

Panel on Welfare Services

List of outstanding items for discussion
(position as at 7 November 2008)

Proposed timing for discussion

1. 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.

2nd quarter of 2009

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 has advised that it 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.

2. Residential care services for the elderly

The subject of subsidy arrangements for residential care services for frail elders was discussed at the Panel meeting on 12 May 2003. The Administration was requested to report work progress to the Panel taking into account members' views and suggestions. Dr Hon KWOK Ka-ki proposed to discuss measures to enhance the services of residential care homes for the elderly at the meeting on 12 October 2006.

1st quarter of 2009

The Subcommittee on Elderly Services discussed with the Administration on residential care services for the elderly at the meetings on 22 January and 19 February 2008. Another meeting was held on 11 April 2008 to follow up the views expressed by the Subcommittee on, among other things, the subsidy arrangement for residential care services for frail elders. In concluding its deliberations, the Subcommittee proposed a series of recommendations relating to residential care services for the elderly in its report for the Administration's consideration. The Subcommittee recommended that the Panel should follow up the recommendations with the Administration.

Proposed timing for discussion

At the meeting on 14 October 2008, members agreed that the Panel should discuss, as soon as possible, the long-term planning of and subsidy arrangements for residential care services for the elderly and measures to ensure the quality of services in private homes.

The Administration advised that it was studying the long-term planning for subsidised residential care services for the elderly through a consultancy study led by the Elderly Commission, which was expected to be completed by the first quarter of 2009.

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

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

1st quarter of 2010

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

The Administration has recently commissioned a review on the effectiveness of the operation of IFSCs. It is expected to be completed by the end of 2009. The Administration will report progress to the Panel in due course.

At the meeting on 14 October 2008, Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung proposed to discuss the Administration's plan to re-open Single Parent Centres to enhance support services for single parents.

Proposed timing for discussion

4. 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. 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. The Administration is in discussion with the sector on various requirements in relation to the upgrading exercise (e.g. staffing requirements) and aims to report progress in the second quarter of 2009.

2nd quarter of 2009

5. Social security assistance for needy elderly

The above item was discussed by the Panel 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. Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG has separately proposed to discuss retirement protection.

To be decided

The Administration has advised that the Government has launched two studies on "Household Survey on the Financial Disposition and Retirement Planning of Current and Future Generations of Older Persons" and "Sustainability of the Three Pillars of Retirement Protection in Hong Kong". The Government will consider the findings of the studies in deciding the future course of action.

At the meeting on 17 March 2008, members expressed grave concern about the progress of the studies. Members agreed that the Panel should write to the Chief Executive (CE) enquiring about the latest position of the studies. CE's Office has replied on 24 April 2008 vide LC Paper No. CB(2)1766/07-08(01).

The Subcommittee on Elderly Services had studied, inter alia, financial assistance for the needy elderly, and proposed a number of recommendations, as detailed in its report to the Panel (LC Paper No. CB(2)2163/07-08), for the Administration's consideration.

Proposed timing for discussion

At the meeting on 14 October 2008, Hon WONG Kwok-hing and Hon WONG Kwok-kin proposed to discuss financial assistance and support for poor elders, including providing income supplement for poor elders and implementing a universal retirement protection scheme.

6. 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.

Suggested to be removed from the list (Note)

Note : In view that the multi-purpose Crisis Intervention and Support Centre has started the provision of short-term accommodation service, accommodating both men and women, since May 2008, the Administration suggests that this item be removed from the list.

7. Residential care services for the mentally disabled

Dr Hon KWOK Ka-ki proposed to discuss measures to enhance the services of residential care homes and private homes for mentally disabled at the Panel meeting on 12 October 2006.

1st quarter of 2009

On licensing of residential care homes for people with disabilities, the Panel discussed the subject on three occasions on 21 March 2006, 11 June 2007 and 8 May 2008. At the meeting on 8 May 2008, the Administration advised that it aimed to introduce a Residential Care Homes (Persons with Disabilities) Bill to the Legislative Council (LegCo) in the 2008-2009 session.

Proposed timing for discussion

8. 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 next session, especially the monitoring of the use of income generated from public charitable fund-raising activities.

Pending completion of the review by the Law Reform Commission

The Administration has advised that the subject matter involved various bureaux and departments. As the Law Reform Commission is now conducting a review of the law and regulatory framework relating to charities in Hong Kong, the Administration has suggested deferring Panel discussion to after the completion of the review.

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

At the Panel meeting on 9 July 2007, Hon Mrs Sophie LEUNG pointed out that an increasing number of overseas countries had adopted the solution-focused approach for the provision of welfare services. She suggested that the subject of "a solution-focused approach in the provision of welfare services" should be included in the Panel's list of outstanding items for discussion.

Suggested to be removed from the list (Note)

Note : The Administration advised that as the item was not proposed in the context of any specific subject but raised at the beginning of the meeting without any elaboration, it is not in a position to follow up. The Panel may wish to consider whether to remove this item from the list.

10. Child Development Fund

At the Panel meetings on 14 January and 14 February 2008, the Administration's proposal to set up a \$300 million Child Development Fund (CDF) was discussed. While members expressed general support for the establishment of CDF, they were concerned about the implementation details and the way forward. The Administration was requested to revert to the Panel on the progress of the pioneer projects under CDF six months after implementation.

2nd quarter of 2009

11. Work progress of the Family Council

The Panel was briefed on the establishment of the Family Council on 14 February 2008. According to the Administration, the Family Council would seek to rationalize the work of the Elderly Commission, Women's Commission and Commission on Youth by March 2009. The Administration was requested to revert to the Panel on the work progress of the Family Council.

