

**Minutes of the Meeting of the
Rehabilitation Advisory Committee
held at 2:30 p.m. on 16 December 2005
at G/F., 332 Nam Cheong Street, Kowloon**

Present

Dr Joseph KWOK Kin-fun	(Chairman)
Ms Iris CHAN Sui-ching	
Mr Herman HUI Chung-shing	
Mr IP Kwok-chung	
Dr IP Yan-ming	
Mr Lawrence LEE Kar-yiu	
Mrs Julie LEE LAU Chu-lai	
Mrs Olivia LEUNG WU Kwai-man	
Mrs Jackie MA LAI Bik-lin	
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
Mrs Betty IP	Principal Assistant Secretary (School Administration & Support) Education and Manpower Bureau
Dr Catherine LAM	Consultant Pediatrician (Child Assessment Service) Department of Health
Mrs Mary MA	Commissioner for Rehabilitation Health, Welfare and Food Bureau

Ms Elia WONG

Assistant Secretary (Rehabilitation) for
Health, Welfare and Food
(Secretary)

In attendance

Mrs Agnes LI

Chief Social Work Officer
(Rehabilitation and Medical Social
Services)
Social Welfare Department

Mr Alex CHOW

Chief Building Surveyor
Buildings Department

Mr CHU Koon Tin

Senior Building Surveyor
Buildings Department

Mr Derek LEUNG

Executive Officer (Rehabilitation)1
Health, Welfare and Food Bureau

Absent with Apologies

Dr York Y N CHOW

Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food

Mr CHONG Chan-yau

Dr Margaret CHUNG Wai-ling

Ms Christine FANG Meng-sang

Mrs Doris HO KO Suet-yiu

Dr Simon LEUNG Man-on

Professor LEUNG Ping-chung

Professor Arthur MAK Fuk-tat

Dr Daisy DAI

Senior Executive Manager
Hospital Authority

Agenda Item I – Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the last meeting held on 14 June 2005 were confirmed.

Agenda Item II – Matters Arising

2. To follow up paragraphs 6 and 15 of the minutes of the last meeting on the use of the public transport by people with disabilities, **the Administration** reported that the Administration had sought legal advice and consulted the Equal Opportunity Commission, and both had reservations regarding the proposals of granting concessionary fares to all persons receiving Disability Allowance.

3. **The Administration** added that the Legislative Council had formed a subcommittee to study the transport needs and provision of concessionary public transport fares for people with disabilities. The Administration would continue to liaise with public transport operators on the matter, while in parallel identifying a proposal that was in line with the spirit of Disability Discrimination Ordinance and could be accepted by all stakeholders.

4. **A member** said that he appreciated the Administration's standpoint and had tried to explain to the disabled groups that the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance and Disability Allowance had addressed the special needs, including transport needs, of people with disabilities, but they were not convinced. He suggested that the Government meet with the disabled groups to enhance communication.

Agenda Item III – Policy Initiatives for People with Disabilities for 2005/06 [RAC Paper 7/2005]

5. **Secretary** introduced the paper that informed Members of the ten new and on-going policy initiatives for people with disabilities as announced in the Chief Executive's Policy Address in October 2005.

6. The presentation of **the Secretary** featured the International Festival of Inclusive Arts (IFIA) to be held from 3 to 10 December 2006. It would be the first of its kind in Hong Kong aiming to encourage people with or without disabilities to cooperate and to exchange experiences in the arts activities, and through this to build a more caring and accepting society.

7. **Secretary** added that as the nurturing of an inclusive culture could not come to fruition overnight, IFIA was part of the Government's long-term effort in the promotion of social integration. To create synergy of community efforts, the Working Group overseeing the preparation works of IFIA had been visiting all the eighteen Districts Councils to solicit support for encouraging their local organizations to participate in the IFIA and to organize more activities echoing the theme of inclusive arts in their own districts throughout the year. The Working Group was also formulating plans to involve schools, interested arts and social services organizations, business sectors and the general public.

8. On Rehabus service, **the Secretary** said that the Government would continue to buy new buses, replace aged vehicles and rationalize its service routes to strengthen the Rehabus service. As regards accessibility, **the Secretary** said that the Government was reviewing the *Design Manual – Barrier Free Access 1997* and relevant details would be

discussed in a subsequent agenda item. In parallel, the Administration was committed to improving the accessibility of public transport and is actively identifying models suitable for serving as accessible taxi in Hong Kong.

