

**立法會**  
**Legislative Council**

LC Paper No. CB(2)2127/09-10  
(These minutes have been  
seen by the Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/WS

**Panel on Welfare Services**

**Minutes of meeting**  
**held on Monday, 14 June 2010, at 10:45 am**  
**in the Chamber 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 LEUNG Yiu-chung  
Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP  
Hon LI Fung-ying, BBS, JP  
Hon Frederick FUNG Kin-kee, SBS, JP  
Hon Ronny TONG Ka-wah, SC  
Dr Hon LEUNG Ka-lau  
Hon WONG Kwok-kin, BBS  
Hon IP Wai-ming, MH  
Dr Hon PAN Pey-chyou  
Hon Alan LEONG Kah-kit, SC  
Hon Albert CHAN Wai-yip

**Members absent** : Hon Paul CHAN Mo-po, MH, JP  
Hon LEUNG Kwok-hung

**Public Officers attending** : Item IV  
  
Mr Patrick NIP, JP  
Director of Social Welfare  
  
Mrs Anna MAK  
Assistant Director of Social Welfare  
(Family and Child Welfare)

Ms Karyn CHAN  
Principal Assistant Secretary for Labour and Welfare  
(Welfare)<sup>1</sup>

Dr Sandra TSANG  
Head of the Department of Social Work and Social  
Administration, the University of Hong Kong /  
Team Leader of the Consultant Team for the Review on  
the Implementation of the Integrated Family Services  
Centre ("IFSC") Service Mode

Professor Joe LEUNG  
Professor of the Department of Social Work and Social  
Administration, the University of Hong Kong /  
Core Member of the Consultant Team for the Review on  
the Implementation of the IFSC Service Mode

Dr LAW Chi-kwong  
Associate Professor of the Department of Social Work and  
Social Administration, the University of Hong Kong/  
Core Member of the Consultant Team for the Review on  
the Implementation of the IFSC Service Mode

Item V

Mr Stephen SUI  
Commissioner for Rehabilitation  
Labour and Welfare Bureau

Mr Eric CHENG  
Assistant Secretary for Education (Higher Education)

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

Mr KWOK Yi-lai  
Inspector, Vocational Training for People with Disabilities  
Section  
Vocational Training Council

Dr MA Chi  
Deputy Executive Director (Training Services)  
Employees Retraining Board

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

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

Miss Karen LAI  
Council Secretary (2) 4

Miss Maggie CHIU  
Legislative Assistant (2) 4

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**I. Information paper(s) issued since the last meeting**  
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1603/09-10(01)]

Members noted that the Administration's information paper on the welfare-related initiatives of the Framework Agreement on Hong Kong/Guangdong Co-operation had been issued since the last meeting.

**II. Items for discussion at the next meeting**  
[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1747/09-10(01) to (02)]

2. Members agreed to discuss the following items proposed by the Administration at the next meeting to be held on 12 July 2010 at 10:45 am -

- (a) Pilot Scheme on Home Care Services for Frail Elders; and
- (b) Child Fatality Review.

3. The Chairman advised that the Panel held a special meeting on 5 June 2010 to receive views from deputations on the long-term social welfare planning. In view of the large number of deputations indicated interest to express views on the subject, members had earlier agreed that another special meeting would be scheduled for 26 June 2010 to receive views from other deputations. The Chairman further advised that he had extended an invitation to the Secretary for Labour and Welfare for the attendance of representatives of the Administration at the forthcoming special meeting on 26 June 2010. The Chairman added that the special meeting would also receive views from deputations on the review on the implementation of the IFSC Service Mode which would be discussed under agenda item III below.

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**III. Review on the Implementation of the Integrated Family Services Centre Service Mode**

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1619/09-10(01) to (02) and CB(2)1747/09-10(03) to (04)]

4. Director of Social Welfare ("DSW") briefed members on the background for commissioning the Consultant Team from The University of Hong Kong in October 2008 to conduct the Review on the Implementation of the Integrated Family Service Centre ("IFSC") Service Mode ("the Review"), as detailed in the Administration's paper. DSW said that upon the release of the Review Report in May 2010, the report had been uploaded onto the website of the Social Welfare Department ("SWD"). This apart, SWD had, in collaboration with the Consultant Team, briefed the stakeholders on the findings and recommendations of the Review and the follow-up actions taken/ to be taken by SWD. He would elaborate on the Administration's response to the recommendations made in the Review report after the Consultant Team had given an account of the major findings and recommendations of the Review Report.

