

Legislative Council Panel on Welfare Services

Retention of a supernumerary directorate post to continue providing support to the work of poverty alleviation of the Labour and Welfare Bureau

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on our proposal to retain one supernumerary post of Administrative Officer Staff Grade C (AOSGC) (D2) in the Labour and Welfare Bureau (LWB) for a further period of around three years and three months from 10 March 2014 until 30 June 2017, to continue providing dedicated support to the Bureau's work on poverty alleviation.

Justification

Background and latest developments

2. With the approval of the Legislative Council (LegCo) Finance Committee (FC), a supernumerary AOSGC post, designated as Principal Assistant Secretary (Poverty) (PAS(P)), was first created on 10 March 2008 for three years to provide dedicated support to the work on poverty alleviation. In January 2011, FC approved that this post be extended for another three years until 9 March 2014. During the period between March 2008 and June 2012, PAS(P) served as the secretary to the former Task Force on Poverty and monitored the Administration's progress in implementing recommendations made by the former Commission on Poverty (CoP), as well as coordinated various poverty alleviation initiatives under LWB.

3. In his election manifesto, the Chief Executive (CE) pledged to reinstate CoP to "undertake an overall review of the forms and manners by which poverty is manifested and their underlying causes" and "study, systematically address the issues identified and adopt measures to

alleviate the causes leading to poverty”. On 19 June 2012, CE (then as the Chief Executive-elect) announced the establishment of the Preparatory Task Force on the Commission on Poverty (PTF) to recommend to him the terms of reference and composition of the new CoP. PAS(P) was the secretary to the PTF which was chaired by CE, with the Chief Secretary for Administration as the Vice-chairman and the Secretary for Labour and Welfare (SLW) and four non-officials from different backgrounds as members. PAS(P) made arrangements for the PTF to conduct an extensive public engagement exercise in taking forward its work and was heavily involved in preparing for the reinstatement of CoP.¹

4. The CoP has been reinstated since December 2012 and is underpinned by six task forces which are the Social Security and Retirement Protection Task Force, the Education, Employment and Training Task Force, the Special Needs Groups Task Force, the Societal Engagement Task Force, the Community Care Fund Task Force and the Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship Development Fund Task Force. Since then, PAS(P) has become the subject officer in LWB on matters relating to the work of CoP and its task forces, in addition to other poverty alleviation initiatives.

Need to retain the post of PAS(P)

Work related to CoP

5. LWB has been heavily involved in the work of CoP, with a particular focus on the work of the Social Security and Retirement Protection Task Force, the Education, Employment and Training Task Force as well as the Special Needs Groups Task Force. PAS(P) will be required to continue supporting SLW and the Permanent Secretary for

¹ PTF members paid a total of eight visits to eleven service units, and participated in six consultative sessions and two forums. Apart from listening to the views of non-governmental welfare organisations, community and grass-roots organisations, academics, non-official members of advisory bodies whose work are closely related to poverty alleviation, PTF members also met with certain disadvantaged groups and people in need. They included recipients of the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme, people receiving rehabilitation services and their families, new arrivals, elderly people and their carers, persons with disabilities, single parents, ethnic minorities, parents of children with special needs, and grass-roots households living in cubicle apartments or sub-divided flats.

Labour and Welfare (PSLW)² in the work of CoP and its task forces. PAS(P) has been providing policy input, preparing meeting papers and coordinating contributions within LWB and among relevant parties to facilitate the consideration and discussion of various poverty topics. PAS(P) also has been keeping track of the progress and development of the work of CoP and each of the task forces, providing and coordinating policy input on welfare-related poverty matters (including those of the Community Care Fund (CCF) programmes) which cut across different task forces and/or teams within LWB, as well as providing dedicated policy support on cross-subject issues from a poverty alleviation perspective. PAS(P) is expected to continue providing similar support in the years to come.