9. **An attendee** was invited to present the rest of the seven Policy Address initiatives being implemented by the Social Welfare Department (SWD). She presented a series of measures launched by the SWD in 2005, which included:

- (1) Extended Care Programme in Day Activity Centre;
- (2) Work Extension Programme in Sheltered Workshop / Integrated Vocational Rehabilitation Services Centre;
- (3) Sunnyway – On the Job Training Programme for Young People with Disabilities;
- (4) New Community Support Projects, which included Holiday Care Services, Family-based Respite Service, Home Care Service, Home-based Rehabilitation Training Services, Day Care Service for Severely Disabled Persons, Personal Development Programme, Support Scheme for Newly Blind Persons and Specialized Programmes for Persons with Autism and Mentally Handicapped Persons with Challenging Behaviours;
- (5) Community Mental Health Care Services;
- (6) Community Support Project for Child & Adolescent Mental Health; and
- (7) IT Support Scheme for People with Severe Physical Disabilities.

This attendee introduced the objective, service content, target recipients and implementation progress of each of the above programmes.

10. **This attendee** also highlighted three brand new initiatives in the pipeline:

- (1) Transitional residential and day training services for severely disabled patients;
- (2) Convalescent and continuing rehabilitation day services to discharged patients with mental, neurological or physical impairment; and
- (3) Visiting Medical Practitioner Scheme.

She presented the objectives, contents and target recipients of these services and remarked that SWD aimed to launch them in 2006. Further details of this attendee's presentation are set out in her powerpoint presentation, which is attached at *Annex A* (in Chinese only).

11. **Chairman** remarked that the series of new and on-going initiatives comprehensively addressed the needs of people with disabilities. He invited views and comments from Members.

12. **A member** remarked on the importance of shortening the lead time for processing applications for funding or services. **An attendee** said that most of the services could be obtained directly from relevant NGOs. As regards funding scheme, such as the IT Support Scheme for People with Severe Physical Disabilities, medical social workers in hospitals would help target recipients to submit applications before the recipients were discharged from hospitals.

13. In response to a member's enquiry on the small number of successful cases under the IT Support Scheme, **an attendee** said that there had been very few severely disabled / tetraplegic patients being discharged from hospitals since the scheme was launched. Three applications were received and had all been approved. **The representative of HD** remarked that those who were previously discharged from hospitals also needed computers. **The representative of SWD** said that the Central Fund for

Personal Computers set up by SWD since 1997 targeted all persons with disability, whereas the new IT Support Scheme aimed to encourage persons with severe physical handicap to live in the community.

14. **A member** opined that hospitals and NGOs should have better coordination to ensure that target recipients could receive services under the Community Support Projects upon being discharged from hospitals.

15. **A member** raised several areas of concern for consideration by the Administration, which included

- (4) the issue of fairness and transparency in handling applications for funding and services;
- (5) possible abuse by users who might acquire the same service repeatedly and deprive others of opportunities;
- (6) helping users to identify suitable service(s) that could meet their needs; and
- (7) ensuring easy access to relevant services and schemes by target users.

16. **A member** made the following suggestions on various new initiatives:

- (1) the International Festival of Inclusive Arts had a worthwhile cause and deserved more resources and efforts for boosting its publicity. Partnership with major media, such as RTHK and TVB, could maximize media coverage;
- (2) the Transitional residential and day training services for severely disabled patients should be a well-sought-after initiative. The Administration should make clear agreement with users prior to admission that the service was not a permanent one; and
- (3) there should be an evaluation mechanism under the Visiting

Medical Practitioner Scheme to ensure that NGOs adopted quality medical service.

17. **The representative of EMB** raised that there were rooms to improve the interfacing between the New Senior Secondary Academic Structure and vocational training. Regarding IT support, **the representative of EMB** said that Hong Kong students could borrow lap-top computers from schools. She added that special schools frequently made use of the computers with necessary adaptation for educational purposes. She wondered if there was any cross-sectoral organization addressing relevant technological adaptation issues. **Chairman** responded that it could be discussed at the Subcommittee on Access.