5. Dr Sandra TSANG of the Consultant Team elaborated on the objectives and the major findings of the Review. Regarding the effectiveness of the IFSC service mode, as shown from the review findings, all stakeholders considered the IFSC service mode as meaningful and appropriate in directing and delivering family services in Hong Kong and should be continued. It was observed that some IFSCs had developed special services when they identified new target groups unique to their communities and developed new specialised services to meet the specific needs. The Consultant Team thought that such practice should be continued and supported by adequate resources.

6. Dr TSANG further advised that the Review Report also recorded factors that hindered the delivery of IFSC services. These included the unfavourable location and set-up of some IFSCs, unrealistic expectations of service users and community stakeholders about the scope of IFSC services such as the handling of housing assistance cases. On the performance standards as set out in the Funding and Service Agreement ("FSA"), concerns were raised about the performance of duties by IFSCs but not formerly counted. In the light of the findings, the Consultant Team had made 26 recommendations accordingly.

7. Dr TSANG then highlighted the recommendations concerning collaboration and interfacing at the central, district and headquarters levels as set out in Recommendations 12 to 16 of the Review Report.

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8. DSW advised that the Administration accepted in principle all the 26 recommendations in the Review Report and would take forward all the 26 recommendations. The implementation of some of the recommendations had already commenced. Referring to the major concerns of frontline staff of IFSCs about the implementation of the IFSC service mode as recorded in the Review Report, the Administration had taken the following actions -

- (a) a liaison group between SWD and the Housing Department ("HD") had been set up at the headquarters level, namely the Liaison Group on Issues relating to Housing Assistance Cases ("the Liaison Group"), with a view to addressing issues relating to the handling of housing assistance cases. Its first meeting was held on 30 April 2010;
- (b) a working group comprising administrators, supervisors and frontline staff of IFSCs would be set up in August 2010 to review the FSA for IFSCs, with a view to updating and adjusting the performance indicators and encouraging IFSCs to develop service initiatives beyond the FSA requirements; and
- (c) a working group was set up in March 2010 to review and streamline the procedures for handling Director of Social Welfare Incorporated – Specified Person account cases.

DSW added that SWD would regularly report the progress of its follow up of the 26 recommendations to the Task Group on the Implementation of IFSCs ("the Task Group"), which was set up in 2004 and comprised members from the 11 District Social Welfare Offices of SWD and the nine non-governmental organisations ("NGOs") operating IFSCs. The minutes of meetings of the Task Group would be available on SWD's Departmental Homepage for public information.

9. Noting that concerns were raised by IFSC social workers about spending a substantial proportion of working hours on handling housing assistance cases, Ms LI Fung-ying asked about the specific work plan of the Liaison Group to address the concerns. Given that the Administration had accepted all the 26 recommendations of the Review Report, Ms LI asked about the implementation plan of the recommendations and the additional resources to be allocated for the purpose. Pointing out that some IFSCs were serving communities with more than 200 000 residents, she asked whether the Administration would allocate more resources to these districts to meet the increasing service demand.

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10. DSW said that in response to the concerns about handling of housing assistance cases by IFSCs, SWD had set up a liaison mechanism with HD at both the headquarters and district levels. The liaison group at the headquarters level would review and streamline the existing work procedures in respect of the referral system, with a view to achieving clearer delineation of roles of social workers and HD staff and ensuring the implementation of agreed procedures in actual operation. Specifically, HD would process application for public rental housing flats and refer those cases which did not meet eligibility criteria but warranted consideration for compassionate rehousing to IFSCs for follow-up actions. DSW further said that the liaison groups at the district level would be set up in July 2010. DSW added that the provision of manpower resources for IFSCs were premised on the service boundaries i.e. each IFSC would serve a population of 100 000 to 150 000, as well as the characteristics and the specific service needs of the community. Since the implementation of IFSC service mode, additional resources had been allocated to meet the increasing service demand. He assured members that the Administration would seek additional resources for the implementation of the recommendations of the Review Report, where necessary.

11. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan said that following the occurrence of family tragedies, it was always reported that social workers of IFSCs could be more sensitive in providing assistance to the victims should they have not been overstretched. However, he noted that the Consultant Team considered it reasonable and appropriate for an IFSC to deliver family services in a community with 100 000 to 150 000 residents. In drawing the conclusion, he wondered whether the Consultant Team had examined whether the resources and manpower for IFSCs were reasonable and whether it had examined the workload of frontline staff of IFSCs, in particular whether the caseload of social workers should be set at a lower level.

12. DSW advised that the number of social workers and supervisory posts in IFSCs had been increased from 896 and 62 in 2004-2005 to 1 017 and 91 respectively in 2009-2010, representing an increase of 16%. On average in 2009-2010, each social worker of IFSCs handled 46.2 active cases monthly, and 42 new / reactivated cases in a year.

13. Assistant Director of Social Welfare (Family and Child Welfare) ("ADSW(F&CW)") said that the number of IFSCs remained at 61 since the full implementation of IFSC service mode in 2004-2005. Over the years, additional resources had been allocated to IFSCs according to the characteristics and needs of individual districts. Reference was made to a number of indicators, for example, the number of Comprehensive Social Security Assistance households, cases of child abuse, spouse abuse, and juvenile crime. Instead of allocating resources to IFSCs across the board, more resources had been allocated to the high-risk districts such as Sham Shui Po and Yuen Long. ADSW(F&CW)

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further said that apart from providing support services to individuals, IFSCs would also engage in preventive work by organising group activities in collaboration with district organisations and other service units. Though additional resources were allocated to IFSCs in past years, a higher output standard had not been set.

14. On the expectation of service users on the IFSC services, Dr Sandra TSANG said that the implementation of the IFSC service mode aimed to provide a family-focused and community-based integrated service mode i.e. providing a continuum of preventive, supportive and remedial services. The provision of resources and manpower for IFSCs was therefore premised on the assumption that the service need for remedial service would be diminishing if adequate preventive and supportive services had been provided by IFSCs. Dr TSANG further said that while acknowledging the recurrence of sporadic family tragedies, she considered that social workers should not be expected to assume the overall responsibility for being unable to provide timely support for the victims. In her view, support from family members and the neighbourhood was equally important in preventing the occurrence of family tragedies. She appealed to the community and service users to properly manage their unrealistic expectations of the scope of IFSC services and the role of social workers.

15. The Chairman asked to what extent the Consultant Team considered that the current IFSC service mode had achieved its objectives in delivering family services.

16. Dr Sandra TSANG pointed out that as shown from the Review findings, the IFSC service mode received general support from the stakeholders as appropriate in directing and delivering family services. However, IFSC social workers were found to be overwhelmed by casework. To tackle this, some social workers had to pair up with co-workers for the delivery of preventive and educational activities so that the latter could stand in when the former were occupied in unexpected urgent remedial work. Efforts should be made to let the service users and stakeholders know about the objectives and priorities of IFSC services so as to properly manage their expectations.

17. DSW shared the views of Dr Sandra TSANG. He said that it was understandable that as compared with preventive work, IFSC social workers would accord priority to emergency remedial work. As such, the District Social Welfare Officers ("DSWOs") had made concerted efforts to collaborate with district organisations and District Councils to carry out preventive and supportive services for families in the district.

18. The Chairman took the view that SWD should carefully maintain a balanced allocation of resources for the delivery of preventive, supportive and remedial services of IFSCs.

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19. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung considered that in view of the increasing complexity of family problems and the population size currently served by an IFSC, it was impossible for IFSC social workers to provide every assistance to those families in need of supportive and preventive services, not to mention the hidden cases. In his view, the Administration should model on the experience of the former Single Parent Centres and foster the concept of self-help and mutual help of the disadvantaged groups so as to provide target assistance to meet their specific needs. Notably, the set up of support groups for single parents would be more effective in enabling them to build social network and promoting the spirit of self-help and mutual help in the community.

20. Dr Sandra TSANG said that the implementation of the IFSC service mode aimed to provide an integrated and continuum of preventive, supportive and remedial services. Most IFSCs had developed special services to meet the service needs of specific target groups in their own communities. Dr TSANG further said that the Consultant Team had exchanged views with service users in conducting the Review. The Family Resource Unit and Family Support Unit of IFSCs were found to be encouraging service users to foster the spirit of self-help. It was noteworthy that some service users had now joined the IFSC activities as volunteers and shared their own experience with other service users as well as offered constructive suggestions to the operation of IFSCs.