6. At the CoP Summit held on 28 September 2013, the 2012 poverty line and analysis of poverty statistics were announced. Setting a poverty line for Hong Kong could help the Government better understand the features and underlying causes of poverty, with a view to formulating targeted poverty alleviation measures to help the poverty groups. It also provides an objective tool for policy analysis and assessment, which are useful for devising more appropriate and effective initiatives. Upon the completion of setting the poverty line, the Administration will continue to review existing policies and gauge the views of different sectors, so as to provide targeted assistance to various needy groups with a view to achieving the objectives of poverty alleviation and prevention. The Administration's direction and strategy for poverty alleviation in the future cover the following four aspects:

- (a) Employment is the best route out of poverty. We should continue to develop our economy and create employment opportunities, particularly quality jobs that can facilitate the upward mobility of our young people.
- (b) Any new measure helping needy poor working families should be pro-employment and pro-children. The support should be structured to sustain self-reliance of family

² SLW is an ex-officio member of the CoP and the vice-chairperson of its Social Security and Retirement Protection Task Force, while PSLW is an ex-officio member of all the six CoP task forces.

members while enhancing their opportunities for upward mobility.

- (c) For improving the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) system, it will be more effective to put in place targeted measures which encourage able-bodied recipients to move from welfare to self-reliance and strengthen support for school-aged recipients to tackle the risk of inter-generational poverty.
- (d) We should consider helping other special needs groups like people with disabilities, ethnic minorities, single parents and new arrivals through a combination of cash assistance, support services and regularisation of effective programmes funded by CCF.

7. LWB will continue to spare no efforts in combating poverty, in particular in supporting CoP's work, and will follow up the initiatives arising from CoP's deliberation. PAS(P) will continue to coordinate the work among the various teams within LWB and with the Labour Department as appropriate in pursuit of the above poverty alleviation direction and provide dedicated support to SLW and PSLW accordingly.

Major Ongoing Projects

(a) Child Development Fund

8. PAS(P) is also the subject officer of the Child Development Fund (CDF). The \$300-million CDF has been funding projects, each lasts for three years, which promote the longer-term development of children from a disadvantaged background with a view to reducing inter-generational poverty. Since its establishment in April 2008, three batches of 40 projects have been rolled out, benefiting over 4 000 children. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are currently recruiting participants for the fourth batch, which will benefit another 2 000 plus underprivileged children. CDF projects have been well received and we are taking forward various measures to enlarge the community's capacity in operating these projects so as to benefit more needy children.

9. A number of improvement measures have been introduced to CDF recently including increasing the number of training programmes for mentors and parents, increasing the training provision and increasing the administrative fee given to NGOs. Moreover, starting from 2014, we intend to adopt a “one-plus-one” approach in rolling out the mainstream CDF projects. Under the proposed one-plus-one approach, each selected NGO would be awarded two projects in one go (with each lasting for three years as usual) but the implementation of the second project is subject to the NGO’s satisfactory performance in implementing the first project. The aim is to enable NGOs to better plan ahead in terms of its resources allocation and hence make the operation of CDF projects more attractive to the NGOs, thereby widening the NGO base and community capacity in supporting CDF.

10. In addition to the mainstream approach under which NGOs operate CDF projects, we are preparing to pilot the adoption of school-based approach to extend the reach of CDF projects. Such pilots will commence in the 2013/14 school year. Seven pilot projects have recently been awarded to ten schools (two projects are joint-school projects) and they are expected to benefit another 400 children from a disadvantaged background. PAS(P) will be working closely with the Social Welfare Department (SWD) to implement the improvement measures and monitor their impact. In particular, PAS(P) will monitor the experimentation of the new school-based approach with a view to exploring how it could be further developed to complement the established NGO-based approach. Accordingly, she will make planning for launching new CDF projects, in pursuit of the objective of extending the reach of CDF projects and expediting the rolling out of new projects, thereby benefiting more underprivileged children.

(b) Short-term Food Assistance Service Projects

11. PAS(P) will also continue to be the subject officer responsible for various ongoing poverty alleviation initiatives in the welfare policy areas. She has been monitoring the development of the short-term food assistance service projects. With the increased commitment of \$200 million approved by FC in June 2013, we are taking forward a number of

enhancement measures. These include increasing the maximum service duration for the beneficiaries, increasing the average allocation per meal-day and the administrative fee for the operators, and splitting the original five projects to seven projects to facilitate more effective management and delivery of the service. PAS(P) will continue to provide policy support on this subject and work with SWD to monitor the effective implementation of these enhancement measures and keep in view the needs of the service users.

