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**Panel on Welfare Services**

**Minutes of meeting**  
**held on Monday, 26 January 2015, at 8:30 am**  
**in Conference Room 1 of the Legislative Council Complex**

**Members present** : Hon CHEUNG Kwok-che (Chairman)  
Hon CHAN Yuen-han, SBS, JP (Deputy Chairman)  
Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung  
Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP  
Hon Frederick FUNG Kin-kee, SBS, JP  
Hon Alan LEONG Kah-kit, SC  
Hon LEUNG Kwok-hung  
Hon Frankie YICK Chi-ming  
Hon CHAN Chi-chuen  
Hon CHAN Han-pan, JP  
Hon LEUNG Che-cheung, BBS, MH, JP  
Dr Hon KWOK Ka-ki  
Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung  
Hon POON Siu-ping, BBS, MH  
Hon TANG Ka-piu, JP

**Members absent** : Hon Albert HO Chun-yan  
Hon Ronny TONG Ka-wah, SC  
Dr Hon LEUNG Ka-lau  
Dr Hon Helena WONG Pik-wan

**Member attending** : Hon WONG Kwok-hing, BBS, MH

**Public Officers : Item I  
attending**

Labour and Welfare Bureau

Mr Matthew CHEUNG, GBS, JP  
Secretary for Labour and Welfare

Miss Annie TAM, JP  
Permanent Secretary for Labour and Welfare

Social Welfare Department

Ms Carol YIP, JP  
Director of Social Welfare

Home Affairs Bureau

Ms Florence HUI Hiu-fai, SBS, JP  
Under Secretary for Home Affairs

Mrs Susanne WONG HO Wing-sze  
Principal Assistant Secretary for Home Affairs (Civil  
Affairs)<sup>3</sup>

Mr Nick AU YEUNG Lik  
Principal Assistant Secretary for Home Affairs  
(Community Care Fund)

**Clerk in  
attendance** : Mr Colin CHUI  
Chief Council Secretary (2) 4

**Staff in  
attendance** : Ms Catherina YU  
Senior Council Secretary (2) 4

Miss Maggie CHIU  
Legislative Assistant (2) 4

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**I. Briefings by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare and the Secretary for Home Affairs on the Chief Executive's 2015 Policy Address**

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)629/14-15(01) to (02), CB(2)723/14-15(01) to (02), the 2015 Policy Address booklet and the 2015 Policy Agenda booklet]

At the invitation of the Chairman, Secretary for Labour and Welfare ("SLW") and Under Secretary for Home Affairs ("USHA") highlighted the major initiatives of the Labour and Welfare Bureau ("LWB") and the Home Affairs Bureau respectively, as set out in the 2015 Policy Address.

Public transport fare concession for the elderly and eligible persons with disabilities

2. Mr WONG Kwok-hing said that in many places on the Mainland, local elderly persons and Hong Kong residents, on presentation of their senior citizen cards, could travel on public transport free of charge. The Administration should follow suit and provide full-fare concession for eligible elderly persons, given that the amount required to reimburse public transport operators the difference between the revenue forgone under the Public Transport Fare Concession Scheme for the Elderly and Eligible Persons with Disabilities ("the Scheme") and full-fare concession was little. He further said that the Administration had discriminated against Hong Kong Tramways Limited ("HKTL") by excluding tram services from the Scheme. It was also unfair to elderly persons using tram services. He called on the Administration to offer free tram services to elderly persons.

3. SLW responded that persons with disabilities ("PWDs") were paying \$2.3 for each ride on tram. The Transport Department had offered to reimburse HKTL with \$0.3 revenue forgone for each trip made by eligible PWDs. However, HKTL hoped that the Administration could bear the full amount of fare and offer free ride to the eligible beneficiaries. Such proposal did not tally with the arrangements for other public transport operators participating in the Scheme. The Administration would conduct a comprehensive review of the Scheme around one year after the full implementation of the extension of the Scheme to green minibuses and study whether there was room for enhancing the Scheme taking into account, inter alia, the financial implications of the Scheme.

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4. Mr WONG Kwok-hing said that as people with loss of one limb were not eligible for Disability Allowance ("DA"), the Scheme was not applicable to them. Given that the review of DA had not yet been completed, the Administration should consider providing fare concession for people with loss of one limb in the interim to alleviate their financial burden.