21. DSW supplemented that as compared with the then five Single Parent Centres, the IFSCs located over the territory could provide single-parent families with more easily accessible services in a one-stop manner without labelling effect. Such services included intensive counselling, assessment on application for compassionate rehousing, etc. Specifically, in 2009, IFSCs organised a total of 144 support/developmental groups for single parents with around 2 400 participants. While acknowledging the remedial services provided by IFSCs, the delivery of preventive and supportive services were other important roles of IFSCs. The Administration believed that the IFSC service mode was an appropriate mode for delivery of family services.

22. Noting that the Administration had already commenced to implement two recommendations of the Review Report, Mr TAM Yiu-chung asked about the concrete implementation timetable for the other recommendations. He enquired whether and how the Administration would take follow-up actions in respect of the findings that two IFSCs had not met the required level of outcome standards for service users' satisfaction and about 30% of IFSCs had not met the output standards indicator in respect of handling new/reactivated cases in 2008-2009. He further asked about the mechanism in place to monitor the performance standards of IFSCs.



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23. DSW responded that as stated earlier, the Administration would take forward all the 26 recommendations. The implementation of some of the recommendations, such as the identification of appropriate premises for the relocation of inconveniently-located IFSCs had commenced. A working group would be set up to follow up on the recommendations relating to FSA for IFSCs. The Task Group would be informed of the progress on the implementation of the recommendations. The Administration would keep the Panel informed of the progress of the implementation of the recommendations in due course.

24. ADSW(F&CW) said that under the existing arrangement, IFSCs were required to submit quarterly statistical reports to SWD. Should any IFSCs fail to meet the performance standards stipulated in FSAs, they were required to submit reports on the substandard performance. As reported by the IFSCs concerned, they were on some occasions unable to meet the performance standards because some duties performed were not counted under FSAs, and some duties were discontinued because of staff movement or the responsible officers had to handle urgent duties. ADSW(F&CW) further said that in the light of the explanation, the overall performance of IFSCs was considered satisfactory. ADSW(F&CW) added that having regard to the recommendations of the Review Report, the Administration would review FSA for IFSCs with a view to updating and adjusting the performance indicators and encouraging IFSCs to develop service initiatives beyond the FSA requirements.

25. Mr IP Wai-ming said that despite IFSC social workers had repeatedly expressed concern about the overwhelming caseload of IFSCs, both the Consultant Team and the Administration had not looked into the appropriate manpower provision of IFSCs for delivering preventive and supportive services as well as remedial services. He asked how resources were allocated for different types of IFSC services. He urged the Administration to inject more resources to IFSCs so as to alleviate the workload of frontline social workers. Mr IP then referred to paragraph 12 of the Administration's paper and asked under what circumstances would SWD seek additional resources for the implementation of the recommendations. As regards the referral system in respect of housing assistance cases, Mr IP took the view that in addition to setting up liaison groups to enhance communication between SWD and HD, the Administration should set out the policy for handling such cases.

26. DSW advised that output standards on casework and preventive services were set out in the FSA for IFSCs. In addition to IFSCs, district organisations would also organise educational and promotional family service programmes at the district level. DSW further said that in taking forward the recommendations, the Administration would take into account the specific needs of different districts and seek additional resources as appropriate. On the liaison mechanism between SWD and HD, DSW said that the liaison groups at both the headquarters and district levels aimed to identify further room for improvement

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and enhance the collaboration and communications in handling housing assistance cases. Generally speaking, HD would process housing applications, whereas SWD would make recommendation for compassionate rehousing on grounds of welfare and/or medical considerations.

27. Mr Frederick FUNG said that in handling housing assistance cases at the IFSC level, SWD should ensure that social workers of various IFSCs were well versed in the objective criteria for making recommendations for compassionate rehousing. This would minimise grievances about the inconsistent procedures for handling and making referrals of housing assistance cases. Pointing out that HD would sometimes reject the professional recommendations made by SWD staff on compassionate rehousing, Mr FUNG questioned the basis for HD's refusal. Mr FUNG further said that empowerment of service users could be enhanced by encouraging them to actively take part in mutual help group activities in IFSCs.

