

**立法會**  
**Legislative Council**

LC Paper No. CB(2)598/09-10  
(These minutes have been  
seen by the Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/WS

**Panel on Welfare Services**

**Minutes of meeting**  
**held on Monday, 14 December 2009, at 10:45 am**  
**in Conference Room A of the Legislative Council Building**

**Members present** : Hon WONG Sing-chi (Chairman)  
Hon CHEUNG Kwok-che (Deputy Chairman)  
Hon Albert HO Chun-yan  
Hon LEE Cheuk-yan  
Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung  
Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP  
Hon LI Fung-ying, BBS, JP  
Hon Albert CHAN Wai-yip  
Hon Frederick FUNG Kin-kee, SBS, JP  
Hon Alan LEONG Kah-kit, SC  
Hon LEUNG Kwok-hung  
Hon Ronny TONG Ka-wah, SC  
Hon Paul CHAN Mo-po, MH, JP  
Dr Hon LEUNG Ka-lau  
Hon WONG Kwok-kin, BBS  
Hon IP Wai-ming, MH  
Dr Hon PAN Pey-chyou

**Public Officers attending** : Item IV

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

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

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

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

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

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

Item V

Mrs Polly CHAN CHOY Bo-chun  
Principal Assistant Secretary for Labour and Welfare  
(Welfare) 4

Mr FUNG Pak-yan  
Deputy Director of Social Welfare (Administration)

Ms LUNG Siu-kit  
Assistant Director (Social Security)  
Social Welfare Department

Mr Denys CHAN Tak-kin  
Chief Social Security Officer 4  
Social Welfare Department

Dr WONG Yu-cheung  
Assistant Professor, Department of Social Work & Social  
Administration, The University of Hong Kong

Prof Joe LEUNG Cho-bun  
Professor, Department of Social Work & Social  
Administration, The University of Hong Kong

Mr Vincent LEE Wan-ping  
Research Assistant, Department of Social Work & Social  
Administration, The University of Hong Kong

**Clerk in  
attendance**

: Miss Betty MA  
Chief Council Secretary (2) 4

**Staff in attendance** : Mr YICK Wing-kin  
Assistant Legal Adviser 8

Miss Florence WONG  
Senior Council Secretary (2) 5

Miss Karen LAI  
Council Secretary (2) 4

Miss Maggie CHIU  
Legislative Assistant (2) 4

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**I. Confirmation of minutes**

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)379/09-10 and CB(2)449/09-10]

The minutes of the meetings held on 22 October 2009 and 9 November 2009 were confirmed.

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

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)293/09-10(01), CB(2)383/09-10(01), CB(2)399/09-10(01) and CB(2)424/09-10(01)]

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

- (a) a letter dated 12 November 2009 from 爭取資助院舍聯席 responding to the initiatives announced in the Policy Address on the provision of residential homes for people with disabilities and the elderly;
- (b) the referral from Duty Roster Members regarding the compassionate rehousing arrangement;
- (c) a letter dated 24 November 2009 from Concerning CSSA Review Alliance about the provision of Internet access charges for needy students; and
- (d) a letter dated 24 November 2009 from Anti "False Harmony" Alliance concerning the professional autonomy of social workers.

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**III. Items for discussion at the next meeting**

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)450/09-10(01) and (02)]

3. Members agreed to discuss the following items proposed by the Administration at the next meeting to be held on 11 January 2010 at 10:45 am –

- (a) Elderly Commission's study on residential care services; and
- (b) Work progress of the Family Council.

**IV. Provision of additional subsidised residential care places as announced in the Policy Address 2009-2010**

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)450/09-10(03) and (04)]

4. Secretary for Labour and Welfare (SLW) briefed members on the initiatives announced in the Policy Address 2009-2010 in respect of the provision of additional subsidised residential care places as detailed in the Administration's paper. He highlighted that the Government would adopt a novel multi-pronged approach to accelerate the provision of subsidised nursing home (NH) places and places with continuum of care (COC), viz increasing the proportion of NH places in existing contract residential care homes for the elderly (RCHEs), purchasing vacant NH places from self-financing RCHEs, and making use of the space in existing subvented RCHEs to provide more long-term care (LTC) places with COC under the conversion programme. SLW added that in line with the policy of supporting "ageing in place as the core, institutional care as back-up", the Government had been providing elders with subsidised community care services. These included centre-based day care services and home-based services for elders who had difficulties in taking care of themselves.

