

**Minutes of the meeting of
Rehabilitation Advisory Committee
held on 11 September 2007 at 2:30 pm
at Room 1007, Citibank Tower,
3 Garden Road, Central, Hong Kong**

Attendance

Present

Dr Joseph KWOK (Chairman)

Mr Raymond LEE (Vice-Chairman)

Mr CHEUNG Tak-hai

Dr Margaret CHUNG

Mr Herman HUI

Mr IP Kwok-chung

Dr James LAM

Mr Lawrence LEE

Dr Ernest LEE

Mr Hansen LEE

Mrs Olivia LEUNG

Mrs Jackie MA

Mr Kim MOK

Mrs Connie LO

Ms Ann SO

Mr David TSE

Ms Jane TSUEI

Mr Anthony YEUNG

Dr Daisy DAI	Chief Manager (Primary & Community Services) Hospital Authority
Mr Stephen FISHER	Director of Social Welfare
Mr SIT Tung	Assistant Director Social Welfare Department
Mrs Fanny LAM	Principal Assistant Secretary (School Administration & Support) Education and Manpower Bureau
Dr Catherine LAM	Consultant Pediatrician (Child Assessment Service) Department of Health
Miss Hinny LAM	Deputy Secretary for Labour & Welfare (Welfare) 1 (Acting)
Mrs Mary MA	Commissioner for Rehabilitation
Ms Elia WONG (Secretary)	Assistant Secretary for Labour & Welfare

In attendance

Mr Matthew CHEUNG	Secretary for Labour & Welfare
Ms Subrina CHOW	Administrative Assistant to Secretary for Labour & Welfare
Ms Jean IP	Press Secretary to Secretary for Labour & Welfare
Ms Ada HIN	Executive Officer (Rehabilitation) 1, Labour and Welfare Bureau

Absent with apologies

Prof Chetwyn CHAN
Prof TANG Siu-wa

Opening remarks

Chairman welcomed Mr Matthew CHEUNG, Secretary for Labour and Welfare (SLW), for joining the meeting and invited SLW to speak to Members of the Rehabilitation Advisory Committee (RAC).

2. **SLW** appreciated the commitment of RAC Members. He said that he had been involved in serving persons with disabilities for many years, since working at the Education and Manpower Bureau back in 1996, followed by his service as the Director/Permanent Secretary at the Labour Department, Education Department, and Economic Development and Labour Bureau.

3. **SLW** noted that, founded in 1977, the RAC had a long history of 30 years. The RAC had been highly respected by the Government as an important mechanism to take forward policies and measures pertaining to the rights of persons with disabilities. He appreciated RAC Members' in-depth knowledge and experience on issues of concern to persons with disabilities.

4. On promoting and monitoring the implementation of the Rehabilitation Programme Plan (RPP), **SLW** appreciated a member's emphasis on the user-friendliness of the content of the RPP to facilitate different sectors to understand the directions set out in the RPP. He also stressed the importance of the two strategic directions of the RPP:

(a) Cross-sector collaboration

SLW said that health and welfare sectors were closely related to each other, and he would work very closely with the Food and Health Bureau to ensure smooth coordination of policies and measures on promoting the well-being of PWDs. He pointed out that cross-sector collaboration and tripartite partnership were very important in promoting a barrier-free environment and diversity of services for early integration of persons with disabilities into society. On engaging the business sector, **SLW** trusted that the RAC would formulate effective strategies on taking it forward, and he would be

pleased to help whenever needed; and

- (b) Empowering persons with disabilities and their family members and carers

SLW also pointed out that the role of family members and carers of persons with disabilities was very crucial, and further discussion on supporting and empowering them was anticipated.

5. SLW hoped that the RPP could be successfully implemented in full, as it was considered exemplary in the welfare sector. He looked forward to collaborating with the RAC Members in the coming years on rehabilitation matters, particularly in implementing and promoting the RPP.

6. SLW shared a member's view on the importance of barrier-free environment and communication for the integration of persons with disabilities into society. He said that Hong Kong had made a lot of progress in this regard and could continue to improve step by step.

7. As regards a member's concern about social workers' workload, salary and service quality from parents' perspective, SLW said that he trusted his strong partner, Mr Stephen FISHER, the Director of Social Welfare, would strive to ensure welfare service quality. SLW noted social workers' workload and appreciated that the welfare sector had joined the Government in the Enhanced Productivity Programme and Efficiency Savings, which were across-the-board exercises applicable to Government departments and all subvented sectors in the past few years. It was, however, not true that the Government was indebted to the NGOs in terms of funding. SLW stressed the importance of peaceful and constructive dialogues. He added that the RAC, as the principal advisor of the Government on rehabilitation policy, should be an ideal platform for gathering suggestions from different perspectives and working out strategies in developing rehabilitation programmes and pursuing service improvement through a collaborative, harmonious and inclusive approach.

I. Confirmation of minutes of the last meeting held on 30 May 2007

8. **A member** suggested revising the second last sentence of paragraph 34 of the Chinese translation of the draft minutes of the last meeting as “可惜社會人士在康復事宜上的和諧氣氛正受到衝擊。”。 Members had no further comment on the draft minutes, which were then taken as confirmed.