28. DSW said that the set-up of a liaison mechanism, as recommended in the Review Report, would enhance the collaboration and interfacing between HD and SWD staff in handling housing assistance cases having regard to the applicants' housing and welfare needs. ADSW(F&CW) added that social workers of IFSCs would have regard to the individual circumstances of each case in making recommendations for compassionate rehousing.

29. As regards the empowerment of service users, DSW advised that service users were invited to join the voluntary work of IFSCs. ADSW(F&CW) supplemented that customer liaison groups had been set up in some IFSCs to gauge the views of service users in planning new service initiatives.

30. Referring to the recommendations put forward by the Consultant Team, Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che expressed the following views for the Administration's consideration -

- (a) on Recommendation 2, SWD should ensure that IFSCs would identify priority target groups (single-parents, new arrivals, ethnic minorities and deprived families) in the communities and provide appropriate services for such groups;
- (b) on Recommendation 3, SWD should put in place a mechanism to monitor as to whether the population intake or the social challenges faced by the community had warranted the setting up of a new IFSC or injection of additional manpower into a particular IFSC;
- (c) on Recommendation 4, SWD should consider setting up a working group to oversee the progress of identification of suitable locations or premises for the delivery of welfare services including IFSCs;

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- (d) on Recommendations 13 and 14, HD should play an active role in coordinating and handling of housing assistance cases; and
- (e) on Recommendation 19, instead of allocating manpower provision to IFSCs across the board, SWD should put in place a mechanism to ensure that adequate manpower provision would be provided to individual IFSCs, in particular those small IFSCs in high-risk districts, to cope with new and changing service demand of specific target groups in the communities.

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31. Expressing agreement with the recommendation to review the FSA for IFSCs, Mr CHEUNG considered that a breakdown of the number of inactive cases handled, and group and community activities organised by each of the 61 IFSCs in the past three years would provide useful information for the review. He requested the Administration to provide the information after the meeting. Mr CHEUNG took the view that the Task Group should be provided with necessary mandate to monitor the progress of SWD's follow up on the recommendations on the implementation of IFSCs. This apart, SWD should make periodic progress report to the Task Group as frequent as practicable.

32. Mr Alan LEONG said that the aims of the IFSC service mode were to provide family services under the direction of "child-centred, family-focused and community-based" and in accordance with the four guiding principles of accessibility, early identification, integration and partnership. As revealed from paragraphs 4.26 and 4.29 of the Review report, Mr LEONG considered that one of the factors hindering the implementation of the four guiding principles was unclear delineation of responsibilities between IFSCs and other welfare service units such as the Family and Child Protective Services Units ("FCPSUs"). Accordingly, the Consultant Team had drawn up Recommendations 12 to 15. Mr LEONG wondered how SWD would ensure that frontline social workers of IFSCs would be dedicated to implementing the four guiding principles in providing family services and would collaborate with other welfare service units as recommended in the Review report. Notably, IFSCs would focus on early identification of child abuse cases and make necessary referrals to FCPSUs for appropriate follow-up services.

33. DSW said that as mentioned in the Review Report, IFSCs had been working closely with community stakeholders, such as social workers in schools and hospitals, to facilitate early identification and referral of cases to other welfare service units and vice versa. Relevant internal guidelines on handling and procedures for referral of various types of cases had been drawn up for IFSC staff. DSW further said that DSWOs had made concerted efforts in enhancing communication and coordination of services provided by various community stakeholders at district level through the District Coordinating Committees. Regular communications mechanism had been carried out.

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34. While expressing agreement with the recommendations in the Review report relating to efficiency in service operation, Mr Albert CHAN expressed disappointment that the Review Report had yet to touch upon the future direction of the service mode of family services. Mr CHAN pointed out that the introduction of the new service delivery mode of IFSC was achieved through merging and re-engineering of various family service resources to form an IFSC. Notwithstanding this, youth and elderly services were not delivered by IFSCs. Mr CHAN further pointed out that the IFSC model should also aim to mobilise the community in building social network of the specific target groups. However, the current service mode of IFSCs focused on "casework" and "group work services", which, in his view, was departed from the objective of introducing the IFSC service mode. Lastly, he considered that the service boundaries of an IFSC should be reduced to a population of 50 000 to 80 000.

