

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)1194/09-10
(These minutes have been
seen by the Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/WS

Panel on Welfare Services

Minutes of meeting
held on Monday, 8 March 2010, at 10:45 am
in Conference Room A of the Legislative Council Building

Members present : Hon WONG Sing-chi (Chairman)
Hon CHEUNG Kwok-che (Deputy Chairman)
Hon Albert HO Chun-yan
Hon LEE Cheuk-yan
Hon LI Fung-ying, BBS, JP
Hon Paul CHAN Mo-po, MH, JP
Dr Hon LEUNG Ka-lau
Dr Hon PAN Pey-chyou

Members absent : Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung
Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP
Hon Frederick FUNG Kin-kee, SBS, JP
Hon Ronny TONG Ka-wah, SC
Hon WONG Kwok-kin, BBS
Hon IP Wai-ming, MH

Public Officers attending : Item IV

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

Mr Patrick NIP Tak-kuen, JP
Director of Social Welfare

Mrs Kathy NG MA Kam-han, JP
Assistant Director of Social Welfare (Elderly)

Mrs Cecilia YUEN
Assistant Director of Social Welfare
(Rehabilitation & Medical Social Services)

Mr Stephen SUI Wai-keung
Commissioner for Rehabilitation
Labour and Welfare Bureau

Ms Betty HO Siu-ping
Principal Assistant Secretary for Labour and Welfare
(Welfare) 3

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

Staff in attendance : Ms Yvonne YU
Senior Council Secretary (2) 5

Miss Maggie CHIU
Legislative Assistant (2) 4

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I. Confirmation of minutes

[LC Paper No. CB(2)1009/09-10]

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 February 2010 were confirmed.

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

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)916/09-10(01), CB(2)949/09-10(01),
CB(2)957/09-10(01) and CB(2)1004/09-10(01)]

2. Members noted that the following information papers had been issued since the last meeting –

- (a) the submission from the Parents' Committee of Hong Kong Down Syndrome Association concerning the provision of additional subsidised residential care places for the elderly and persons with disabilities as announced in the Chief Executive's 2009-2010 Policy Address;
- (b) the submission from the Alliance for Universal Pension regarding the retirement protection for the elderly;

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- (c) the reply from the Director of Social Welfare to the Hong Kong Human Rights Monitor and copied to the Panel; and
- (d) the referral from Duty Roster Members regarding the provision of long-term care services for the elderly.

III. Items for discussion at the next meeting

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1010/09-10(01) to (02)]

3. Members agreed to discuss the following items proposed by the Administration at the next meeting to be held on 12 April 2010 at 10:45 am –

- (a) Progress on the Preparation of the Residential Care Homes (Persons with Disabilities) Bill;
- (b) Additional Provision for Social Security Recipients; and
- (c) Proposed injection of Further Funding into the Partnership Fund for the Disadvantaged.

IV. Pilot Scheme on Home Care Services for Frail Elders and Pilot Scheme on Home Care Services for Persons with Severe Disabilities

[LC Paper No. CB(2)1010/09-10(03)]

4. Secretary for Labour and Welfare (SLW) said that as announced in the 2010-2011 Budget, the Administration would commit new resources to increase the supply of subsidised residential care places for elders and persons with disabilities (PWDs), increase the provision of day care places, and try out better home care services, specifically for elders waiting for subsidised nursing home (NH) places, and for persons with severe disabilities waiting for subvented residential care services through two strategic and forward-looking pilot schemes, viz. the pilot scheme on home care services for frail elders and the pilot scheme on home care services for persons with severe disabilities, as detailed in the Administration's paper.

5. On the new resources for residential care services for elderly, SLW elaborated that an additional recurrent funding of \$160 million would be allocated for an additional 1 087 subsidised NH and care and attention (C&A) places, representing an increase of 37% of NH places. In line with the policy of "supporting ageing in the community as the core, institutional care as back-up", the Administration was working with the Elderly Commission (EC) to examine how to enhance the community care services for the elderly, with a view to avoiding premature and unnecessary institutionalisation. The launch of the pilot

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scheme on home care services for frail elders would provide a new package of intensive and tailor-made home care services for elders on the waiting list for subsidised NH places, so as to better serve their special needs and help relieve the pressure of their carers. To this end, a one-off funding of \$55 million would be sought from the Lotteries Fund (LF) for implementing the pilot scheme. SLW said that in view of the relatively large elderly population in Kowloon, the Administration would invite elders residing in the region (covering Wong Tai Sin, Sai Kung, Kwun Tong, Yau Tsim Mong, Kowloon City and Sham Shui Po districts) who were waiting for NH places to join the pilot scheme. The pilot scheme was expected to commence within 2010-2011 and would last for three years, serving about 510 elders in total. There would be an interim review and then a final review upon the completion of the pilot scheme.