5. As regards the residential care services for persons with disabilities (PWDs), SLW said that in accordance with the 2007 Hong Kong Rehabilitation Programme Plan, the Government had been adopting a three-pronged approach to encourage participation from the different sectors in providing diversified residential care services for PWDs, viz regulating the residential care homes for PWDs (RCHDs) through a statutory licensing scheme, so as to ensure their service quality on one hand and help the market develop residential care homes of different types and operational modes on the other; supporting non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to develop self-financing homes; and continuing to steadily increase the number of subsidised residential care home places. In line with the above strategic directions, the Government planned to introduce a pilot Bought Place Scheme (BPS) as a complementary measure prior to the implementation of a statutory licensing scheme.

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6. SLW stressed that the Administration attached great importance to the residential care services for the elderly and PWDs. The Government was providing about 26 000 subsidised RCHE places and 11 100 subsidised RCHD places, representing a respective increase of 60% and 74% over the number of places in 1997, and the public expenditure on elderly services, and rehabilitation and medical social services had risen 145% and 142% respectively during the same period.

7. Noting that the provision of subsidised residential care places could not meet the increasing demand in spite of the efforts made by the Government, Mr TAM Yiu-chung urged the Administration to accelerate the provision of subsidised residential care places on the one hand, and enhance the community care services on the other. Mr TAM suggested that the Administration should purchase places from private residential care homes with a view to improving the service quality of these homes; extend the Integrated Discharge Support Trial Programme for Elderly Patients to all districts throughout the territory so as to enhance the support for elderly hospital discharges and their carers; and increase the places for day respite service for elders, particularly for those who suffered from dementia and Parkinson so as to defer the deterioration of their functional capabilities. This apart, Mr TAM noted with concern about the long waiting time for admission to subvented RCHDs and urged the Government to accelerate the provision of subsidised places for PWDs with a view to relieving the stress of their family members.

8. SLW said that the Administration was very concerned about the residential care services for the elderly and PWDs. The Government planned to purchase around 500 additional places under the Enhanced Bought Place Scheme (EBPS) from private RCHEs, and launch a pilot scheme to provide RCHEs with visiting pharmacist services so as to strengthen the elderly care services. SLW further said that the waiting time for a subsidised place in private RCHEs participating in EBPS was about seven months, but some elders preferred waiting for places in designated RCHEs.

9. SLW said that in line with the policy of supporting "ageing in the community as the core and institutional care as back-up", the Administration was working with the Elderly Commission (EC) to examine how to enhance the community care services to the elderly, such as involving social enterprises in service delivery. As for the Integrated Discharge Support Trial Programme for Elderly Patients, which targeted to serve 20 000 elders and 7 000 carers, the Administration would evaluate the effectiveness of the Programme towards its completion and then consider the way forward. SLW agreed that the provision of day respite service played a crucial role in providing support and temporary relief for carers to enable elders to age in the community. The Administration would endeavour to strengthen community care services, in addition to the provision of additional subsidised residential care places.

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10. As regards the waiting time for admission to subvented RCHDs, SLW said that the Administration was mindful of the waitlisting situation. The waiting time might vary among individual PWDs in the light of their severity of disabilities, types of care services that they required and their preferences for specific RCHDs.

11. Ms LI Fung-ying was of the view that the supply of subsidised RCHE places was far from adequate to meet the demand. Noting from the media reports about elder abuse cases in private RCHEs, Ms LI expressed grave concern about the service quality of private homes. In this respect, Ms LI asked about the Government's efforts in monitoring the service quality of RCHEs and the staffing requirements in RCHEs, and whether the health workers in RCHEs ought to undergo relevant training in taking care of elders.