5. SLW responded that an Inter-departmental Working Group on Review of DA ("Working Group") had been set up by LWB to, amongst others, review the eligibility criteria for DA. The Working Group would be careful in dealing with the issue of "allowing people with loss of one limb to apply for DA" as it had a direct implication for the definition of disability. If DA was to be provided for people with loss of one limb, the Administration might be required to include other types of disabilities under the DA Scheme, thereby imposing heavy burden on the public coffers.

Alleviating poverty

6. Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that as stated in the 2015 Policy Address, the overall poor population and the poverty rate had dropped after the implementation of poverty alleviation measures. The overall poverty rate before policy intervention had in fact increased from 19.6% in 2013 to 19.9% in 2014. He further said that the poverty rates of elderly persons and of children were around 30% and 20% respectively after policy intervention. In the light of the sound economic development of Hong Kong, the poverty rates should not be so high. He opined that the welfare-related initiatives mentioned in the Policy Address were only minor remedies to the existing deficiencies in the provision of welfare services. He expressed dissatisfaction about the existing welfare policies and wealth distribution in Hong Kong.

7. SLW responded that members should not look at the Policy Address alone for the Government's commitment to social welfare services. The current-term Government had implemented/announced a basket of measures with respect to elderly services and poverty alleviation such as the Old Age Living Allowance ("OALA") and Low-income Working Family Allowance ("LIFA") Scheme. A number of Community Care Fund ("CCF") assistance programmes would gradually be regularized which would also help alleviate the poverty situation. He said that the increase in elderly poverty rate was a result of an increase in the elderly population. However, it should be noted that the poverty line analysis took account only of income but not assets. Some elderly persons had no

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income but possessed assets. Indeed, a number of them were "income poor, asset rich". Some poor elderly persons who were not receiving Comprehensive Social Security Assistance ("CSSA") said that they had no financial needs. As such, the elderly poverty rate could be overstated.

8. Expressing concern that the Administration would take 15 to 18 months to prepare for implementing the LIFA Scheme, Dr Fernando CHEUNG urged the Administration to speed up the preparation process. Noting that CCF would launch one-off subsidy programmes before the implementation of LIFA, he enquired about the details of these programmes and whether public views on these programmes would be collected.

9. SLW responded that the Administration would make its best efforts to implement the LIFA Scheme as quickly as possible. CCF had re-launched the programme to provide a one-off living subsidy for low-income households who were neither living in public housing nor receiving CSSA (i.e. known colloquially as the "n have-nots"). It was estimated that more than 50 000 households would benefit from the programme. In addition, the Administration would invite CCF to consider providing one-off special subsidy for primary and secondary students on full grant under the School Textbook Assistance Scheme in the 2015-2016 school year. Around 138 000 students would benefit from this scheme. The Administration would provide the Subcommittee on Poverty with further information after the subject matter had been considered by the Commission on Poverty ("CoP").

Retirement protection

10. Mr Alan LEONG enquired about the way forward and the emphasis of the study on retirement protection and how the \$50 billion earmarked for the future needs would relate to the way forward of the study. The Deputy Chairman sought information on the initiatives to be implemented with the \$50 billion and the implementation timetable.

11. SLW responded that the current-term Government had the determination to deal with issues relating to retirement protection and agreed that protection for needy citizens after retirement should be improved. By setting aside \$50 billion the current-term Government had demonstrated its political courage and commitment. In the coming few months, CoP would devise the framework and set out the details of retirement protection for a public consultation in the latter half of 2015.

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12. In response to the Deputy Chairman's enquiry about whether CoP would draw up concrete proposals for retirement protection following public consultation, SLW said that a working group would be formed under CoP to devise the framework and set out the details for the public consultation. It was expected that the working group would come up with concrete proposals. The Deputy Chairman said that the subject of retirement protection had dragged on for too long. She considered that the proposals on retirement protection should be ready for discussion by Members by June 2015.

13. Mr Frederick FUNG said that the focus of public consultation should not be on principles but on whether universal retirement protection should be provided. Retirement protection proposals should be available to the public during the public consultation so that the public could give views thereon.

14. Mr TAM Yiu-chung said that earmarking \$50 billion had demonstrated the Government's commitment but the sum could not solve all the problems. He opined that retirement protection had been discussed at length and the Administration should make a decision on the approach to retirement protection within 2015. He said that as there were divergent views on retirement protection, it might not be easy to forge consensus in the community. The Administration could consider the proposal, put forward by the of Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong ("DAB"), of introducing an assistance scheme with the level of allowance set between OALA and CSSA payments for the needy elderly persons and then revisiting the issue of universal retirement protection at a later stage.

15. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung said that given the Government's huge fiscal surplus, the Administration should make use of the \$50 billion now instead of deferring the sum of money for future use.

16. SLW said that it was the wish of the current-term Government to reach a clear way forward on retirement protection. CoP would discuss the subject matter at its meeting in February 2015 and would map out a timetable on taking forward the matter in a pragmatic manner.

17. Dr Fernando CHEUNG, Mr CHAN Chi-chuen, Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung and Dr KWOK Ka-ki said that further exploration of the issue of retirement protection was a retrogression. Mr CHAN Chi-chuen said that the public generally expected that the Administration would move on to the examination of financial resources required for the introduction of a retirement protection scheme after the completion of the

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study conducted by the research team led by Professor Nelson CHOW. He said that the Chief Executive and some Bureau Secretaries had said in a number of occasions that resources should be devoted to the most needy elderly people. He asked whether it had implied that the Government had ruled out universal retirement protection. He was also wary that the means test requirements for the future retirement protection scheme would be even more stringent than that for OALA. He also cast doubt on the Government's determination on providing retirement protection although \$50 billion had been earmarked to provide for future needs.

18. SLW responded that the Government had worries about the definition and impact of universal retirement protection. The study of retirement protection clearly stemmed from concern over elderly poverty and due consideration must therefore be given to whether retirement protection should also be provided for those who had no financial needs. That said, the option of universal retirement protection would not be excluded from the public consultation exercise.

Supporting residents of public rental housing estates with intakes

19. In response to Mr Alan LEONG's enquiry about the support programmes for residents of public rental housing ("PRH") estates with intakes, SLW said that the Community Investment and Inclusion Fund ("CIIF") Committee had supported the implementation of over 30 projects in Tin Shui Wai ("TSW") which had successfully helped the residents develop mutual help networks. Having regard to the experience of building community networks in TSW, the CIIF Committee would deploy resources to PRH estates with intakes to implement projects for supporting residents in building mutual help networks. Separately, the Social Welfare Department ("SWD") would take the lead and engage non-governmental organizations ("NGOs") as well as community groups to reach out to the residents and understand their needs so that they could receive the necessary support at an early stage.

20. In response to the Chairman's enquiry about the reason for using CIIF for implementing the support programmes, SLW explained that the objective of the support programmes was developing social capital. Support programmes would be provided for Upper Ngau Tau Kok Estate, Kai Ching Estate, Tak Long Estate and a PRH estate in Sheung Shui. As many of the residents of these PRH estates might encounter difficulties in adapting to the new environment, it was important to intervene early in order to provide them with the necessary support and build community and neighbourhood networking.

Housing assistance for occupants of subdivided flats

21. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung expressed concern about the situation of the occupants of subdivided flats in industrial buildings who became homeless as a result of the Building Department's enforcement actions. He said that the occupants concerned who were not eligible for the transitional accommodation provided by the Administration could only move from one industrial building to another. As a result, they would suffer from deteriorating living standards and upsurge rentals. He called on the Administration to address the housing problems of occupants of subdivided flats and improve their living conditions.

22. SLW responded that the CCF's one-off subsidy programme for the "n have-nots" and LIFA would help relieve the financial burden of occupants of subdivided flats. The one-off subsidy programme for the "n have-nots" would benefit more than 40 000 households and many of these households were occupants of subdivided flats. Under the programme, a subsidy of \$4,000, \$8,000, \$11,000 and \$13,000 would be provided for a one-person household, two-person household, three-person household and four-or-more-person household respectively.

Child care services and after-school support

23. Mr LEUNG Che-cheung said that as child care support for children aged below three was insufficient, many mothers could not go to work until their children went to kindergartens. As such, it might be difficult for them to seek employment after having left the workforce for a few years. Many working mothers had reflected that child care support during this period was crucial for them to stay in employment. He asked whether the Administration would strengthen the provision of child care services for children aged below three.