(c) Employment Assistance Programmes under the CSSA Scheme

12. PAS(P) will also continue to provide policy input to various employment assistance programmes under the CSSA Scheme. These employment programmes were integrated in January 2013 under the Integrated Employment Assistance Programme for Self-reliance (IEAPS) to streamline and improve service delivery. Operating NGOs can now provide multifarious and one-stop employment assistance services on a family basis according to the needs of the family members. PAS(P) will continue working with SWD in overseeing the effectiveness of the integrated service. She will also provide policy input in considering the way forward of providing employment assistance to CSSA recipients before the end of the existing IEAPS contracts in March 2015.

Proposal

13. To continue provide sufficient support to the poverty alleviation work under LWB, and in view of the substantial workload and multifaceted considerations involved in devising new poverty alleviation initiatives and implementing and improving several on-going poverty alleviation measures, we propose to retain the supernumerary post of PAS(P) until the end of this term of the Administration, i.e. 30 June 2017. We will review the continued need for this post in the light of the progress of the work on poverty alleviation. The proposed job description of PAS(P) is at **Annex A**.

14. PAS(P) will continue to be supported by four non-directorate staff, i.e. one Administrative Officer, one Senior Executive Officer, one Personal Secretary I and one Assistant Clerical Officer. The proposed

organisation chart of the PAS(P)'s team (i.e. the Poverty Team) is at **Annex B**. An organisation chart of LWB showing the extension of the PAS(P) post is at **Annex C**.

Alternative Considered

15. We have critically examined the possibility of redeploying existing directorate posts to take up the work of the current PAS(P) post. As all other Principal Assistant Secretaries (PASs) in LWB and the Commissioner for Rehabilitation (C for R) are fully engaged in their own schedule of duties, it is operationally not possible for them to take up the tasks without adversely affecting the discharge of their current duties. The major responsibilities of other PASs in LWB and C for R are given at **Annex D**.

Financial Implications

16. The additional notional annual salary cost of the proposed AOSGC (D2) post at mid-point is \$1,739,400. The full annual average staff cost, including salaries and staff on-cost, is \$2,503,000. We will absorb the additional expenditure from within the existing provisions in 2013-14 and will include the necessary provision in the Estimates of the relevant years to meet the cost of this proposal.

Advice Sought

17. We plan to submit the proposal to the LegCo Establishment Subcommittee at its meeting on 24 January 2014 and then to FC on 21 February 2014 for approval. Members are invited to note and comment on this proposal.

Labour and Welfare Bureau
December 2013

**Proposed Job Description for
Principal Assistant Secretary (Poverty)**

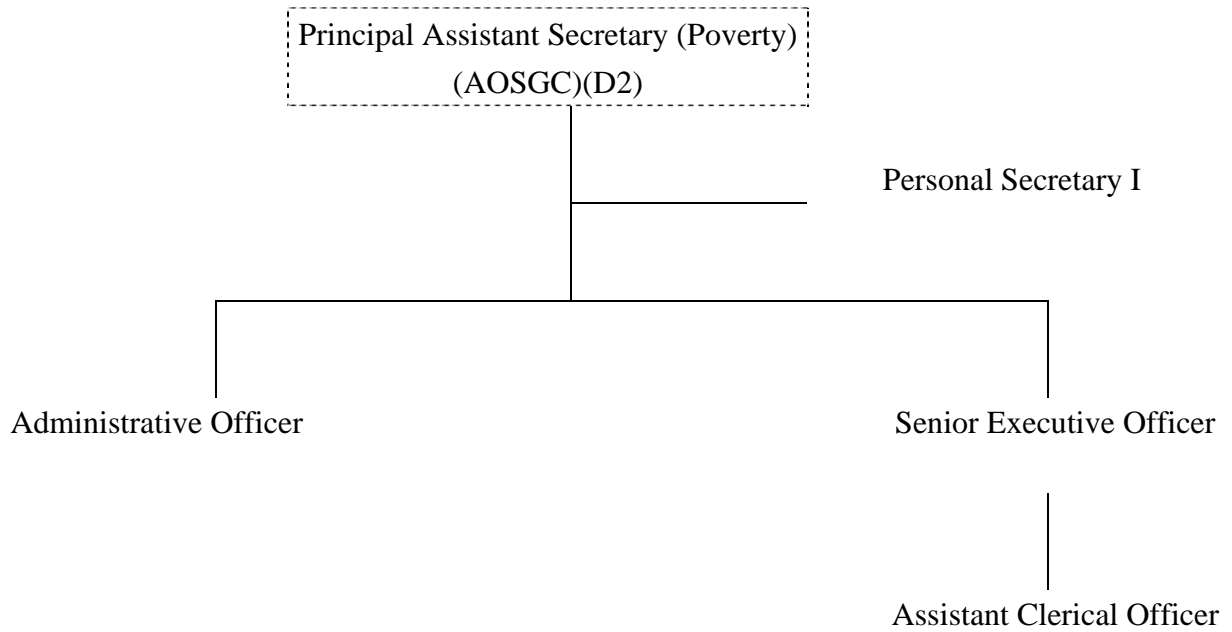
Rank: Administrative Officer Staff Grade C (D2)