12. SLW responded that the service standards were stipulated in the funding and service agreements/service agreements signed between the Social Welfare Department (SWD) and service operators of subvented/contract RCHEs. Staff of SWD's Licensing Office of Residential Care Homes for the Elderly (LORCHE) would make regular and unannounced inspections to each private RCHE on average seven times annually. The minimum staffing requirements in RCHEs were set out in the Residential Care Homes (Elderly Persons) Regulation for the compliance of RCHE operators.

13. Assistant Director of Social Welfare (Elderly) (AD/SW(E)) added that the minimum staffing requirements for nurses and health workers were laid down in the Regulation. To be qualified for registered health workers, they should have completed accredited training courses for health workers. Currently, around 30 organisations, such as the Hong Kong St. John Ambulance and the Hong Kong Association of Gerontology, were providing accredited training courses. Although there was no specific entry requirement for the care workers, they would receive on-the-job training and attend skills enhancement training courses arranged by the RCHE operators.

14. DSW supplemented that SWD was providing subsidised RCHE places through subvented RCHEs, contract RCHEs and private RCHEs participating in EBPS. The service quality standards were laid down in the relevant agreements and RCHEs concerned were required to submit service records to SWD regularly. Staff of LORCHE would arrange regular service reviews with the service operators of private RCHEs participating in EBPS. In addition to training provided by NGOs, SWD, the Department of Health (DH) and the Hospital Authority (HA) also collaborated together in providing training to RCHE staff and outreaching services to RCHEs.

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15. Ms LI Fung-ying requested the Administration to provide information on the number of health workers in RCHEs who had attended relevant training courses.

16. Expressing concern about the quality of private RCHEs and the long waiting time for subsidised RCHE places, Mr Ronny TONG enquired if the Administration would assess the resources implication if the waiting time for a subsidised place was to be shortened to one year.

17. SLW said that as a matter of fact, not all elders needed to reside in RCHEs and that many elders preferred to age at home. It was also noteworthy that some elders were staying at private homes while they were waiting for subsidised RCHE places. For those elders who stayed at home, 56% of them were receiving home-based community care services. SLW advised that the Consultancy Study led by EC on the long-term planning of residential care services for the elderly was about to be completed, and the Administration would revert to the Panel on the findings and recommendations of EC's Study in January 2010.

18. Citing the recent court case pertaining to an elder abuse case at a private RCHE, Dr PAN Pey-chyou called upon the Administration to step up publicity to raise the public awareness of reporting elder abuse cases. Dr PAN expressed concern about the varied service quality of private RCHEs. In a bid to promote quality assurance and further enhance the monitoring of RCHEs, Dr PAN said that the Administration should consider awarding accreditation to RCHEs to raise their service quality above the licensing requirements.

19. SLW responded that the Administration would urge the public to report substandard services and malpractice of RCHEs through the SWD hotline (2343 2255). He stressed that non-compliance with the licensing requirements would not be tolerated and the operating licences would be subject to revocation. SLW advised that purchasing EBPS places from private RCHEs helped improve the service quality. When SWD purchased a certain percentage of residential care places in a private RCHE, the home had to apply the EBPS requirements, which were higher than the licensing requirements, to all places including the remaining non-EBPS places. Of 573 private RCHEs, there were 129 homes participating in EBPS. This apart, to his understanding, other organisations, such as the Hong Kong Productivity Council was promoting the participation of RCHEs in the accreditation scheme.

20. Mr Albert CHAN said that the League of Social Democrats had submitted a proposal to the Administration suggesting that vacant government premises, in particular vacant schools, be converted into residential care homes so as to expedite the provision of subsidised residential care places.

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21. SLW said that SWD had been actively liaising with the Education Bureau (EDB), the Lands Department and other relevant Government bureaux and departments in identifying suitable premises for converting into residential care homes. SLW said that some vacant village schools were not suitable for converting into residential care homes having regard to the physical constraints. Apart from vacant school premises, SWD would also identify other suitable Government premises for conversion into residential care homes. For example, SWD had recently secured two vacant government premises in Ho Man Tin and Kwai Chung (the former Ma Tau Wai Girls' Home and the South Kwai Chung Jockey Club Polyclinic) for conversion into two Integrated Rehabilitation Service Centres for PWDs. In addition, about 1 000 residential care places for the elderly would be provided upon completion of the 12 development projects for the construction of new contract RCHEs.