2nd quarter of 2009

The Administration has subsequently advised that it aims to report progress in the second quarter of 2009.

12. Staff turnover in Special Child Care Centres

The above item was referred by the Subcommittee to Study Issues Relating to the Provision of Boarding Places, Senior Secondary Education and Employment Opportunities for Children with Special Education Needs. When the subject of "Impact of the Pre-primary Education Voucher Scheme on Special Child Care Centres" was discussed at the Subcommittee meeting on 3 April 2008, members expressed concern about the high turnover rate of staff working in Special Child Care Centres (SCCCs). According to the deputations attending the meeting, the staff turnover rate in SCCC was as high as 32%. The Subcommittee agreed that the subject should be referred to the Panel on Welfare Services for follow-up discussion.

Suggested to be removed from the list (Note)

Note : The Administration has advised that it is more appropriate for the agencies with high staff turnover rates to review their human resources and management practices in order to bring down the turnover rate. On the part of the Administration, the Social Welfare Department has secured annual recurrent resources of \$5.2 million starting from 2008-2009 to enhance the training opportunities for the special child care workers. This will help alleviate staff retention problem. The Panel may wish to consider whether to remove this item from the list.

13. Implementation of the Lump Sum Grant subvention system

In the last term, the Panel urged the Administration to review the implementation of the Lump Sum Grant (LSG) subvention system. The Administration advised that the LSG Independent Review Committee was established in January 2008 to review the implementation of the LSG subvention system. The Committee was expected to complete the review by the end of the third quarter of 2008 and will report its findings and recommendations to the Secretary for Labour and Welfare. The Panel agreed at its meeting on 16 May 2008 to follow up the matter in the next session.

1st quarter of 2009

At the meeting on 14 October 2008, members agreed that the Administration should revert to the Panel on the review findings of the LSG Independent Review Committee once available.

14. Review of the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme

The Panel and the Subcommittee on Review of the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme had studied the existing arrangements for the CSSA Scheme in the last term. In concluding its deliberations, the Subcommittee made a number of recommendations in its report to the Panel (LC Paper No. CB(2)871/07-08). A motion urging the Administration to take note of the Subcommittee's report was moved at the Council meeting on 20 February 2008. The motion was carried.

To be decided

At the Panel meeting on 12 June 2008, members urged the Administration to shorten the interval of each adjustment cycle of CSSA and review the adequacy of the CSSA standard payment rates and items to be included in the Social Security Assistance Index of Prices. The Administration also agreed to see if the preparatory work for the next round of the Household Expenditure Survey on CSSA households could be further advanced.

Proposed timing for discussion

At the meeting of the Subcommittee on Review of CSSA Scheme on 2 April 2007, the provision of public dental care services for the needy, including CSSA recipients, was discussed. 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. The Panel on Health Services discussed the health care services for the elderly on 12 November 2007.

Dr Hon KWOK Ka-ki has separately proposed to discuss the provision of dental grant for the CSSA recipients (LC Paper No. CB(2)1047/07-08 issued on 12 February 2008).

15. Research report on "Strategies and measures in tackling domestic violence in selected places"

At its meeting on 8 July 2008, the Subcommittee on Strategy and Measures to Tackle Family Violence studied the research report on "Strategies and measures in tackling domestic violence in selected places" prepared by the Research and Library Services Division (RLSD) of the LegCo Secretariat and requested RLSD to provide supplementary information. The Subcommittee recommended that the Panel should follow up with the Administration on the findings of the research report in the next legislative term.

1st quarter of 2009

Proposed timing for discussion

16. Review of Old Age Allowance

At the meeting on 14 October 2008, Hon WONG Kwok-hing and Hon WONG Kwok-kin proposed to discuss increasing the monthly rates of Old Age Allowance (OAA) to \$1,000.

November 2008

The Panel discussed the subject matter at the meetings on 12 November and 10 December 2007. Members were advised that the Labour and Welfare Bureau was conducting an in-depth study on how to improve the OAA Scheme, which was expected to be completed by the end of 2008.

CE announced on 24 October 2008 that OAA would be increased to \$1,000 a month under the existing system. The Administration will seek approval from the Finance Committee as soon as possible.

17. Home Environment Improvement Scheme for the Elderly

Item proposed by Hon WONG Kwok-hing and Hon WONG Kwok-kin at the meeting on 14 October 2008. The proposal was detailed in their joint letter which was circulated vide LC Paper No. CB(2)50/08-09(02).

Suggested to be removed from the list (Note)

Note : The Administration has advised that in view that implementation issues of the Home Environment Improvement Scheme for the Elderly will be dealt with in the case conference to be held on 21 November 2008, this item can be removed from the list.

18. Review of the system for processing applications for Disability Allowance under the Social Security Allowance Scheme

Item proposed by Hon WONG Kwok-hing and Hon WONG Kwok-kin at the meeting on 14 October 2008. The proposal was detailed in their joint letter which was circulated vide LC Paper No. CB(2)50/08-09(03).

Suggested to be removed from the list (Note)

Note : The Administration advised that it had answered an oral question on Disability Allowance raised by Hon WONG Kwok-hing at the Council meeting on 5 November 2008. This item can be removed from the list.

Proposed timing for discussion

19. Poverty alleviation

At the meeting on 14 October 2008, members agreed that the Panel should follow up with the Administration on the implementation of the recommendations in reports of the Subcommittee to Study the Subject of Combating Poverty and the former Commission on Poverty, and the work progress of the Task Force on Poverty.

2nd quarter of 2009

The Administration will report on progress of the Task Force on Poverty in the second quarter of 2009, together with the progress report on CDF.