35. Dr Sandra TSANG said that the main objectives of the Review were to examine the implementation of the IFSC service mode. Nevertheless, she agreed with Mr Albert CHAN that the Administration might consider the need to conduct a review on the integration of the various types of services at an appropriate juncture.

36. DSW added that SWD had been committed to catering for the specific needs and the well-being of different target groups including the elderly and youth by providing a wide spectrum of centre-based, home-based and outreaching services to cater for their specific needs.

37. Referring to the support services for ex-mentally ill persons, Dr PAN Pey-chyou noted with concern that medical social workers were required to follow up with the medical conditions of the ex-mentally ill persons, as well as their welfare needs and family problems. To alleviate the workload of medical social workers, Dr PAN asked whether the Administration would consider extending the IFSC services to ex-mentally ill persons.

38. DSW said that community support services to ex-mentally ill persons involved interface with different service units including schools, hospitals, IFSCs, and NGOs. As medical social workers would, in collaboration with the medical staff, formulate the discharge plan and arrange rehabilitation services in the community for ex-mentally ill persons, this would enable them to provide comprehensive and appropriate community support services to ex-mentally ill persons. The medical social workers would refer the ex-mentally ill persons and/or their family members to IFSCs for appropriate services and assistance where necessary. DSW further said that the set-up of the Integrated Community Centre for Mental Wellness over the territory would provide one-stop service to ex-mentally ill persons through an integrated service delivery mode.

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39. The Chairman reminded members that the Panel had scheduled a further meeting for 26 June 2010 to receive views from deputations on the subject.

**IV. Support services for disabled adults**

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1747/09-10(05) to (06)]

40. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan said that persons with disabilities ("PWDs") were relatively difficult to secure employment in the labour market. In anticipation of the introduction of a statutory minimum wage and its adverse impacts on PWDs' employment opportunities, the Administration should consider providing wage subsidy to the employers to encourage them to employ PWDs. Pointing out that the employment of PWDs in public organisations remained on the low side, Mr LEE enquired about latest progress in this respect.

41. Commissioner for Rehabilitation ("C for R") said that to his understanding, the Bills Committee on Minimum Wage Bill had deliberated thoroughly on the impacts of the statutory minimum wage on PWDs and related issues. He reiterated the Administration's stance that the employment of PWDs should be based on their work abilities and not their disabilities. Hence, the Government expressed reservation about the proposal of providing a wage subsidy to secure employment of PWDs. The Government considered it more appropriate to promote the employment of PWDs through encouragement and other measures such as priority procurement of products and using services of PWDs. It was noteworthy that a number of welfare organisations were supportive of the policy on employment of PWDs. C for R cited that the Tung Wah Group of Hospitals, Pok Oi Hospital, Yan Chai Hospital and Po Leung Kuk had since 2009 employed an increasing number of PWDs. The ratio of employees with disabilities in the Tung Wah Group of Hospitals had been increased from 1.64% to 2.01%. The Yan Chai Hospital and the Pok Oi Hospital also aimed at increasing the number of employees with disabilities to about 2%.

42. Assistant Director of Social Welfare (Rehabilitation & Medical Social Services) ("ADSW(RMSS")) supplemented that the launch of Enhancing Employment of People with Disabilities through Small Enterprise Project ("the 3E's Project") aimed to enhance the employment of PWDs through market-driven approach and direct creation of more job opportunities for PWDs. Under the 3E's Project, seed money was provided to NGOs to set up small social enterprises/businesses to create job opportunities for PWDs. As at end of May 2010, some \$36 million had been granted under the 3E's Project to support the setting up of 61 small social enterprise projects, which had created about 500 employment opportunities for PWDs. In addition, the Marketing Consultancy Office (Rehabilitation) ("MCO(R)") was set up to enhance employment and training opportunities for PWDs. Apart from assisting NGOs in setting up social firms and small businesses under the 3E's Project, MCO(R) also organised marketing events and publicity activities to promote work abilities of PWDs.

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43. Notwithstanding that a wide range of vocational rehabilitation and training services were provided for PWDs to equip them with job skills to secure suitable employment, Ms LI Fung-ying asked about the number of PWDs who were able to secure employment upon completion of the training courses and programmes. Ms LI further asked whether the number of training places was adequate to meet the full demand; and if not, whether the Administration would allocate additional resources for the purpose. Ms LI also enquired about the employment of PWDs in the civil service.