22. Mr Albert CHAN envisaged that additional vacant schools would be available in the coming years which would provide ideal sites for residential care homes. Given that nearly 7 000 elders had died while waiting for subsidised residential care places every year, Mr CHAN strongly urged the Administration to actively liaise with EDB and relevant departments in identifying suitable vacant schools for such purpose. In response, DSW said that the Administration would continue to closely liaise with EDB, the Housing Department and other relevant departments to identify suitable premises in this respect.

23. In the light of the recent media reports about the malpractice of private RCHEs and RCHDs, Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che urged the Administration to expedite the legislative process for introducing the licensing scheme to regulate the operation of RCHDs and review the Residential Care Homes (Elderly Persons) Ordinance with a view to enhancing the service quality of residential care homes. Noting that the Administration planned to raise the proportion of NH places in contract RCHEs from 50% on average to 90%, Mr CHEUNG sought clarification about the actual number of additional residential care places would be provided under the new initiatives in the next three years. Mr CHEUNG further asked about the concrete timetable for the 12 development projects for the construction of new contract RCHEs.

24. SLW said that the Administration attached great importance to the service quality of RCHEs. LORCHE was set up under SWD to monitor the service quality of RCHEs, and it would follow up complaints against RCHEs. SLW further said that the Residential Care Homes (Persons with Disabilities) Bill was in the drafting stage and the Administration aimed to introduce the Bill to the Legislative Council (LegCo) in the second half of the 2009-2010 legislative session.



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25. SLW advised that the Administration was aware of the relatively long waiting time for subsidised NH places and limited supply of NH places in private market. In this connection, the Administration would adopt a novel approach to accelerate the provision of subsidised NH places. Notably, it would increase the proportion of NH places in existing contract RCHEs, purchase vacant NH places from self-financing RCHEs and make full use of the space in existing subvented RCHEs. As regards the additional subsidised NH places to be provided, SLW said that the details would only be available after the Financial Secretary had announced his forthcoming Budget. However, the actual number of places would also depend on the response of the service operators.

26. Taking into account that the response of service operators would depend very much on the purchasing price for NH places, Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che asked about the price to be offered by the Administration. DSW said that purchasing NH places from self-financing RCHEs would be determined taking into account the manpower provision, rental, operating costs, etc. of individual homes. As for the introduction of this new purchase scheme, consultation with the stakeholders had just been carried out by SWD in November 2009, and the details had yet to be finalised.

27. Mr Frederick FUNG expressed dissatisfaction at the Administration's failure to honour its undertaking to revert to the Panel in the first quarter of 2009 on the consultancy study on residential care services for the elderly led by EC. Pointing out that the average waiting time for subsidised C&A places in private RCHEs under EBPS and that in subsidised RCHEs was 10 months and 32 months respectively, and that for subsidised NH places was 43 months in 2008, Mr FUNG was of the view that the Administration should adopt a pledge for the waiting time for subsidised residential care places. This apart, Mr FUNG took the view that the Administration should enhance the training and support for carers and put in place a mechanism to assess the care needs of the elderly for residential care services.

28. SLW advised that access to subsidised RCHE places was subject to care need assessment under the Standardised Care Need Assessment Mechanism for Elderly Services. As for the training and support for carers, the Administration had launched the District-based Trial Scheme on Carers since 2007 to equip individuals with basic elderly care skills. The Trial Scheme had provided training to over 750 carers through 11 participating District Elderly Community Centres in three districts and would be extended to cover the remaining districts in the territory. It was expected that another 1 500 carers would be trained in a year's time.

29. SLW further said that the study led by EC was near completion and the Administration would revert to the Panel at its next meeting in January 2010. Nevertheless, it would not be pragmatic to set a target time for admission to subvented/contract RCHEs as the demand would change due to various factors.

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30. Notwithstanding the Administration's explanation, Mr WONG Kwok-kin held the view that the Administration should set the target waiting time for residential care places and take concrete measures to improve the quality of private RCHEs.

