

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Rehabilitation Advisory Committee (RAC)
held at 2:30 p.m. on 11 May 2004 (Tuesday)
in Room 2005, 20/F., Murray Building, Garden Road, Hong Kong**

Present

Dr Joseph KWOK Kin-fun	(Chairman)
Ms Susie HO	Deputy Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food (Welfare) (Vice-chairman)
Ms Iris CHAN Sui-ching	
Dr Margaret CHUNG Wai-ling	
Ms Christine FANG Meng-sang	
Mrs Doris HO KO Suet-yiu	
Mr Herman HUI Chung-sing	
Mr IP Kwok-chung	
Dr IP Yan-ming	
Mr Lawrence LEE Kar-yiu	
Mrs Julie LEE LAU Chu-lai	
Dr Simon LEUNG Man-on	
Prof LEUNG Ping-chung	
Mrs Olivia LEUNG WU Kwai-man	
Mrs Jackie MA LAI Bik-lin	
Prof Arthur MAK Fuk-tat	
Dr TSE Tsun-him	
Ms WONG Kwai-wan	
Mr YEUNG Ka-sing	
Mr Anthony YEUNG Kwok-ki	
Mr Paul K W TANG	Director of Social Welfare
Miss Ophelia CHAN	Assistant Director (Rehabilitation and Medical Social Services)
	Social Welfare Department
Mrs Betty IP	Principal Assistant Secretary Education and Manpower Bureau
Dr Lesley YIP	Senior Medical Officer Department of Health
Mr Stephen PANG	Commissioner for Rehabilitation
Mr Tommy LAI	Assistant Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food (Secretary)

In attendance

Mrs Mary MA	Commissioner for Rehabilitation (Designate)
Mrs Laura LING	Principal, Shatin Public School
Mr FONG Kai-leung	Senior Social Work Officer (Rehabilitation and Medical Social Services) Social Welfare Department

Absent with Apologies

Mr CHONG Chan-yau	
Dr Daisy DAI	Senior Executive Manager, Hospital Authority

Welcoming Remarks

The Chairman welcomed Members to the first meeting of the new term, in particular the new Members including Mr Herman HUI, Mr IP Kwok-chung, Mr Lawrence LEE and Mr Anthony YEUNG.

Agenda Item I – Confirmation of Minutes

2. The minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 2003 were confirmed.

Agenda Item II – Matters Arising

3. Nil.

Agenda Item III – Formation of Integrated Vocational Rehabilitation Services Centres for People with Disabilities [RAC 1/2004]

4. **The representative of SWD** took Members through the paper, informing Members of the operation of a few Integrated Vocational Rehabilitation Services Centres (IVRSC) set up by Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs).

5. **Members** expressed support for the establishment of IVRSCs and enquired about their roles and the way forward. In response, **the representative of SWD** said that the objective and clientele of IVRSCs were different from those of the Skills Centres (SC) operated by the Vocational Training Council (VTC). IVRSCs would nonetheless be encouraged to provide feedback and share experience with SCs on the design of vocational training courses for people with disabilities (PWDs).

6. **The representative of SWD** added that formation of IVRSCs was at the discretion of NGO operators. Some NGOs had previously adopted an integrated mode of service delivery on their own initiative. Subventions to NGO operators for their existing vocational rehabilitation services would not be scaled down regardless of whether they decided to set up IVRSCs or not. However, SWD would encourage them to do so.

7. She further pointed out that in order to monitor the implementation and effectiveness of IVRSCs, a Working Group would be formed comprising representatives of SWD, NGO operators and parents of PWDs. Experts in vocational training for PWDs including occupational therapist would also be considered for membership of the Working Group. An overall evaluation would be conducted by the Working Group one year after the establishment of the 16 IVRSCs on trial.

8. Members generally supported SWD's recommendation of establishing the IVRSCs.

9. On a related issue, **the representative of SWD** reported that the introduction of "indicative wage level" for workers under the employment of contractors bidding for government contracts had implications on PWDs working in sheltered workshops and Supported Employment (SE) units. Under the new guideline, these SE units had to pay their contracted employees a salary not lower than the "indicative wage level" when they bid for new government contracts.

10. **The representative of SWD** said that NGO operators of these SE units had expressed concerns to SWD that following the guideline would result in a reduction of work opportunities for their disabled employees as they could no longer spread out the work amongst PWDs in their units and compete for government contracts as in the past. As a result, PWDs would have fewer employment opportunities in the open market. NGOs requested SWD to consider seeking a waiver for them in complying with the "indicative wage level" requirement in bidding for government contracts.

11. **A member** said that it was important to ensure that vocational training and employment opportunities for PWDs should not be undermined by the new guideline. NGO operators should consider entering into employment contract with those PWDs who were ready to take up open employment whilst extending workshop training for those who were not yet ready.

12. **Members** said that under the new guideline NGO operators should carefully review the status of PWDs working in their service units. **A member** pointed out that the “indicative wage level” was applicable only to contracted employees. **A member** remarked that NGO operators should re-examine the feasibility of maintaining the past practice of spreading out the work among PWDs in their service units in view of the new guideline.

13. **A member** said that the right of PWDs to earn wages not below the “indicative wage level” should be adequately protected. **The Administration** said that any arrangement contemplated by SWD should not be seen as discriminatory against PWDs in having equal opportunity to a wage level applicable to all.

14. **The Chairman** said that under the new guideline SWD had to explore with NGOs to work out a flexible arrangement with a view to promoting and protecting employment opportunities for PWDs.