Responsible to: Deputy Secretary for Labour and Welfare
(Welfare)²


Major Duties and Responsibilities –

1. To assist in considering, devising and taking forward new poverty alleviation initiatives.
2. To support the work of the Commission on Poverty by providing policy input and coordinating contribution from parties concerned in relation to the Commission's deliberation and discussion of welfare-related issues. This includes servicing the Social Security and Retirement Protection Task Force, the Education, Employment and Training Task Force, as well as the Special Needs Groups Task Force, and considering policy issues which cut across different Task Forces and Teams as well as their impact on poverty and welfare initiatives.
3. To oversee and provide policy input for the Child Development Fund projects.
4. To oversee and provide policy input to other initiatives related to poverty alleviation, such as the short-term food assistance service, the integrated employment assistance programmes under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme, and the welfare-related Community Care Fund programmes.

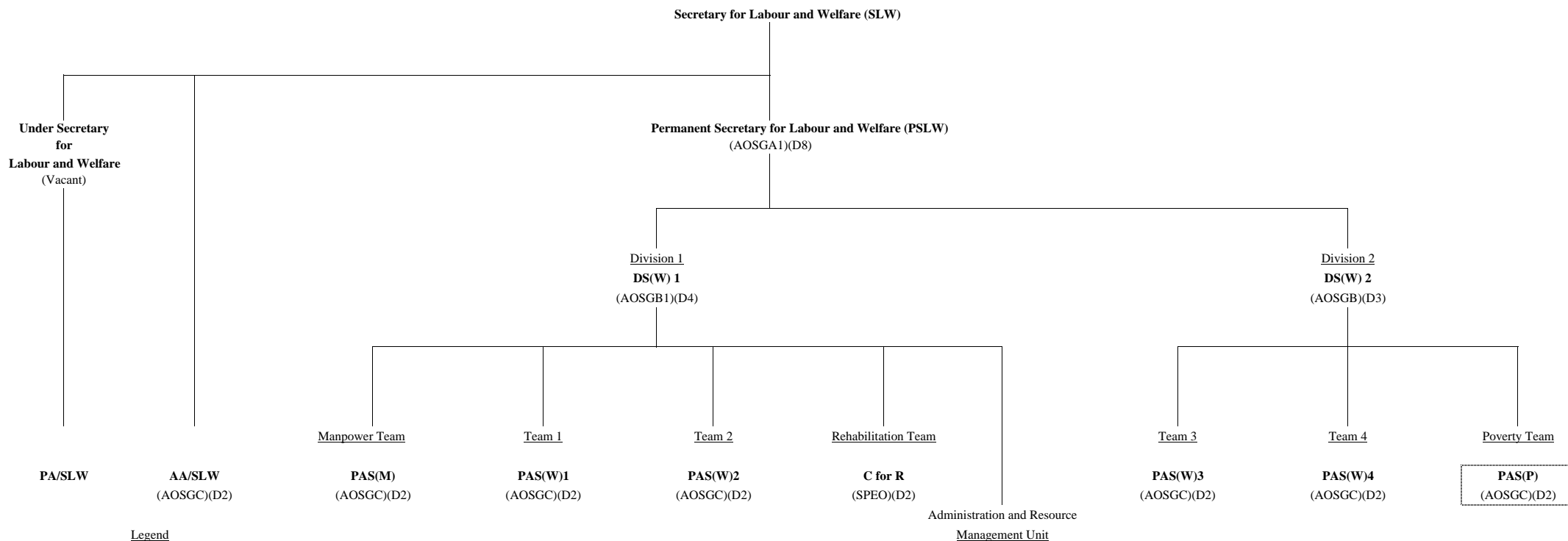
**Proposed Organisation Chart of the
Poverty Team**