31. SLW responded that RCHEs were obliged to comply with the licensing requirements as stipulated in the Residential Care Homes (Elderly Persons) Ordinance and Residential Care Homes (Elderly Persons) Regulation. Staff of LORCHE would pay regular visits to these homes to ensure their compliance with the licensing requirements. This apart, the service quality of private RCHEs would be upgraded if they participated in EBPS. Currently, there were 129 homes participating in EBPS. To further strengthen the elderly care services, the Government had planned to launch a pilot scheme to provide RCHEs with visiting pharmacist services.

32. SLW reiterated that it would be difficult, if not impossible, to set a target waiting time for residential care places. It was worth noting that there was no means-test for subsidised residential care places. All eligible applicants, including those whose families were financially capable of paying fees for high quality private RCHEs, would be put on the Central Waiting List. EC was of the view that the overall planning on the residential care services for the elderly should take into account these factors such that resources could be allocated more effectively. SLW added that it was the Administration's directions to increase the provision of subsidised residential care places on the one hand and enhance the community care services for elders on the other.

33. Mr IP Wai-ming cast doubts as to whether the centre-based day care services could help relieve the stress of the carers given that the service hours could not tie in with the off-duty hours of the general public. SLW said that the Administration would continue to strengthen the community care services by providing additional day care places in districts of huge demand, such as Tsuen Wan.

34. Mr IP Wai-ming expressed concern about the service quality of private RCHEs taking into account that lower-paid imported care workers with long working hours were permitted to work in private homes under the Supplementary Labour Scheme. He enquired whether any statutory requirements were set in respect of the manpower provision for RCHEs.

35. AD/SW(E) said that the minimum staffing requirements of RCHEs were laid down in the legislation and the Code of Practice for Residential Care Homes (Elderly Persons). Moreover, the Community Geriatric Assessment Teams and Psycho-geriatric Outreach Teams of HA and the Visiting Health Teams of DH would pay visits to RCHEs and provide support services for the elderly.

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LORCHE staff would also refer individual RCHEs to DH on specific training needs. The Administration was requested to provide details of the outreaching support services provided by HA and DH to RCHEs.

36. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan considered it unacceptable for the Administration's failure to provide a pledge on the waiting time for subsidised RCHE places. To resolve the waitlisting situation for subsidised places and enhance the quality of private RCHEs, Mr LEE was of the view that the Administration should increase the number of purchased places under EBPS substantially and the payments for elders on the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) living in private RCHEs. In view of the relatively low wage level of health workers in RCHEs, Mr LEE cautioned that the Administration should pay due attention to the impact of statutory minimum wage on the health workers.

37. SLW reiterated that the Consultancy Study led by EC would study the long-term planning of residential care services for the elderly and the Administration would revert to the Panel in January 2010.

38. Mr Albert HO urged the Administration to set a pledge for priority admission of the severely mentally and physically handicapped persons into RCHDs, thereby relieving the stress and burden of their family members.

39. Assistant Director of Social Welfare (Rehabilitation & Med Social Services) said that to identify PWDs with genuine need for residential services and to match them with appropriate types of services, a Standardised Assessment Mechanism for Residential Services for People with Disabilities (the Tool) was implemented with effect from January 2005. All applicants for subvented RCHD places must be assessed by the Tool to ascertain their residential services need before they were placed on the waiting list or admitted to their required service type. SLW advised that all eligible applicants would be put on the Central Waiting List as subvented places were non-means- tested.

40. Mr Albert HO asked if the Government would consider reserving suitable sites for constructing residential care homes in the town planning stage. SLW said that the Government had already earmarked sites in 12 development projects for construction of new contract RCHEs and six for new RCHDs in the long run, and would endeavour to do so in future development projects.

41. Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che suggested that that the Panel should consider appointing a subcommittee under the Panel to monitor the provision of residential care places and community care services. Mr CHEUNG said that he would prepare a proposal for members' consideration at the next meeting. Members agreed to discuss the matter at the next meeting.