Agenda Item IV – 2005 Rehabilitation Programme Plan Review [RAC Paper 8/2005]

18. **Secretary** presented the paper, which updated Members on the progress of the 2005 Rehabilitation Programme Plan Review. She said that the Working Group of the Review had held 13 meetings to discuss all areas of the rehabilitation services and conducted four Consultation Forums for stakeholders to express their views. The original plan was that the Consultation would be completed by October 2005. However, in response to requests from the rehabilitation sector and other stakeholders, the deadline for receiving written submissions of views was postponed to the end of January in 2006. The Working Group would study and consolidate the views collected and then revert to the Rehabilitation Advisory Committee (RAC).

19. **A member** asked if the Health, Welfare and Food Bureau had a

timeline for the progress of the Rehabilitation Programme Plan Review. **The Administration** said that it was for the Working Group to decide. She added that the key was when the Working Group could finally come to a consensus on various issues.

Agenda Item V – Consultancy Study for the Review of the Design Manual Barrier Free Access 1997 [RAC Paper 6/2005]

20. **A member** reported that the Subcommittee on Access had made a number of comments and suggestions for the Review of the *Design Manual Barrier Free Access 1997*. These included some issues of principles, such as equal opportunities for people with or without disabilities to have access to the backstage of a theatre, and not only to the audience seating area. For comments on specific requirements, Subcommittee Members gave views on the proposed design standards of accessible toilets, illumination level, flashing fire alarms, ramps, signage, slip-resistance surfaces, tactile guide paths, etc. In addition, the Subcommittee also advised on the consultation plan for the review, and discussed on the enforcement of the design manual. Extract of minutes of the Subcommittee's meetings that covered the discussions on the subject matter is at ***Annex B***.

21. **The Administration** said that the subject matter had also been discussed by the Rehabilitation Programme Plan Review Working Group, and it would be scrutinized at the joint meeting of the Legislative Council Panel on Welfare Services and the Panel on Planning, Lands and Works in January 2006. After then, public consultation would commence.

22. **The representative of BD** said that the public consultation would last for six months. The draft design manual would be uploaded to the Buildings Department's webpage for the general public to view and

comment. Afterwards, the consultant would have to balance the interests of all relevant parties to finalize the design manual. He also clarified that the design manual already existed in the 80s, and the first review of it was conducted in 1997. Since relevant legislation did not have retrospective effect, new requirements could only be reinforced on new buildings and existing buildings that underwent major renovations.

23. In response to the comments of a member, **the representative of BD** said that the Buildings Department could reinforce relevant regulations on private housing estates, whereas the design and construction of roads and street signs were under the purview of the Highways and Transport Departments.

24. In reply to the representative of EMB, **an attendee** said that if the premises of special schools were not government buildings, they would be bound by the legislation under review.

25. **A member** remarked that to prepare for the Paralympic Games to be held in Hong Kong in 2008, the improvement of the accessibility of existing buildings should be expedited in order to catch up with the American and European standards. **A member** added that Hong Kong was hardly accessible from tourists' point of view, as most hotels did not have accessible rooms.

26. **A member** said that while he appreciated the difficulties of enforcement in Hong Kong, he noted that Europe and the United States also had their own restrictions, such as the preservation of historical buildings. He opined that creativity should be used to overcome constraints.

27. **A member** said that the design manual concerned not only the people with disabilities. Therefore, she considered it necessary to step up publicity so that the general public could be involved. **Another member** suggested consulting all the District Councils.

[Post-meeting note: the 18 District Councils were invited to attend the two public forums of the review.]

28. **A member** said that the earlier the review could be completed, the better the accessibility of new buildings. He considered the current consultation plan sufficient, and not in need of further extension.

29. **A member** also agreed with the current consultation timetable and considered conducting the consultation on-line to be efficient. As regards improving the accessibility of old buildings, he suggested awarding those who sought to improve accessibility, as trying to impose the laws on old buildings retrospectively was not feasible.

30. **Chairman** concluded that consultation and public education should be conducted in parallel.

Agenda Item VI – Any Other Business

31. **Chairman** proposed a vote of thanks to all Members, as the meeting was the last one in the current term.

32. **The Administration** added that Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food would like to thank all Members in person but was unable to join the meeting. He would therefore like to arrange another occasion to thank all Members. Secretary would inform Members of the arrangement nearer

the time.

Date of Next Meeting

33. There being no other business, the meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m. The next meeting would be held in the Spring of 2006. Members would be informed of the details nearer the time.

Rehabilitation Division
Health, Welfare and Food Bureau
Government Secretariat

February 2006