24. SLW responded that the Administration would provide the necessary support to help release women homemakers to join the labour force. To this end, more child care places in aided child care centres and kindergarten-cum-child care centres ("Child Care Centres") would operate to 8 pm. In addition, 34 of the centres operating after-school care centres had enhanced their services by providing services up to 9 pm on weekdays, Saturdays, Sundays and school holidays. The Administration would promote the provision of the enhanced services at more after-school care centres progressively. Child care support for parents was also provided under the Neighborhood Support Child Care Project.



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25. SLW further said that 100 aided long full-day child care places for children aged below three would be provided in Shatin in 2017-2018. The Administration would strive to secure more child care places for children aged below three in the future planning for child care facilities.

26. Mr LEUNG Che-cheung said that the aforesaid additional provision and the Neighborhood Support Child Care Project could not meet the great demand for child care services. Some residents of Yuen Long had reflected that as no child care places were available for children aged around three in the district, they could not go to work until their children went to kindergartens. He called on the Administration to make its best efforts to increase the provision of child care services for children aged below three.

27. SLW responded that to support parents who were unable to take care of their children temporarily because of work, the Administration had launched a series of measures to enhance child care services. A pilot project would be launched to help grandparents become well-trained child carers in a home setting. The Administration had also invited NGOs to establish work-based child care centres through the Special Scheme on Privately Owned Sites for Welfare Uses ("the Special Scheme") and two NGOs had responded positively. The Administration would also explore the feasibility of providing child care places for staff members in the proposed Government Complex in Tseung Kwan O.

28. SLW added that the Partnership Fund for the Disadvantaged ("PFD") under SWD aimed to promote tripartite partnership among the welfare sector, the business community and the Government through providing grants to match the value of donations made by the business partners to support NGOs running welfare projects for the disadvantaged. The Administration had proposed to inject \$200 million into PFD which would be dedicated to launching more after-school learning and support programmes for primary and secondary students from grassroots families. The ceiling of the matching grant for each of these approved projects had been raised to a maximum of \$3 million with a view to facilitating welfare NGOs to launch projects of a larger scale and for a longer term, thereby releasing labour force of retirees and women.

29. The Chairman said that to unleash women labour force, full-time places in kindergartens should be increased and after-school care services for primary students should be strengthened. Nevertheless, these measures would either take a long time to implement or require the support from schools. To meet the imminent needs for child care services,

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the Administration should attract more carers to join the Neighborhood Support Child Care Project by providing them with a higher allowance. The Administration should consider raising the allowance for these carers to a level not lower than the Statutory Minimum Wage rate. There should be better co-ordination between the Education Bureau ("EDB") and LWB with respect to the implementation of child care services so as to unleash women labour force.

30. The Deputy Chairman said that the Administration failed to resolve the long-standing and acute shortage of child care services. Although some community groups had made suggestions of providing job opportunities for women (e.g. providing government premises for community groups or NGOs to run child care centres), the Administration had not taken forward these suggestions. In her view, the Administration should change its mindset in addressing the inadequate provision of child care services, thereby facilitating the release of women labour force. She called on the Administration to tighten the collaboration among government departments and bureaux for the effective implementation of various initiatives.

31. SLW responded that the Administration would facilitate the release of women to the labour force through a multi-pronged strategy. In addition to strengthening child care services, after-school support and care services for the elderly would be enhanced. The Administration stood ready to consider suggestions of community groups and launch trial projects.

32. The Chairman said that the 5 000 additional places to be provided at Child Care Centres were for extended hours service ("EHS") places only. The actual additional provision was 100 aided long full-day child care places for children aged below three which would be provided in 2017-2018. Mr LEUNG Che-cheung and Mr CHAN Chi-chuen enquired about distribution of the additional EHS places and the timetable for providing these additional places.

33. SLW responded that EHS was a distinctive service and had not been provided in some Child Care Centres before. The Administration aimed at providing the additional places in phases and would first provide 1 200 additional places in the coming financial year with priority accorded to districts with high demand such as Shatin, Kwun Tong and Shum Shui Po. The Administration would discuss with the child care centres concerned the suitable timing to provide the remaining places.

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34. The Chairman enquired about whether the additional EHS places would be allocated to Child Care Centres according to the demand and on a first-come-first-serve basis. Permanent Secretary for Labour and Welfare ("PS(LW)") responded that SWD would collect information from child care centres on the number of waitlistees and users of EHS to better understand the demand in each district. EHS places would be allocated to Child Care Centres taking into account the service demand and the capacity of Child Care Centres.