AOSGC Administrative Officer Staff Grade C

 Supernumerary directorate post proposed to be extended

Proposed Organisation Chart of the Labour and Welfare Bureau



Legend

- AA Administrative Assistant
- DS Deputy Secretary
- PAS Principal Assistant Secretary
- C for R Commissioner for Rehabilitation
- AOSGA1 Administrative Officer Staff Grade A1
- AOSGB1 Administrative Officer Staff Grade B1
- AOSGB Administrative Officer Staff Grade B
- AOSGC Administrative Officer Staff Grade C
- SPEO Senior Principal Executive Officer
- PA Political Assistant to Secretary for Labour and Welfare

- M Manpower
- P Poverty
- W Welfare

 Supernumerary AOSGC post proposed to be extended until 30.6.2017

**Major Responsibilities of Other Principal Assistant Secretaries
in the Labour and Welfare Bureau and the Commissioner for Rehabilitation**

Post / Rank	Major Responsibilities
Principal Assistant Secretary (Welfare) 1 / AOSGC (D2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Social welfare subvention system ● Long-term Social Welfare Planning ● Welfare services for families, children and youth ● Rehabilitation services for young offenders ● Social work training and manpower planning ● Legal Representation Scheme for Children/Juveniles involved in Care or Protection Proceedings ● Social Welfare Advisory Committee ● Welfare exchange with the Mainland ● Community Investment and Inclusion Fund and social capital development ● Chief Executive's Community Project List ● Lotteries Fund and other welfare-related funds ● Financial Assistance Scheme for Family Members of Those Who Sacrifice their lives to Save Others ● Regulation of charitable fund-raising activities under Social Welfare Department's purview
Principal Assistant Secretary (Welfare) 2 / AOSGC (D2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Policy on combating domestic violence ● Policy on support for victims of sexual violence ● Secretarial support to the Women's Commission and its working groups ● Policy and strategies to promote the well-being and interests of women in Hong Kong ● Gender mainstreaming within the Administration ● Promotional and educational activities to enhance the awareness of public and civil service on women issues ● Research, studies and surveys on women issues ● Liaison and meetings with local women's groups and relevant international bodies ● United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women ● Beijing Platform for Action ● UN Commission on the Status of Women ● Public Transport Fare Concession Scheme for the Elderly and Eligible Persons with Disabilities

Post / Rank	Major Responsibilities
Principal Assistant Secretary (Welfare) 3 / AOSGC (D2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Policy matters relating to elderly with long-term care needs ● Allocation mechanism for subsidised long-term care services ● Home and community care services for elderly ageing in the community ● Residential care services for frail elderly and continuum of care, including the licensing regime ● Carers' support and training ● Manpower supply and training of care staff in elderly care services
Principal Assistant Secretary (Welfare) 4 / AOSGC (D2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme ● The Social Security Allowance Scheme - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Old Age Allowance - Old Age Living Allowance - Disability Allowance ● Promotion of active ageing, including lifelong learning and senior volunteerism ● Support for vulnerable elderly people, including matters related to elder abuse and elderly suicide ● Secretariat of the Elderly Commission
Principal Assistant Secretary (Manpower) / AOSGC (D2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Manpower statistics and projections ● Vocational training and retraining ● Housekeeping of the Employees Retraining Board and the Clothing Industry Training Authority ● Continuing Education Fund ● Manpower Development Committee ● Apprenticeship Scheme and Adult Education Subvention Scheme ● APEC Human Resources Development Working Group

Post / Rank	Major Responsibilities
Commissioner for Rehabilitation / SPEO (D2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Policies for rehabilitation of persons with disabilities ● Rehabilitation Programme Plan ● Rehabilitation programme under Social Welfare Department ● Medical social service ● Statutory licensing scheme on the residential care homes for persons with disabilities ● Disability Discrimination Ordinance ● Co-ordination of and reporting on the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region ● Rehabilitation Advisory Committee and its subcommittees ● Subvention of Rehabus services, Skills Centres run by Vocational Training Council, Guardianship Board and the Environmental Advisory Service ● Public education and publicity on rehabilitation ● Queen Elizabeth Foundation for the Mentally Handicapped ● S K Yee Fund for the Disabled ● Grants and donations for rehabilitation projects ● Central Registry for Rehabilitation