Eugene FUNG
Principal Assistant Secretary for Labour & Welfare
(Welfare) 3

Mrs Kathy NG
Assistant Director of Social Welfare (Elderly)

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Dr CHAN Wai-man, JP
Assistant Director of Health
(Family and Elderly Health Service)

Mr Tony LIU
Chief Manager/Management
(Support Services 2)

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

Staff in attendance : Ms Maisie LAM
Council Secretary (2) 2

Miss Maggie CHIU
Legislative Assistant (2) 4

I. Confirmation of minutes
[LC Paper No. CB(2)627/07-08]

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 November 2007 were confirmed.

II. Provision of support and assistance for the poor elderly
[LC Paper No. CB(2)624/07-08(01)]

2. The Subcommittee deliberated (Index of proceedings attached at **Annex**).

Eligibility criteria for the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme

3. Members expressed concern that the requirement for elders to apply for the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme on a household basis might have affected the eligibility of some needy elderly. They pointed out that elders could not apply for CSSA on an individual basis if their family members declined to make the statement on non-provision of financial support or provide documents to prove that their income was unable to support their parents even though they were living together. Members urged the Administration to allow the elderly to apply for CSSA on an individual basis. Alternatively, the applicants should be allowed to make self-declaration of lacking family support.

4. Deputy Secretary for Labour & Welfare (Welfare) 2 (DS/LW(W)2) made the following responses -

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- (a) the rationale for requiring persons, including the elderly, who were living with family members to apply for CSSA on a household basis were to encourage family members to support each other and prevent the avoidance of the duty of care for the elders by resorting to CSSA. This was also in line with the policy objective that non-contributory financial assistance funded by general revenue should be provided to those most in need;
- (b) to assess the appropriate level of financial assistance that should be provided in each CSSA application, family members who resided under the same roof with the applicant were required to make a declaration of financial assistance provided to the applicant. The proposal of allowing elderly CSSA applicants to make self-declaration of lacking family support and holding them legally liable for the declaration might create difficulty for those illiterate elderly CSSA applicants; and
- (c) exemption from the one-household requirement would be allowed where justified.

5. Members pointed out that the number of applications for exemption from the one-household requirement provided by the Administration did not reflect the extent of the problem accurately, as some needy elders had decided not to apply for CSSA upon learning the need for their children who were living together to provide a statement on non-provision of financial support. Some elders had moved out of their families in order to become eligible for CSSA. The Chairman added that financial support from family members was not necessarily confined to those living together. Hence, the requirement for applying for CSSA on a household basis was unnecessary.

6. DS/LW(W)2 stressed that the present arrangement had struck a reasonable balance between providing assistance to meet the basic needs of those who could not support themselves financially, and ensuring proper use of the public funds. She pointed out that the Director of Social Welfare would exercise discretion to grant exemption where justified.

7. Dr Fernando CHEUNG suggested and members agreed that the Chairman should write to the Chief Secretary for Administration (CS) to convey the Subcommittee's request for reviewing and relaxing the requirement for elders to apply for CSSA on a household basis.

(Post-meeting note : The Chairman's letter to CS and CS's reply were issued to members vide LC Paper Nos. CB(2)685/07-08(01) and CB(2)789/07-08(01) on 2 and 10 January 2008 respectively.)

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Financial assistance to elderly not on CSSA

8. Members noted with concern that some poor elders not on CSSA were relying on the Old Age Allowance (OAA) to make ends meet. Dr Fernando CHEUNG advised that according to the recent study conducted by the Hong Kong Council of Social Service, one-third of the elderly population were living in poverty. To provide greater financial assistance to those needy elders not on CSSA, members made the following points -

- (a) the monthly OAA payment rates should be increased to \$1,000 immediately in the light of the improving fiscal position of the Government;
- (b) a new form of income support on top of OAA should be provided for the needy elders not on CSSA; and
- (c) the Administration should come up with a concrete timetable for publishing the findings of the Central Policy Unit (CPU)'s study on the financial sustainability of the existing three pillars of retirement protection.

9. DS/LW(W)2 made the following responses -

- (a) the Administration was actively considering views on how to provide more targeted assistance and support for elders in financial hardship;
- (b) the request for increasing the monthly payment rates of OAA would be conveyed to the Financial Secretary, as requested, for consideration. However, it should be pointed out that the OAA payment, which was non-contributory and largely non-means-tested, was not meant to be an income support for the elderly to meet their basic needs. Needy elderly might apply for assistance under the CSSA Scheme where higher standard rates, supplements and special grants were available to cater for the special needs of the elderly; and
- (c) the study being undertaken by CPU was expected to be completed soon. Nevertheless, she would convey members' concern about the progress of the study to the relevant authorities.