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**V. New Dawn Project**

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)450/09-10(05) and (06)]

42. With the aid of powerpoint presentation, Dr WONG Yu-cheung, Assistant Professor, Department of Social Work & Social Administration, The University of Hong Kong highlighted the outcome of the evaluation study on the New Dawn Project (the ND Project) undertaken by the Department of Social Work and Social Administration of The University of Hong Kong (the Research Team). Dr WONG said that after reporting the initial findings of the evaluation study of the ND Project to the Panel in July 2007, the Research Team had conducted an extended study comprising an opinion survey to gauge the public views on the ND Project. This entailed a telephone survey with an effective sample size of 1 505 interviews with 723 ND Project participants and their youngest child, as well as in-depth individual interviews with 16 ND Project participants who had different experiences in job-seeking and employment. The key findings were as follows -

- (a) the majority of the respondents from the public opinion survey supported the ND Project and considered that the requirement of working not less than 32 working hours per month and a sanction of \$200 per month for refusal to participate in the ND Project were appropriate, and that the ND Project could help participants move towards self-reliance and integrate into the community. The majority of the respondents did not favour the idea of lowering the minimum age of the youngest child to below 12 as a requirement for participation in the ND Project;
- (b) the employment rate of the participants had increased from 38.5% in the study findings in 2006-2007 to 53.5% in the present extended study. For those employed, the current average monthly salary was around \$3,500 and the average working hours per month were 121.2 hours. On average, the participants remained in the current job for about 15 months. The additional income was mainly spent on food, transportation expenses and clothing; and
- (c) those respondents who had been able to find a job considered that the ND Project helped increase the family income, raise their self-confidence, improve the standard of living and improve family relationship. Those who had not been able to find a job were due to various reasons, such as health problem, age and need to take care of family members.

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43. Dr WONG said that the Research Team recommended continuation of the ND Project, specifically –

- (a) no change to the existing arrangements of the ND Project, i.e. the requirement for ND Project participants to seek paid employment of not less than 32 hours per month, the minimum age of the youngest child at 12 as a requirement for participation in the ND Project, and a sanction of \$200 per month for refusal to participate in the ND Project;
- (b) if in future single parents/family carers were required to take up employment when their children were at a younger age, appropriate after-school child-care services should be available for the ND Project participants. The requirement to seek a job with longer working hours could also be considered when the general economic and employment conditions improved; and
- (c) for more efficient use of resources, the Administration might consider integrating the ND Project with other employment assistance programmes/schemes under the CSSA Scheme such as the Integrated Employment Assistance Scheme and the Special Training and Enhancement Programme (My STEP) for CSSA recipients aged from 15 to 29.

44. Deputy Director of Social Welfare (Administration) (DDSW(A)) said that given the positive findings revealed from the evaluation study, SWD planned to launch a new phase of the ND Project upon completion of its current phase in March 2010, which would base on the experience of the current phase. DDSW(A) further said that in the new phase, necessary support included short-term financial assistance for job seeking, employment assistance and skills upgrading training and information on child-care services would continue to be provided for the ND Project participants. Similar to other CSSA recipients, the monthly earnings of ND Project participants could be disregarded/partially disregarded under the existing disregarded earnings arrangement. For those single parents/family carers with justifiable reasons such as to take care of vulnerable family members or in ill-health, DSW would exercise discretion and temporarily exempt them from joining the ND Project. A sanction of \$200 would be deducted from the monthly CSSA payments only if the single parent/family carer refused to join the ND Project without justifiable reasons and \$200 would not be deducted from the CSSA payments if they had made genuine efforts in seeking employment. DDSW(A) added that SWD would continue to work closely with NGO operators to improve the implementation of the ND Project. The Administration would also consider the possibility of integrating various employment assistance programmes/schemes under the CSSA Scheme in the long run as recommended by the Research Team.

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45. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan wondered why attending training courses or pursuing further studies could not be regarded as satisfying the working requirement under the ND Project. He further asked whether the evaluation study had looked into needs of the ND Project participants for further studies and training.