44. On the training courses and programmes for PWDs, C for R said that the three Skills Centres of the Vocational Training Council ("VTC") offered a variety of market-driven training courses/programmes for PWDs aged 15 or above, with a view to enhancing their employment prospects and equipping them for open employment. The Skills Centres offered a total of 660 full-time training places. In 2009, the average waiting time for these courses was about two weeks, and the enrolment rate was about 86%. Employee Retraining Board ("ERB") also offered skills enhanced courses to facilitate PWDs to equip themselves with new job skills, and the number of such places had been increased from 1 300 to 2 000 in 2010. These programmes were designed to meet the needs of PWDs and the employment market and the supply of vocational training places by VTC and ERB was able to meet service demand. For those who were not yet ready to take up open employment, they could receive vocational rehabilitation services at Sheltered Workshop ("SW") and Supported Employment ("SE"). The average waiting time for SW and SE places was about 14 months and two months respectively. For persons with severe intellectual disability who were unable to receive vocational training or SW services, Day Activity Centres ("DACs") provided them with day care and training in daily living and simple work skills. There were about 1 000 PWDs waiting for DAC places and the average waiting time was about 31 months. C for R added that there would be an additional provision of 137 and 160 DAC places in 2010-2011 and 2011-2012 respectively, representing about 30% of the number of waitlistees. This apart, SWD had implemented the new service delivery model of Integrated Vocational Rehabilitation Service Centres ("IVRSCs") since 2004 through re-engineering the SW and SE services. An additional of 420 IVRSC places (i.e. about 20% of the number of waitlistees) would be provided in 2010-2011, and more places were coming on stream. C for R stressed that the Government strived to provide PWDs with a wide range of vocational rehabilitation, training and employment services so as to equip them with skills that met market requirements and assisted them in securing employment commensurate with their abilities.

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45. Regarding the Government's policy on employment of PWDs in the civil service, C for R said that the Government sought to place PWDs in appropriate jobs whenever possible. Applicants with disabilities who met the basic entry requirements for a post would be automatically invited to attend the selection interview and would be given an appropriate degree of preference. Notably, PWD candidates would normally be recommended for appointment if they were considered suitable to carry out the duties of a particular post, even though they might not be able, due to their disabilities, to perform the duties of every post in the same rank. In 2009, there were some 3 200 employees with disabilities in the civil service, representing about 2.1% of the strength of the civil service. To promote employment of PWDs in the civil service, the Civil Service Bureau held a seminar on 23 April 2010 to refresh human resources managers of all bureaux and departments on the said policy and encourage them to make wider use of the services and products provided by PWDs.

46. Mr Ronny TONG envisaged that the introduction of the statutory minimum wage would adversely affect the employment of PWDs and the elderly. He wondered whether the Administration had conducted any assessment on the short-term impacts on the wage level and employment opportunities of PWDs. In recognition of the employment difficulties encountered by PWDs, Mr TONG asked whether the Administration would consider providing a wage subsidy to PWDs upon the coming into force of the statutory minimum wage.

47. C for R said that the Administration believed that the proposed arrangements for the introduction of a statutory minimum wage had already struck a reasonable balance between providing wage protection to PWDs and safeguarding the employment difficulties encountered by some PWDs. C for R further said that the Government was committed to promoting the employment of PWDs. For instance, under the job placement programmes operated by the Labour Department and SWD, wage subsidy would be provided to the employers to encourage them to try out the work abilities of PWDs. C for R added that a dedicated website was set up to provide relevant information on the employment of PWDs provided by various government departments and organisations. It served as a one-stop resource platform for employers, PWDs and those who were interested in procuring the products and using the services of PWDs.

48. To further promote employment of PWDs, Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che asked whether the Administration would make reference to overseas experience and consider requiring large corporations to employ a specified percentage of disabled employees.

49. C for R responded that according to the reports published by the International Labour Organisation in 2003 and the European Commission in 2000, the introduction of statutory quota for the employment of PWDs was considered not very effective as seen from the experience of overseas countries.