6. SLW further said that the Administration was mindful of the acute waitlisting situation for those with severe disabilities, notably persons with severe physical and/or mental disabilities on the waiting lists for hostel for severely mentally handicapped persons (HSMH), hostel for severely physically handicapped persons (HSPH) and C&A home for severely disabled persons (C&A/SD). As announced in the 2010-2011 Budget, the Government would continue to increase the supply of subvented residential care places and enhance the provision of community care and support services for PWDs. Regarding residential care service for PWDs, the Government would provide an additional 939 places in the coming two years. In tandem, to strengthen the community support for persons with severe disabilities, the Administration would introduce a pilot scheme for persons with severe disabilities, who were on the waiting lists for subvented residential care services at HSMH, HSPH and C&A/SD, with a package of home-based support services to meet their specific care and training needs. These enhanced support services sought to facilitate these PWDs' continued living at homes while waiting for subvented residential care services, and help relieve the stress of their family carers.

7. SLW advised that a one-off funding of \$163 million would be sought under LF for implementing the three-year pilot scheme on home care services for persons with severe disabilities. Under the pilot scheme, the Government would try out a new package of home-based support services in Tuen Mun and Kwun Tong districts with the largest number of persons with severe disabilities (273 and 264 persons respectively) waiting for subvented residential care services at HSMH, HSPH and C&A/SD. The pilot scheme was expected to serve a total of about 540 persons with severe disabilities in its full operation. It would commence in the fourth quarter of 2010-2011 and end in the third quarter of 2013-14. There would be an interim review and then a final review upon the completion of the pilot scheme.

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8. SLW stressed that given the severity of the conditions of persons with severe disabilities and their residential care needs, the new home-based care services would be delivered to the service users and this was by no means a substitute for residential care services.

9. While welcoming the introduction of the two pilot schemes, Ms LI Fung-ying considered that the Administration should formulate a forward-looking long-term plan for relieving the waitlisting situation of subsidised residential care places in the light of the ever-growing demand for such services. Pointing out that some 6 500 PWDs were on the waiting lists for various types of residential care services, of which some 2 700 were persons with severe disabilities, Ms LI said that the pilot scheme on home care services for persons with severe disabilities, which was expected to serve a total of only about 540 persons with severe disabilities, was far from adequate to meet the caring needs of PWDs who were living in the community. Ms LI took the view that the home care services should not be regarded as a substitute for the provision of additional residential care places. Ms LI enquired whether the Administration would consider providing financial assistance to family carers of PWDs so as to relieve their financial burden and to enable them to take care of their family members.

10. SLW said that the two pilot schemes were in line with the strategic directions of providing support for service users and their family carers. As he had pointed out earlier, reviews would be conducted in the course of and upon the completion of the pilot schemes. Having regard to the review findings, the Administration would then consider the need for extending the schemes to other districts in the territory. As regards the suggestion of providing an allowance for family carers of PWDs, SLW advised that PWDs were eligible for the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) or Disability Allowance to meet the special needs arising from disability. For instance, discretionary grant/supplement was provided under the CSSA Scheme for eligible PWDs to employ domestic helpers to take care of them at home. SLW further advised that the various types of support services provided by the Government to family carers aimed at helping them discharge their family responsibilities and alleviating their stress, rather than substituting family functions. The existing support services could reflect social values and, compared to the provision of subsidies, could better address the needs of family carers. In view of this, the Administration had no intention to change the existing policy.