35. In response to the Chairman's enquiry about when allocation plans for EHS places would be drawn up, Director of Social Welfare ("DSW") said that SWD would discuss with child care centres before March 2015. The Administration aimed to complete the examination of proposals from child care centers by July 2015 with a view to launching the service in September 2015. Mr CHAN Chi-chuen urged the Administration to speed up the process as the additional manpower required by each Child Care Centre should not be substantial.

36. Since the allocation of EHS places would be subject to the demand, the Chairman appealed to members of the public to indicate their needs for EHS so that the Administration could make a better assessment of the provision of places. He called on the Administration to consider increasing the number of additional places for 2015-2016 if the demand was slightly higher than 1 200 places so that users did not have to wait for another year to receive the service.

37. SLW responded that the Administration was willing to provide more EHS places subject to the capacity of child care centres. DSW supplemented that EHS places were not fully taken up in some districts and the usage rate in some districts was below 70%. The overall average usage rate of EHS was 78%. The Administration would keep in view the usage rate in each district and adjust the allocation of EHS places according to the demand.

38. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung said that in the light of the huge fiscal reserve and the great demand for EHS, the Administration should provide all the 5 000 additional EHS places in one go.

39. SLW responded that the lack of resources was not the major constraint for the provision of additional EHS places. Since some child care centres required more time to prepare for the roll-out of EHS, the additional places should be provided by phases, with the first batch to be provided by those Child Care Centres which were able to absorb more

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Admin EHS places. At the Chairman's request, the Administration would provide a breakdown of the usage rate of EHS provided by child care centres and by districts; and the amount incurred in providing 1 200 EHS places at child care centres.

40. Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that in the light of the inadequate provision of full-day child care places, the Administration should draw up provision plans for such places to meet the demand.

41. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung opined that the injection of \$200 million into PFD would not help much in unleashing women labour force as what many women needed most was full-time care services for their small children. Many women wished to attend programmes conducted by the Employees Retraining Board ("ERB") to enhance their skills but were unable to do so because only one ERB's training programme provided trainees with child care services. To facilitate women to attend training programmes thereby enhancing their employability, he urged the Administration to allocate additional resources to ERB for providing child care services for their trainees.

42. SLW responded that ERB would launch the Modular Certificates Accumulation System which aimed at facilitating trainees to complete full-time training courses in a more flexible manner through taking specified half-day or evening modular training courses. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung opined that it could not address the problem of some women who could not attend training courses because of a lack of the required child care services.

Pre-school rehabilitation services

43. Dr Fernando CHEUNG enquired about the scale of the pilot scheme for on-site pre-school rehabilitation services ("Pilot Scheme"). SLW responded that having regard to the concern of some kindergartens that they did not have the expertise to provide rehabilitation services for children with special needs, NGOs operating subvented pre-school rehabilitation services would be invited to provide on-site services under the two-year Pilot Scheme. The Pilot Scheme would not only benefit children with special needs and their parents but also help enhance the professional level of the kindergartens concerned. Subject to the outcome of the evaluation study of the Pilot Scheme, the Administration would strive to bid for resources to regularize the scheme.

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44. PS(LW) supplemented that pre-school rehabilitation services were mainly provided through Special Child Care Centres ("SCCCs"), Early Education and Training Centres ("EETCs") and Integrated Programme in Kindergarten-cum-Child Care Centres. There were currently 6 534 places for pre-school rehabilitation services. In the light of the insufficient supply of pre-school rehabilitation places, an additional 3 842 places were proposed for SCCCs and EETCs under the Special Scheme. The Pilot Scheme would provide support for children with special needs, their parents and the kindergartens concerned before the additional places coming on stream. The Administration would invite proposals from NGOs which had experience in operating pre-school rehabilitation services and select suitable NGOs to participate in the Pilot Scheme. The Administration would draw on the experience of the organizations which were providing on-site pre-school rehabilitation services, with a view to trying out the most suitable mode of operation and the best practices during the pilot period.