Agenda Item IV – Pilot Project on Extended Years of Education in Special Schools [RAC 2/2004]

15. **The Chairman** welcomed Mrs Laura LING to attend the meeting on this item.

16. **A member** took Members through the paper and expressed gratitude to the principals and teachers of special schools and parents of the students for their co-operation in implementing the pilot project in special schools for the mentally handicapped (MH) in the past two years. **A member** gave a power-point presentation on the implementation of the Extended Years of Education (EYE) Programme in her school.

17. Noting that the objective of the EYE Programme was to prepare for a smooth transition for students of special schools to post-school placements including vocational training and employment, **members** suggested that special schools should consider establishing contact with employers to promote the working ability, employment and job attachment opportunities for their students. In response, **a member** said that special schools would be encouraged to establish contact with employers’ associations through various activities such

as school open day. **The Administration** added that HWFB played a role in co-coordinating services for students of special schools to help them to progress to post-school training in a seamless manner. In this regard, the VTC had been in close liaison with special schools over the design and enrolment of graduates from special schools to training courses in VTC's SCs.

18. In response to a member's question on extension of the EYE Programme to special schools for the physically handicapped (PH), **a member** said that unlike special schools for the MH, there were secondary four and five classes in special schools for the PH. EMB had plans to implement EYE Programme for those students with both MH and PH studying in special schools for the PH.

19. **A member** said that in view of their learning difficulty, some MH students would require longer than two years to acquire the skills for post-school placement which called for more flexibility in the EYE Programme.

20. **A member** said that MH students should be given equal opportunity to receiving education as other students in Hong Kong. In addition to enhancing their abilities through education, their rights to education should equally be safeguarded. **A member** said that the EYE Programme was one step forward and EMB had continued with funding to special schools for the MH despite a drop in the number of enrolled students to facilitate the implementation of EYE.

21. **The Chairman** said that the EYE Programme was a positive step forward in education of disabled students in special schools. In view of Members' interest in this subject, he requested EMB to report progress at a later stage.

[Mrs LING left the meeting.]

Agenda Item V – Work Reports of Sub-committees [RAC 3/2004; RAC 4/2004; RAC 5/2004 and RAC 6/2004]

22. Noting the achievements outlined in the reports, **the Chairman** thanked Members of the four Sub-committees and the Administration for their efforts in the past two years.

23. **A member** enquired on a few points in the report by the Sub-committee on Access including progress of the improvement measures in accessibility of schools under EMB's School Improvement Programme (SIP),

the accessibility guideline for banks being prepared by the Hong Kong Association of Banks (HKAB) and Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) and Emergency Short Message Service (SMS) for hearing impaired. **The Administration** informed Members that improvement measures under the SIP were on schedule and funding had been secured for all approved improvement projects. As regards the Emergency SMS, substantial progress had been made and the Hong Kong Police Force would soon invite tenders. He undertook to check with HKAB and EOC and kept Members informed of the progress on the development of an accessibility guideline for banks.

[Post-meeting note: According to information provided by EOC, the HKAB had issued an “ATM Installation Guidelines” to its members in April 2003 to facilitate improvement of ATM services for PWDs. The HKAB would continue to work with EOC on further improvement measures to enhance accessibility of banking services to PWDs.]

24. On the Jockey Club Arts for the Disabled Scheme (JCADS), **a member** said that more publicity should be made in particular amongst parents of PWDs. **The Administration** said that information about the JCADS was available on its internet website. At present, publicity on individual programme and activity was made by the delivery agencies. A comprehensive publicity plan for the JCADS had been discussed and endorsed by the Sub-committee on Arts and Culture. Publicity would be stepped up in the near future which included production of a VCD and a large-scale performance cum exhibition to be held in December 2004. Parents’ associations and PWDs in the community would be the target audience in these exercises.

25. **The Chairman** said that the reports of the Sub-committees should be made known to the public, in particular, on the achievements in assisting the integration of PWDs into the community.

Agenda Item VI – Any Other Business

26. **The representative of SWD** informed Members of the major findings and recommendations outlined in the Director of Audit’s Report No. 42 - Chapter 9 concerning training, employment and residential services for PWDs. In general, SWD welcomed the recommendations made in the Audit Report and would take necessary actions to improve the delivery of services in a more cost-effective manner.

27. In response to a question by a member on the long waiting time for residential services for PWDs, **the representative of SWD** said that the discharge rate of current residents in hostels and homes for PWDs was low thus affecting the waiting time for new intake. To address this issue, SWD had devised a draft assessment tool for admission to residential homes and hostels in order to clearly identify the needs of PWDs on the waiting list and match appropriate service with their needs. **A member** commented that the circumstances faced by individual PWDs on waiting list were unique and it was imperative that their needs be clearly identified so that appropriate service could be arranged.

28. **A member** said that some parents of students in special schools for the PH had met with officials of Education and Manpower Bureau to request for additional provision of boarding services for their children. **A member** replied that EMB noted the parents' request and would take follow up action as and when necessary, and would report progress at future meetings of the Committee.

29. **The Chairman** informed Members that the Administration would soon leave his post. He expressed gratitude to the Administration for his support given to this committee in promoting the well being of PWDs in the past years. **The Administration** thanked Members for their advice and guidance on various issues deliberated in this committee for the rehabilitation of PWDs.

Rehabilitation Division
Health, Welfare and Food Bureau
Government Secretariat

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