11. Dr PAN Pey-chyou supported the two pilot schemes as they would strengthen the home care services for frail elders and persons with severe disabilities while waiting for subsidised residential care places. Pointing out that very intensive care was required for frail elders waiting for subsidised NH places, he was concerned how the pilot scheme on home care services for elders would better address the special care needs of frail elders as compared with the

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existing Enhanced Home and Community Care Services (EHCCS). In his view, the employment of local domestic helpers would be more suitable for taking care of the special care needs of frail elders at home.

12. Considering that the majority of elders waiting for NH places were severely impaired, SLW advised that as compared with EHCCS, the pilot scheme aimed to provide a new package of intensive and tailor-made home care services with emphasis on rehabilitation and nursing care elements to cater for the special care needs of elders on the waiting list for NH places. The services would be delivered through non-governmental organisations (NGOs) or social enterprises (SEs) with experience in elderly care and established service networks in the districts concerned. SLW added that EC would conduct a further study on community care services for the elderly, with a view to better addressing elders' needs.

13. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan cautioned that the provision of residential care services could not be replaced with the new home care services. Given that home care services could not meet the round-the-clock care needs of severely impaired elders, enhancement of home care services could not relieve the pressure faced by the family carers in taking care of elders at home. He took the view that the service users and their carers should be allowed to choose to use the new home care services under the pilot scheme or subsidised residential care services, instead of being required to join the pilot scheme before admission to subvented residential care homes. This apart, the Administration should actively consider providing family carers with an allowance on a par with the additional cost for providing the new home care services such that the provision of carers' allowance would be cost neutral. This would, however, provide an additional option for the frail elders and PWDs to stay at home. Noting that the respective unit costs for subsidised residential care places for the elderly and PWDs were about \$6,000 and \$8,000, Mr LEE asked about the estimated cost for the new home care services, and the service details such as the duration and frequency of the services.

14. SLW reiterated that elders and PWDs who joined the pilot schemes on home care services would remain on the waiting lists for subsidised residential care services. SLW stressed that apart from supporting the policy of ageing in place, the Administration attached great importance to the residential care services for the elderly. As undertaken in the Chief Executive's 2009-2010 Policy Address, the Administration would adopt a novel multi-pronged approach to accelerate the provision of subsidised NH places and places with continuum of care for the elderly. Specifically, the Administration had allocated funding for some 1 000 subsidised residential care places for the elderly, including about 800 NH places, in this year's budget. In addition, some 1 000 residential care places for the elderly would be provided upon completion of the 12 development projects for the construction of new contract residential care homes for the

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elderly. As for residential care places for PWDs, the Government would provide 939 additional places in the coming two years, including the setting up of two integrated rehabilitation services centres in Kwai Chung and Ho Man Tin in the coming year, providing a total of 490 residential places.

15. SLW further said that while he fully recognised the important roles of family carers in taking care of frail elders and PWDs, the suggestion of providing an allowance to their family carers to relieve the demand for residential care services would require thorough and careful consideration in view of the fact that severely handicapped persons or severely impaired elders required various kinds of care services, including health care and rehabilitation training, which would better be met by care professionals of residential and community care services.

16. Assistant Director of Social Welfare (Elderly) added that with reference to the operating cost for EHCCS (about \$3,500 per month), the new home care services for frail elders under the pilot scheme would be in the region of \$4,000 to \$5,000, i.e. an increase of about 30%. As regards the implementation details of the pilot schemes, Director of Social Welfare (DSW) added that the operating cost for home care services for persons with severe disabilities would be higher than that for frail elders having regard to the fact that the former needed a package of more intensive and professional rehabilitation training service and nursing care service. In order to allow potential service operators to make suggestions on the service content and delivery mode for the pilot scheme on home care services for frail elders, SWD would invite service proposals through a non-committal Expression of Interest (EOI) exercise. In the light of the proposals received, SWD would finalise the detailed service specifications and invite qualified operators to submit formal service proposals. The Chairman said that the Panel might wish to discuss the service specifications when more details were available, if considered necessary.

17. Dr LEUNG Ka-lau considered that the pilot scheme on home care services for frail elders waiting for NH places failed to address the specific needs of elders according to their different kinds of caring needs. For instance, residential care services would better serve the caring needs of frail elders if they needed very intensive care in their daily lives, not to mention the cost effectiveness of residential care services as compared to home-based care services. In his view, the Administration should give due regard to the different caring needs of frail elders in devising the types of services to be provided under the pilot scheme.