45. In response to Dr Fernando CHEUNG's enquiry about the number of beneficiaries of the Pilot Scheme, PS(LW) said that NGOs would be requested to indicate in their proposals the number of schools and children they could serve. DSW supplemented that NGOs had to take account of their manpower resources in drawing up the proposals. While the capacity of NGOs in providing on-site pre-school rehabilitation services was a major consideration, Dr Fernando CHEUNG and the Chairman said that the Administration should have an idea of the scale of the Pilot Scheme. PS(LW) responded that as the Pilot Scheme would be funded by the Lotteries Fund ("LF") and the deployment of LF would be relatively flexible, the Administration had not set a quota for the Pilot Scheme. In response to Dr CHEUNG's request for more information on the initiatives proposed in the Policy Address, SLW said that there was not much available information on on-site rehabilitation services as it was a new concept. As such, it was necessary for the Administration to discuss with NGOs their service capacity. The Administration would then secure the required funds accordingly. The Chairman requested the Administration to provide the Panel by April 2015 with the number of places to be provided under the Pilot Scheme.

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46. Dr KWOK Ka-ki expressed concern about the serious shortfall in pre-school rehabilitation places. He said that EDB should improve its work in this regard and collaborate with LWB in the provision of pre-school rehabilitation.

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47. SLW responded that the CCF's assistance programme to provide training subsidy for children from low-income families who were on the waiting list for subvented pre-school rehabilitation services had been regularized. Parents of these needy children could make use of the training subsidy to procure rehabilitation services. Dr KWOK Ka-ki held the view that the amount of training subsidy was too small to help parents obtain the service in the private market.

*(At 10:25 am, the Chairman extended the meeting for 10 minutes beyond the appointed ending time to allow sufficient time for discussion.)*

Manpower supply for the welfare sector

48. Noting that an additional 920 places would be provided for training enrolled nurses under a two-year full-time programme ("the Enrolled Nurse Training Programme"), Mr POON Siu-ping asked whether the additional provision was set after assessing the demand for enrolled nurses. He also asked when these trainees would join the welfare sector. SLW responded that these trainees were expected to graduate in batches within three to five years. Among the trainees in the first eight classes, about 90% of them had joined the welfare sector.

49. Dr KWOK Ka-ki said that although the graduates of the Enrolled Nurse Training Programme were required to work in the welfare sector for a continuous period of no less than two years, many of them would choose to leave the sector after the two-year period. Given that the turnover of paramedical staff including physiotherapists, occupational therapists and nurses was high, he took the view that the Administration should strive to attract more experienced paramedical staff to join the welfare sector as they were relatively more stable.

50. SLW responded that the turnover rate of enrolled nurses who had participated in the Enrolled Nurse Training Programme was around 10% during the two-year period. To help address the manpower shortage of paramedical and care staff, the Steering Committee on Strategic Review on Healthcare Manpower Planning and Professional Development, chaired by the Secretary for Food and Health, was conducting a strategic review of healthcare manpower planning and professional development in Hong Kong. To develop manpower resources in care services, the "first-hire-then-train" pilot project had been launched to recruit young people to provide care services in residential care homes for the elderly ("RCHEs").

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Youth services

51. Mr Frankie YICK said that the cyber youth outreaching projects being launched by some social welfare organizations were proven successful. He took the view that instead of rolling out pilot cyber youth outreaching projects, the Administration should provide these organizations with funds for strengthening their services in this regard. SLW acknowledged the effectiveness of the outreaching projects conducted by these organizations in reaching out to the youth in need. To allow the Administration time to conduct a comprehensive review in order to make improvements to the projects, the pilot period had been extended for one year. The Administration would explore the feasibility of launching the projects on a regular basis. Mr YICK urged the Administration to step up its efforts and allocate more resources to helping the youth in need as soon as practicable.

Rehabus service

52. In response to Mr POON Siu-ping's enquiry about the enhancements of the Rehabus service, SLW said that new rehabuses had been procured every year in the past. While the Administration would endeavor to secure more resources for increasing the fleet size to cater for the needs of PWDs, Rehabus service should be complemented by adequate supply of drivers. The Administration would continue to discuss manpower issues with operators of Rehabus service. He further said that there was a demand for taxies which could accommodate wheelchair users from PWDs and elderly persons who had mobility difficulties. However, there was only a limited supply of these taxies in the market. The Administration would encourage the trade to provide more taxies of this kind.

Allowance for carers of persons with disabilities

53. Mr POON Siu-ping asked whether the Administration would consider providing an allowance for carers of PWDs. SLW responded that the Administration would draw on experience from the pilot programme to provide living allowance for carers of the elderly persons from low income families and explore the feasibility of providing an allowance for carers of PWDs.