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10. Members maintained the view that contrary to the Administration's policy intention, OAA had in fact become a form of income support for those poor elders who were not on CSSA due to various reasons. They strongly urged the Administration to come up with concrete measures to assist these elderly expeditiously.

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11. DS/LW(W)2 stressed that in the light of an ageing population, the Administration would need to consider carefully the resource implications of the long-term planning of elderly services.

Residential care services for the elderly

12. Responding to members' enquiry about the monthly fees for subsidised residential care places, Assistant Director of Social Welfare (Elderly) (ADSW(E)) advised that elders staying in subsidised residential care places only had to pay a monthly fee of about 20% of the actual unit cost, with the remaining about 80% being paid for by the Government (i.e. about \$6,000 to \$11,700 for subvented/contract residential care places for elders with or above moderate impairment level and about \$5,000 to \$7,000 for places in private residential care homes for the elderly (RCHEs) participating in the Enhanced Bought Place Scheme). Those who had financial difficulties could apply for CSSA to cover the monthly fees. The average CSSA payment for elders living in non-subsidised residential care places was about \$5,000 per person per month.

13. Members expressed concern about the quality and monitoring of RCHEs, especially the private ones. ADSW(E) advised that the Licensing Office of Residential Care Homes for the Elderly of the Social Welfare Department (SWD) would conduct unannounced inspections on RCHEs regularly to enforce the licensing requirements. Apart from this, SWD had issued a Code of Practice for Residential Care Homes (Elderly Persons) with various principles, procedures, guidelines and standards in running the services for compliance by RCHE operators.

14. Members agreed that the Subcommittee would further discuss the provision of residential care services for the elderly at a future meeting.

III. Date of next meeting and item(s) for discussion

15. The Chairman reminded members that the next meeting would be held on 22 January 2008.

16. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 12:51 pm.

**Proceedings of the second meeting of the
Subcommittee on Elderly Services
on Tuesday, 18 December 2007, at 10:45 am
in Conference Room A of the Legislative Council Building**

Time marker	Speaker(s)	Subject(s)	Action required
000000 - 000225	Chairman	Confirmation of minutes of the meeting held on 30 November 2007	
000226 - 001452	Administration Chairman	Briefing by the Administration on the financial assistance and support services for the elders in need [LC Paper No. CB(2)624/07-08(01)]	
001453 - 002213	Ms LI Fung-ying Administration Chairman	<p>Ms LI Fung-ying sought clarification on the following -</p> <p>(a) whether dentures and fillings were treatment items covered by the special grants for the elderly Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) recipients; and</p> <p>(b) the concrete timetable for introducing more assistance to poor elders who had to rely on the Old Age Allowance (OAA) for a living.</p> <p>The Administration's response -</p> <p>(a) the Subcommittee on Review of the CSSA Scheme had held lengthy discussion on the provision of medical services to the elderly CSSA recipients. Details were set out in the Administration's paper to the Subcommittee [LC Paper No. CB(2)435/06-07(01)];</p> <p>(b) the Administration was actively considering views on how to provide more targeted assistance and support for elders in genuine financial hardship; and</p> <p>(c) OAA payment was not meant to be an income support for the elderly to meet their basic needs. Needy elders could apply for CSSA which took special care of the elderly through the provision of higher standard rates, special grants and supplements.</p>	
002214 - 002429	Mr Albert HO Administration	<p>Breakdown of the elders aged 70 or above who were receiving public financial assistance (i.e. CSSA, OAA and the Disability Allowance (DA)), as at the end of October 2007 -</p> <p>(a) 187 271 elders aged 60 or above were on CSSA (about 16% of the elders aged 60 or above); the recurrent expenditure was \$8.3 billion in 2006-2007;</p> <p>(b) 468 839 elders aged 65 or above were on OAA (about 53% of the elders aged 65 or above; the recurrent expenditure was \$3.8 billion in 2006-2007; and</p> <p>(c) 55 545 elders aged 65 or above were receiving DA; the recurrent expenditure was \$0.8 billion in 2006-2007.</p>	