46. DDSW(A) said that single parents/family carers on CSSA with the youngest child reaching the age of 15 ought to take part in the Support for Self-reliance (SFS) Scheme like other able-bodied CSSA recipients and to find full-time jobs. The ND Project had been designed to prepare and help the participants whose youngest child were aged 12 to 14 to build up their capacities for self-help, integrate into the community and move towards self-reliance through engagement in paid employment. Specific employment assistance services would be provided for the ND Project participants with no or limited work experience to overcome barriers to employment. Given the objective and design of the ND Project, attending training courses or pursuing further studies would not be regarded as satisfying the working requirement. Dr WONG Yu-cheung of the Research Team added that the scope of the evaluation study did not cover the needs for further studies of the respondents.

47. Pointing out that only about 30% of the participants were able to secure paid jobs, Dr PAN Pey-chyou asked about the reasons for the relatively low success rate and ways to enhance their employability. Given that children aged 12 to 14 were at the critical development stage, he was concerned about the impact of the working requirement on the parent-child relationship.

48. Having regard to the difficulties faced by individual participants in securing paid employment and the characteristics of the ND Project participants, DDSW(A) considered that the success rate was not particularly low. DDSW(A) further clarified that the paid employment of not less than 32 hours was a monthly requirement, so the participants should be capable of taking care of their families. As shown from the findings of the evaluation study, the average monthly working hours were in fact longer than the minimum requirement. Also, a vast majority of the employed participants considered that their parent-child relationship had not deteriorated.

49. Ms LI Fung-ying said that most of the ND Project participants were middle age and low educated workers, they could only secure low-skilled paid jobs. Having regard to the difficulties in securing paid employment, she cast doubt about the effectiveness of the ND Project in assisting the participants to move towards self-reliance.

50. Dr WONG Yu-cheung of the Research Team said that while able-bodied CSSA recipients were required to enroll in the SFS Scheme, single parent/family carer CSSA recipients would also need to join the SFS Scheme when their

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youngest child reached the age of 15. The ND Project would help to prepare them to take up full-time paid employment and move towards self-reliance when they later joined the SFS Scheme. Dr WONG added that the monthly earnings of ND Project participants who had secured paid employment could be disregarded/partially disregarded up to a maximum of \$2,500. It was hoped that the ND Project would help participants acquire the necessary skills and experience for taking up full-time paid employment, and restore their self-confidence.

51. Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che was of the view that given the limited job types and opportunities in the labour market, the success rate of about 30% of the participants in securing jobs was fairly good. He shared the view of Mr LEE Cheuk-yan that more skills training programmes should be provided for the participants to enhance their employability. Mr CHEUNG said that under the current funding mode, operating NGOs received funding from SWD based on the number of ND Project participants. It was difficult for NGOs to project the manpower provision for the ND Project if a vast number of single parent/family carer CSSA recipients referred by SWD eventually refused to join or quitted the ND Project.

52. DDSW(A) said that SWD was aware of the difficulties faced by the operating NGOs. SWD would work out improvement measures by making reference to the revised funding mode for the new phase of My STEP, which was well received by operating NGOs, when launching the new phase of the ND Project in April 2010.

53. Pointing out that the primary objective of the ND Project was to assist the single parent/family carer CSSA recipients to integrate into the community, Mr Alan LEONG asked whether consideration would be given to recognising performing community services and attending training courses as meeting the working requirement under the ND Project. This would also help the participants strike a balance between working and maintaining parent-child relationship.

54. DDSW(A) reiterated that the ultimate goal of the ND Project was to prepare and assist participants to take part in the SFS Scheme eventually and secure full-time jobs in the longer run. Voluntary work was encouraged but should by no means substitute paid employment under the ND Project. DDSW(A) said that as shown from the study findings, the employed ND Project participants found their working hours appropriate while the respondents in the public opinion survey agreed to the minimum working requirement of 32 hours per month.

*[To allow sufficient time for discussion of all the agenda items, members agreed to extend the meeting to end at 1:00 pm.]*

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55. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung said that requiring the single parent/family carer CSSA recipients with young children to find paid employment would create more social problems if their young children were left unattended and went astray. He asked whether the study had gauged the views of these recipients.