Disability Allowance

54. Mr TANG Ka-piu said that many rehabilitation groups took the view that the eligibility criteria for DA could be based on the degree of

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functional disability of applicants. According to the Administration, the review of DA would take account of the findings of the consultancy study on practices of other places in respect of DA and the Census and Statistics Department's survey on the service needs of persons with disabilities ("the Survey"). As the Survey had been completed, he asked whether the Government would revamp DA and implement new eligibility criteria for DA in its current term of office.

55. SLW responded that issues relating to DA were rather complex, which involved, among others, defining disability. According to a recent report, there were more than one million people who were chronically ill. If disability was broadly defined under the DA Scheme and if this group of people were to become eligible for DA, it would impact substantially on the Government's financial resources. The Working Group therefore had to carefully review the eligibility criteria for DA and related issues, taking account of the financial implications and the fairness of the eligibility criteria.

56. PS(LW) supplemented that the Working Group was set up to follow up the issue of "allowing people with loss of one limb to apply for DA" as pledged in CE's manifesto. The Working Group had looked into the existing support provided for PWDs and whether there were any service gaps. The Administration had commissioned The University of Hong Kong to conduct a consultancy study on practices of other places in respect of DA and would brief members on the findings of the consultancy study. The Chairman said that the review of DA would be discussed at the Panel meeting scheduled for 9 March 2015.

Residential care homes for the elderly and for persons with disabilities

57. Mr Frederick FUNG said that specific targets for admission to RCHEs and residential care homes for persons with disabilities ("RCHDs") should be set. The Administration should make pledges to meet these targets and formulate policies on allocating a certain percentage of the total floor area of government premises for the provision of RCHEs and RCHDs.

58. SLW said that the Administration attached much importance to shortening the waiting time for admission to RCHEs and RCHDs. For instance, the Administration launched the Special Scheme to provide additional day care places and residential care places in elderly and rehabilitation services. It was estimated that under the Special Scheme,



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an additional 2 000 day care places and 7 000 residential care places would be provided for the elderly. As regards rehabilitation services, it was estimated that a total of 8 000 places would be provided with around 2 000 for residential care places and some 6 000 for training places. The Special Scheme would help alleviate the long waitlisting situation of such services. In the meantime, the Administration would continue its efforts in increasing the supply of RCHEs.

59. As regards the admission target for residential care places, SLW responded that many elderly persons had preference for the location of RCHEs, and they could even indicate their preference for specific RCHEs. If an admission target was set, the elderly persons might be given fewer choices of the location of RCHEs. Moreover, about 26% of the elderly persons had declined the offer of RCHEs of their preferred locations. If they were given fewer choices, the elderly persons would be less likely to accept the placement offer, which would in turn further prolong the waiting time. As the elderly persons' preference for the location of RCHEs should be respected, the Administration would strive to increase the supply of residential care places.

60. SLW further said that two integrated rehabilitation service complexes ("IRSCs") would be set up, one at the site of ex-Siu Lam Hospital, Tuen Mun and the other at the site of ex-Kai Nang Sheltered Workshop and Hostel, Kwun Tong. The IRSC at the site of ex-Siu Lam Hospital would provide 1 150 residential care service places for severely physically handicapped persons, severely mentally handicapped persons and moderately mentally handicapped persons. The IRSC at ex-Kai Nang Sheltered Workshop and Hostel would provide 300 such places.

61. Noting that the Administration had proposed to discuss the progress of the implementation of the Special Scheme at the Panel meeting to be held in April 2015, the Chairman hoped that the Administration would provide the timetable and roadmap for the development of the projects under the Special Scheme.

62. Mr Frederick FUNG said that as elderly persons had indicated their preference for the location of RCHEs in their applications, the Administration should plan ahead and provide more RCHEs in districts with higher demand. The waitlisting situation for RCHDs was also worrying. He urged the Administration to optimize Government premises for the provision of RCHEs and RCHDs.

Fujian Scheme

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63. Mr LEUNG Che-cheung said that given that Fujian was the ancestral home for many Hong Kong elderly persons, DAB had suggested that the Administration should consider providing Old Age Allowance ("OAA") for eligible Hong Kong elderly persons residing in Fujian. He asked whether the Administration had any plan to implement a Fujian Scheme.

64. SLW responded that while the Administration had no plan to extend the provision of OAA to elderly persons residing in Fujian at this stage, it would not rule out such a possibility. The Administration would study the provision of OAA for elderly persons who chose to retire in places outside Hong Kong in conjunction with the issue of retirement protection, taking policy implications into account.