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It was found that many organisations chose to pay penalties for non-compliance with such requirement instead of employment of PWDs. The international trend had moved to promote employment of PWDs through the enactment of anti-discrimination legislation and introduction of facilitating measures, which was in line with the Government's existing policy.

50. In response to Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che's enquiry about the further learning opportunities for PWDs, Assistant Secretary for Education (Higher Education) said that higher education institutions were committed to offering equal opportunities to all applicants. The admission decisions of institutions were based on holistic assessment of the academic merit of the applicants. Applicants with disabilities would not be discriminated against. To maximize opportunities for students with disabilities, the Joint University Programmes Admissions System ("JUPAS") maintained a Sub-system for the admission of students with disabilities ("the Sub-system") for their early planning and necessary assistance. Applicants who received offers under the Sub-system were not obliged to accept them immediately. Their applications would continue to be considered together with those of other applicants under the Main Round exercise with a view to the possibility of more attractive offers. In 2009, 16 applicants under the Sub-system were admitted. He further said that while additional resources were provided to secondary schools with disabled students to meet their specific needs, similar provision was not provided to higher education institutions having regard to the fact that the latter received subventions under the block grant funding arrangement. Nonetheless, institutions had in place special arrangements and support services for accommodating students with special needs with regard to their particular disability and their field of study.

51. Inspector, Vocational Training for People with Disabilities Section, VTC said that VTC administered a Special Admission Scheme ("SAS") for students with special educational needs. Under SAS, students applying for VTC's courses would be given an offer if they were able to meet the minimum entry requirements for the course concerned and had passed an interview. Upon admission under SAS, students and their parents would be invited to attend tailor-made orientation programmes which introduced the services and support measures available at VTC for them. These included the provision of essential technical aids, counselling service and additional coaching. Depending on the nature of their disabilities, students might apply for and be given exemption from completing some specific modules. In some cases, more time was allowed and other special arrangements were arranged for these students when they underwent assessments where necessary. Since 2006, the number of students with special educational needs studied in VTC had been increased from about 180 to some 400.



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52. The Chairman expressed concern about the number of waitlistees and the long waiting time for DAC and SW places. In his view, the problem was particularly acute for adult PWDs bearing in mind that their parents were getting old to take care of their adult PWD children at home. He strongly urged the Administration to enhance the vocational rehabilitation and support services for these PWDs to relieve the stress and pressure of their family carers. To this end, the Administration should set specific targets for the provision of these services.

53. ADSW(RMSS) said that as at 31 March 2010, there were about 1 000 and 2 500 PWDs waiting for places in DACs and SWs, and the respective average waiting time was about 31 months and 14 months if the PWDs had no preference for specific SWs or location. The Administration was fully aware of the waitlisting situation and had accorded priority to the provision of these services. In tandem, SWD set up 16 District Support Centres ("DSCs") for PWDs in January 2009 to strengthen the support and training for PWDs and their carers, thereby enhancing the caring capability of carers, relieving their burden and stress and improving their quality of life. Moreover, as announced in the 2010-2011 Budget, the Financial Secretary had earmarked \$163 million under the Lotteries Fund to implement a pilot scheme on home care services for persons with severe disabilities with a view to strengthening the community support to PWDs and relieving the pressure on their family carers. C for R added that it was difficult to set targets for shortening the waiting time for day training and vocational rehabilitation services as the provision of these services was affected by a host of factors and changing circumstances. However, the Administration would continue to make active efforts to identify suitable sites and premises for provision of rehabilitation facilities. ADSW(RMSS) supplemented that SWD would actively identify new premises for DSCs to provide PWDs and their family carers with one-stop community support services with a view to enhancing the domestic and community living skills of PWDs, thereby facilitating their integration into the community.

**V. Report of the Subcommittee on Poverty Alleviation**  
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1760/09-10]

54. Members endorsed the report of the Subcommittee on Poverty Alleviation, and supported the Subcommittee's proposal to seek the agreement of the House Committee at its meeting on 18 June 2010 for the priority allocation of a debate slot to the Subcommittee Chairman, Mr Frederick FUNG, under House Rule 14A(h) for moving a motion on the Subcommittee's report at the Council meeting on 7 July 2010.

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**VI. Any other business**

55. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 12:45 pm.

Council Business Division 2  
Legislative Council Secretariat  
27 July 2010