18. SLW advised that at present, about 29% of elders on the waiting list for NH places were staying at home, and the remaining ones were residing at private RCHes. The pilot scheme aimed to provide intensive and tailor-made home care services for elders residing in the community who were waiting for subsidised NH places. DSW said that impairment level and care needs of elders who were on the waiting list for subsidised residential care services were

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assessed under the Standardised Care Need Assessment Mechanism for Elderly Services (SCNAMES). He stressed that personalised home care services with greater emphasis on the rehabilitation and nursing care elements would be provided to frail elders under the pilot scheme.

19. To better understand and provide specific home care services for frail elders and PWDs, Dr LEUNG Ka-lau said that the Administration should conduct a territory-wide study on their specific caring needs and refine the pilot schemes as appropriate.

20. Mr Albert HO said that he would not oppose the introduction of two new pilot schemes if they were not intended to replace the provision of subsidised residential care places. Being forward-looking pilot schemes, Mr HO asked whether and how the Administration would identify the specific care needs of different types of service users with a view to providing appropriate home care services that best suited their needs. This apart, the Administration should set specific targets for admission to subsidised residential care places.

21. SLW said that while ageing in place was the policy direction, residential care places would be provided to those who were in need of such services. It was rightly pointed out in the Consultancy Study initiated by EC that there were concerns that the existing community care services were not comprehensive enough to address the needs of elders. Further development of community care services would encourage elders to age in place and thus avoid premature and unnecessary institutionalisation. SLW further said that subsidised residential care services were meant for those who had long-term care needs but could not be adequately taken care of at home. Since November 2003, access to subsidised residential care homes for the elderly places was subject to care need assessments under SCNAMES. Eligible elders would be put on the Central Waiting List for subsidised C&A places and NH places. The provision of the new home care services would relieve the stress of family carers, and enable the elderly on the waiting list for NH places and their family members to reconsider the option of ageing at home.

22. Mr Paul CHAN took the view that the provision of home care services was by no means a substitute for residential care services. Mr CHAN asked about the rationale for seeking a one-off funding from LF for implementing the three-year pilot schemes, instead of financing the two pilot schemes under the recurrent expenditure. He cast doubt on whether the Government had long-term commitment in providing such services.

23. SLW advised that grants would be sought from LF for implementing projects as they were pilot in nature. Should the review findings of the pilot schemes be encouraging, the Administration would consider financing the projects under the recurrent funding after the three-year pilot period. LF was

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also public fund and it was the established arrangement for providing funding under LF for pilot welfare projects.

24. Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che appreciated the efforts made by the Government in introducing the two pilot schemes which sought to strengthen the home care services for elders on the waiting list for NH places, and for persons with severe disabilities. He enquired about the breakdown of cost estimation for the two pilot schemes. Noting that the Administration would consider extending the pilot schemes across the territory if they were proven effective, Mr CHEUNG took the view that the Administration should advance the timetable for conducting an interim review so that supporting information would be available earlier. To relieve the financial burden of family carers, Mr CHEUNG suggested that a tax deductible allowance should be introduced to recognise the efforts made by family carers in taking care of the elders and PWDs at home.

25. SLW responded that –

- (a) while dependent parent allowance was being provided to relieve the financial burden of family carers, he would convey to the Financial Secretary the proposal of introducing a new tax deductible allowance to recognise the efforts of family carers in taking care of elders and PWDs at home;
- (b) the Administration was open-minded and did not rule out the possibility of increasing the quota of service users or expanding the pilot schemes to cover all districts if the schemes were proven effective. The expected numbers of service users under the pilot schemes were estimated based on the respective numbers of waitlistees for NH places and subsidised residential care services at HSMH, HSPH and C&A/SD in the districts concerned; and
- (c) SWD would invite proposals for the new home care services for the elderly through an EOI exercise, and the detailed service specifications, including the cost estimation, would be available upon receipt of the proposals. The Administration would revert to the Panel on the service specifications if necessary.

26. Given that the Administration had made clear that it would continue to increase the provision of residential care places, Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che considered that the Administration should take into account the length of stay at NH places in subsidised RCHEs and the longer life expectancy, and conduct an in-depth study to project the future needs for NH places. SLW answered in the affirmative.