Elderly Services Programme Plan

65. The Chairman said that in discussing the Elderly Services Programme Plan ("the Programme Plan") at previous Panel meetings, members urged the Elderly Commission ("EC") to extend the scope of the Programme Plan and collect views of elderly persons in the 18 districts at the Formulation Stage. Although some of the views of the elderly persons might be beyond the scope of the Programme Plan, he was of the view that the Administration should also consider these views as they reflected the future needs of elderly persons.

66. PS(LW) responded that the Consultant Team would consolidate and submit the views gathered from the public engagement exercise to the Working Group on the Elderly Services Programme Plan under EC for consideration. For the views which were outside the scope of the Programme Plan, the Administration would refer them to the relevant bureaux for consideration.

Dental assistance programme for the elderly

67. Noting that CCF would expand the Elderly Dental Assistance ("EDA") Programme to cover elderly persons who were OALA recipients and aged 80 and above, Mr WONG Kwok-hing urged the Administration to lower the age limit for the EDA Programme to 70 so that eligible elderly persons could receive dental care services before their dental conditions deteriorated further.

68. USHA responded that having regard to the large number of OALA recipients, the EDA Programme would be expanded progressively to first cover those who were most in need of the services. The progressive

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expansion of the EDA Programme could also avoid overloading the service providers participating in the EDA Programme. The Administration would consider extending the EDA Programme to elderly persons aged below 80 progressively having regard to the progress of implementation and the overall situation.

69. Mr WONG Kwok-hing said that the Administration should be able to speed up the extension of the EDA Programme to elderly persons below 80 if the number of prospective beneficiaries in each age group was insignificant. USHA responded that the number of OALA recipients who were aged between 65 and 69 would increase from 330 000 to 450 000 in five years. The sharp increase in the number of beneficiaries would impose a great burden on dentists participating in the EDA Programme.

70. In response to the Chairman's enquiry about the number of dentists participating in the EDA Programme, Principal Assistant Secretary for Home Affairs (Community Care Fund) ("PAS(CCF)") said that about 300 dentists had joined the EDA Programme. In view of the large number of beneficiaries and shortage of dentists, the EDA Programme would be expanded progressively. At the request of Mr WONG Kwok-hing, PAS(CCF) undertook to provide the number of elderly persons, broken down by age, who were aged between 70 and 79 and were eligible for the EDA Programme.

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*(Post-meeting note: The Administration's response was issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(2)920/14-15(01) on 26 February 2015.)*

Social enterprises

71. Mr Frederick FUNG said that comparing with the Republic of Korea which had set a target of having 10 000 social enterprises ("SEs") in five years, the rate of increase of SEs in Hong Kong (i.e. from 260 in 2008 to 450 in 2015) was far too slow. In his view, the Administration should formulate policies and implement supportive measures to complement the development of SEs, e.g. setting aside a certain number of government's service contracts for bidding by SEs only, offering tax exemption/concession to the patrons of SE services, providing subsidies for SEs which had employees with disabilities and had made a loss so that these SEs could continue their business, etc. The Administration should make reference to the strategies adopted by other places such as the United Kingdom, Spain, Taiwan and the Republic of Korea the governments of which were heavily involved in supporting SEs.

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72. USHA suggested looking into the matter by comparing the number of SEs per million population and the numbers for Hong Kong, Singapore and the Republic of Korea were 63, 33 and 19.1 respectively. From this perspective, the progress made by various sectors in supporting the development of SEs in Hong Kong over the past few years had been encouraging. To promote the development of SEs, the Administration had, in addition to assigning service contracts for bidding by SEs, supported the "Ethical Consumption" campaign to encourage the procurement of SE services and products. The Administration had studied the practices of some overseas places regarding tax concession for SEs. Given Hong Kong's low tax regime, there was little room for tax concession for SEs. The Administration would explore further ways to promote the development of SEs.

73. USHA added that in 2012, the Administration had conducted a survey on the business performance of SEs. According to the findings of the survey, 60% of SEs had achieved break even or even made small profits and 80% of the SEs funded under the Enhancing Self-Reliance Through District Partnership Programme were able to remain in operation after the funding period. With the continuous improvement of the existing environment, the operation of SEs should be able to sustain.

**II. Any other business**

74. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 10:45 am.