Time marker	Speaker(s)	Subject(s)	Action required
002430 - 002749	Mr Albert HO Administration	<p>The Administration's responses to questions raised by Mr Albert HO -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) types of subsidised residential care places included subvented homes run by non-governmental organisations (NGOs), purpose-built homes run by NGOs or private operators on a contract basis, and private homes participating in the Enhanced Bought Place Scheme (EBPS); (b) the monthly subsidy for subvented/contract residential care places for elders with or above moderate impairment level ranged from about \$6,000 to \$11,700; (c) the monthly subsidy for EBPS places ranged from about \$5,000 to \$7,000; and (d) those who had financial difficulties could apply for CSSA to cover the monthly fees. 	
002750 - 003335	Mr TAM Yiu-chung Administration Chairman	<p>Views of Mr TAM Yiu-chung that the Administration should review the requirement for elders living with their family members to apply for CSSA on a household basis</p> <p>The Administration's explanation that -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) the rationale for requiring CSSA applicants who were living with family members to apply for CSSA on a household basis were to encourage family members to support each other, which was in line with the policy objective that non-contributory financial assistance funded by general revenue should be provided to those most in need; and (b) exemption from the one-household requirement would be allowed where justified. 	
003336 - 004156	Miss CHAN Yuen-han Administration Chairman	<p>Views of Miss CHAN Yuen-han that the Administration should examine critically the financial difficulties encountered by the poor elderly not on CSSA and come up with concrete measures to address the problem</p> <p>The Administration responded that it was providing financial assistance and a range of highly subsidised services for elders in need, such as social security, elderly services and health care. As announced in the 2007-2008 Policy Address, the Administration would implement a number of policy initiatives specifically for the hidden elderly, carers of the elderly and elderly hospital discharges.</p>	
004157 - 005514	Dr Fernando CHEUNG Administration Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung	Views of Dr Fernando CHEUNG and Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung that elderly CSSA applicants should be allowed to apply for CSSA on an individual basis irrespective of whether they were living with family members	

Time marker	Speaker(s)	Subject(s)	Action required
		The Administration's explanation of the rationale for requiring elders to apply for CSSA on a household basis	
005515 - 010029	Chairman Administration Miss CHAN Yuen-han	The Chairman's concern about the completion date of the study undertaken by the Central Policy Unit (CPU) on the financial sustainability of the existing three pillars of retirement protection The Administration's advice that CPU's study was expected to be completed soon, and it would convey the concern to the relevant authorities	Admin to follow up
010030 - 010718	Mr Albert HO Administration	Views of Mr Albert HO that the Administration should abolish the requirement for elders to apply for CSSA on a household basis and increase the monthly rates of OAA to \$1,000 The Administration undertook to convey the suggestion of increasing the OAA rates to the Financial Secretary, as requested, for consideration, and clarified that family members of the elderly CSSA applicants merely had to declare whether, and if so, what financial support had been provided to the applicants	Admin to follow up
010719 - 011325	Miss CHAN Yuen-han Administration	Miss CHAN Yuen-han's view that the Administration should adopt a holistic approach to address the financial hardship faced by those poor elders not on CSSA by, say, introducing a universal retirement protection scheme or a new form of income support for these elders The Administration's remarks that it would need to consider carefully the resource implications of the long-term planning of elderly services in the light of an ageing population	
011326 - 012539	Dr Fernando CHEUNG Administration Chairman Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung	Discussion on the proposal to allow the elderly CSSA applicants to apply for CSSA on an individual basis and to make self-declaration of lacking family support	
012540 - 013459	Mr Alan LEONG Administration	Views of Mr Alan LEONG that the Administration should examine the reasons why some elders in financial hardship declined to apply for CSSA and relied on OAA to make ends meet The Administration's advice that OAA payment was not meant to be an income support for the elderly. Those faced undue economic hardship could apply for CSSA which sought to meet their basic needs	
013500 - 014156	Chairman Administration	The Chairman's view that the Administration should review the requirement for elders to apply for CSSA on a household basis	
014157 - 014513	Miss CHAN Yuen-han Administration	Timetable for publishing the findings of the study on the financial sustainability of the existing three pillars of retirement protection	

Time marker	Speaker(s)	Subject(s)	Action required
		The Administration's advice that it would revert to the Panel on Welfare Services on the findings of CPU's study when available	
014514 - 015118	Mr Albert HO Administration Dr Fernando CHEUNG Chairman	<p>Concern raised by members on the quality and monitoring of subvented and private residential care homes for the elderly (RCHEs) and the level of CSSA payments to elders living in non-subsidised residential care places</p> <p>The Administration's response that -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) RCHEs were regulated through a licensing system administered by the Director of Social Welfare; (b) SWD's Licensing Office of Residential Care Homes for the Elderly would regularly conduct unannounced inspections on RCHEs to enforce the licensing requirements; (c) SWD had set out a list of requirements covering various aspects relating to the quality of care for the elderly residing in RCHEs in the Code of Practice for Residential Care Homes (Elderly Persons) (October 2005 Revised Edition); and (d) the average CSSA payment to needy elders living in non-subsidised residential care places was about \$5,000 per person per month. 	
015119 - 015411	Dr Fernando CHEUNG Chairman	Suggestion of Dr Fernando CHEUNG that the Chairman should write to the Chief Secretary for Administration conveying the Subcommittee's request for the Administration to review and relax the requirement for elders to apply for CSSA on a household basis	
015412 - 015716	Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung	Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung's concern about the inadequate public health care services for the elderly	
015717 - 020655	Chairman Administration Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung Miss CHAN Yuen-han	Date of the next meeting and item for discussion	