56. DDSW(A) said that in addition to the public opinion survey, interviews with 723 ND participants and their youngest child and in-depth individual interviews with 16 ND Project participants who had different experiences in job-seeking and employment were conducted by the Research Team. The views of these recipients had been outlined in the Panel paper.

57. The Chairman said that according to the study findings, the average hourly wage level of the ND Project participants was about \$30. He was concerned about the impact of the introduction of statutory minimum wage on the participants in seeking employment, bearing in mind that the participants would be out-competed if they were subject to the statutory minimum wage level as other skilled workers in the labour market. DDSW(A) said that the Minimum Wage Commission had yet to deliberate on the statutory minimum wage level. The Chairman urged the Administration to keep a close eye on the matter and the possible impact on the ND Project participants.

**VI. Proposal to appoint a select committee by the Legislative Council to inquire into issues relating to the professional autonomy of social workers in Tai O Neighbourhood Level Community Development Project in serving the community**

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)450/09-10(07) and CB(2)551/09-10(01) to (02)]

58. The Chairman said that the motion to be moved by Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che was issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(2)450/09-10(07). He then referred members to the letter dated 11 December 2009 from Mr TAM Yiu-chung and a submission from the Anti "False Harmony" Alliance which were tabled at the meeting. The wording of Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che's motion was as follows –

"That, given the reply of the Chief Secretary for Administration to Hon Albert CHAN's oral question on 21 October 2009 that the Government would not set up an independent commission of inquiry to investigate the incident relating to the professional autonomy of social workers in the Tai O Neighbourhood Level Community Development Project, this Panel proposes that a select committee be appointed by LegCo to inquire into the aforementioned incident." (Translation)



Action

59. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan supported the proposal of appointing a select committee by LegCo to inquire into the incident. He said that he could not agree with Mr TAM Yiu-chung's views as set out in his letter that the Chief Secretary for Administration and the Secretary for Home Affairs (SHA) had made sufficient explanation on the case and that the case had been deliberated in-depth. Mr LEE took the view that it remained unclear why SHA followed up personally with a complaint case concerned local affairs during a meeting with the management of the Hong Kong Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA). As a matter of fact, disciplinary action was taken against the staff concerned shortly after the meeting, and the staff concerned was transferred to another position. In his view, SHA had interfered with the internal affairs of YWCA.

60. Dr PAN Pey-chyou was of the view that fostering social harmony was within the policy purview of the Home Affairs Bureau. Hence, raising his concerns to YWCA about the social disharmony of Tai O was within SHA's purview. It was Government's responsibility to coordinate the work of welfare organisations and manage their conflicts such that services could be provided smoothly. He saw no reason why LegCo should appoint a select committee for the matter.

61. Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che said that he had attended the case conference under the LegCo Redress System on the Tai O case. He believed that some Government officials had not unveiled the truth which was unfair to the social workers concerned. Hence, he took a strong view that a select committee should be appointed by LegCo to inquire into the incident.

62. Mr WONG Kwok-kin supported the TAM Yiu-chung's views that the case had been deliberated in-depth on various occasions by LegCo. He said that the Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions would not support the motion.

63. The Chairman put the motion moved by Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che to vote. Eight members voted for the motion, two members voted against it and one member abstained from voting. The Chairman declared that the motion was carried. The Chairman further said that the Panel would submit its proposal for a select committee to be appointed by LegCo to the House Committee (HC) to seek its support at its meeting on 8 January 2010.

64. Responding to Mr Albert CHAN, the legal adviser to the Panel said that any individual member could give a notice of motion to be considered by the Council for proposing the appointment of a select committee. The Clerk said that the deadline for giving notice of motions for the Council meeting on 27 January 2010 would be 12 January 2010.

Action

**VII. Any other business**

Continuation of work of the Subcommittee on Poverty Alleviation  
[LC Paper No. CB(2)450/09-10(08)]

65. Members noted and endorsed the proposal of the Subcommittee on Poverty Alleviation to continue its work in the 2009-2010 session. The Chairman said that a report would be made to HC on 15 January 2010 on the justifications for continuing the work of the Subcommittee beyond the 12-month period.

66. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 12:58 pm.

Council Business Division 2  
Legislative Council Secretariat  
8 January 2010