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27. The Chairman expressed concern about the sufficiency of the one-off funding sought from LF and the manpower for implementing the two pilot schemes, and the criteria for assessing the effectiveness of the two pilot schemes. The Chairman said that the provision of home care services was a complicated issue which required cross-departmental efforts. In his view, SWD should adopt a case management approach in taking forward the pilot schemes.

28. SLW said that as explained earlier, the Administration was open-minded on the service scope of the pilot schemes. In the meantime, in order to allow potential service operators to make suggestions on the service content and delivery model of the pilot scheme for elderly, SWD would invite service proposals through a non-committal EOI exercise. In the light of the proposals received, the Government would finalise the detailed service specifications and invite qualified operators to submit formal service proposals. The criteria for assessing the effectiveness of the pilot schemes would be drawn up at a later stage. As both pilot schemes were expected to commence next year, there would be ample time for the service providers to recruit necessary staff for implementing the schemes.

29. DSW added that at present, NGOs delivering home care services adopted a case management approach for following up the care needs of service users. Under the pilot schemes, the new services would place greater emphasis on the rehabilitation and nursing care needs of the users. The Administration would closely monitor the implementation of the pilot schemes and refine the service content and delivery mode if such needs arose. As regards the staff requirements for the new services, DSW said that SWD, in collaboration with the Hospital Authority, had launched classes for enrolled nurses for the welfare sector to alleviate the shortage of nurses in the sector.

30. Ms LI Fung-ying took the view that following the implementation of the pilot schemes, the waiting time for admission to subsidised residential care places should under no circumstances be longer than the current waiting time, especially for those who had genuine need for residential care services. The Chairman considered that the waitlisting situation should be improved if the pilot schemes were proven effective.

31. SLW reiterated that the pilot schemes aimed to relieve the pressure faced by family carers in caring for frail elders or PWDs at home. The enhancement of home care services for the elderly would help avoid premature and unnecessary institutionalisation, and thereby reducing the number of waitlistees for subsidised residential care services. On the other hand, the pilot scheme on home care services for persons with severe disabilities aimed to enhance the support services to relieve the immense pressure faced by their family carers while waiting for admission to subsidised residential care places, and not to shorten the waiting lists.

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32. Pointing out that the care needs of severely mentally handicapped persons and severely physically handicapped persons varied greatly, Dr PAN Pey-chyou wondered how the pilot scheme on home care services for persons with severe disabilities would meet the special care needs of individual PWDs.

33. SLW responded that given the conditions of persons with severe physical and/or mental disabilities and the level and intensity of care they required, the Government was mindful of their special care needs and the immense pressure faced by their family carers in caring for them at home. Under the pilot scheme, PWDs who were on the waiting lists for subvented residential care services at HSMH, HSPH and C&A/SD would be provided with a package of home-based support services including personal care and escort service, occupational therapy/physiotherapy rehabilitation training service and nursing care service to meet their care and training needs. These enhanced support services sought to facilitate these PWDs' continued living at home while waiting for residential care services, and help relieve the stress of their family carers.

34. Dr PAN Pey-chyou said that work-related diseases caused by prolonged or excessive exertion of hands and forearms when taking care of frail elders and PWDs were not uncommon among health and care workers in residential care homes. Consideration should be given to developing ancillary devices to assist these workers in delivering home-based care services.

35. SLW said that the Labour Department had endeavoured to promote employers' and employees' awareness of the prevention of occupational and work-related diseases by organising educational and promotional activities. Notably, it had collaborated with the Occupational Safety and Health Council in promoting occupational health among workers in residential care homes.

36. Mr Albert HO remained of the view that the Administration should spell out clearly the threshold for determining those elders and PWDs who were most in need of residential care as well as set a pledge for admission to the required service units. SLW said that access to subsidised residential care services was subject to objective care need assessments under SCNAMES and Standardised Assessment Mechanism for Residential Care Services for PWDs to ascertain their residential service needs before they were placed on the waiting lists or admitted to the required service units.

37. In concluding the discussion, the Chairman said that the Panel might wish to follow up the discussion on the review of the assessment tools for admission to subsidised residential care places and the provision of an allowance to family carers at future meetings, if considered necessary.

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V. Any other business

38. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 12:30 pm.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
1 April 2010