II. Matters arising

9. On the issue of concessionary public transport fare for persons with disabilities, **the Administration** updated Members that SLW would be meeting with the Disability Alliance on Concessionary Transport Fare the day after the meeting. While the Administration would continue to persuade public transport operators to fulfill their corporate social responsibility, it would also consider if any funding could be allocated from the welfare pocket for such purpose. In response to a member’s concern on the amendment of the Disability Discrimination Ordinance (DDO), **the Administration** said that the Administration had made it clear at the Legislative Council that if the public transport operators were to offer concessionary fare to persons with disabilities, the Administration would amend the DDO to remove the operators’ concerns on possible legal challenge in offering fare concession to selective group of persons with disabilities. However, public transport operators had not indicated that they are prepared to offer fare concession to persons with disabilities

10. As regards the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, **Secretary** reported that the Administration would render its full support if the Central People’s Government of the People’s Republic of China was to ratify it and extend it to the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.

11. Concerning the *Design Manual: Barrier Free Access*, **Secretary** updated Members that having discussed the matter for four times, the

LegCo Panel on Welfare Services finally achieved a consensus in general, and the Buildings Department was finalising the Manual with a view to submitting it to the LegCo as soon as possible. In parallel, the Buildings Department is preparing the draft drafting instructions for effecting relevant legislative amendments.

III. Launching plan for 2007 Rehabilitation Programme Plan (RPP)

12. **Secretary** introduced the paper proposing a series of measures to launch the 2007 RPP targeting four sectors, including the rehabilitation sector, business sector, district, community and other non-government/non-profit making organisations, as well as relevant government policy advisory bodies, bureaux and departments. Further views and suggestions from Members on target measures to further promote the RPP were invited.

13. **A member** said that it was crucial to promote the RPP through tripartite efforts, and not simply relying on the Administration and the RAC. Therefore, he suggested Members to contribute more ideas on how to get more people involved in promoting the RPP.

14. **A member** suggested:

- (a) formulating measures targeting youth organisations, including the 13 uniformed groups, because younger people were more receptive to public education;
- (b) involving relevant departments to mobilise their respective sectors. For example, Transport Department could help to arouse concern on accessibility issues in the transport sector through their regular meetings; and
- (c) drawing up a broad implementation timetable for launching and sustaining the impact of the RPP.

15. **A member** expressed the following views and suggestions:

- (a) she suggested that regular meetings to be held between the Joint Council and the RAC to monitor and review the overall progress of the implementation of the RPP.
- (b) as regards the business sector, the Hong Kong Council of Social Service's Caring Company programme had a series of initiatives and publicity efforts promoting corporate social responsibilities to companies and the general public, which could include messages about inclusiveness and integration of persons with disabilities into society;
- (c) she suggested targeting the schools, including their principals, teachers, students and parents, for disseminating relevant messages and mobilizing them to spread the messages out; and
- (d) she hoped to see the recommendations of the RPP adopted in the Government's policy and resource plans.

16. **The Administration** said that as agreed at the last RAC meeting, the RAC would be responsible for following up on the implementation progress of the RPP. The Administration would report to the RAC annually on measures taken by the various government bureaux and departments. The Joint Council might communicate to the RAC its efforts and achievements made in promoting and implementing RPP as appropriate.

17. **A member** said that it would be a long-term social educational process to transform the abilities of persons with disabilities into social capital, and to eliminate social stigma. Apart from promoting employment of persons with disabilities, measures in many different aspects are required in parallel. Targeting different youth groups would be a good example.

18. **A member** said that from the point of view of local community, the impact of the rehabilitation concept in local districts was very limited. Relevant issues were hardly discussed by community organizations. He

suggested making use of local networks of the Social Welfare Department (SWD) to mobilize district communities to collaborate in organizing inclusive programmes, and to arouse the general public's concern. He anticipated that District Councils should welcome such collaboration opportunities. **Another member** supported that RAC Chairman write to the Chairperson and attend the general meeting of each District Council to appeal for support. **Chairman** said that he would invite SWD and other relevant Members to join him on such visits.

19. **A member** suggested drawing up indicators for the promotional efforts, such as the number of organizations approached and responded, etc.

20. **Chairman** said that recognition and appreciation for those who were doing well towards the goals of RPP could have very significant impact.

21. **A member** agreed that, particularly for the corporate sector, punishing measures would not work. He suggested drawing up a list of simple goals to encourage companies to achieve, as taking a small step by each company could make big changes. These goals should include more varieties, such as improving accessibility, and not necessarily employment related.

22. **A member** suggested targeting small and medium enterprises, as multi-national corporations already had specialized departments focusing on such matters. The majority of local companies were small and medium enterprises, which were flexible, pragmatic and usually could not spare much attention and time on business-unrelated matters. Special efforts would be required to get them involved.

23. **A member** suggested that in addition to recognition schemes for companies, there should also be public education programmes, such as experience sharing by successful small and medium enterprises. In addition, he suggested approaching charitable organizations of the business sector, such as Lions Clubs, Rotaries, etc. which should be more forthcoming to the good cause.

24. **A member** considered TV docudrama a very effective means for

bringing home the message of inclusiveness to the general public.

25. **Chairman** urged Members to continue to formulate effective measures for taking forward the RPP, and relevant Sub-committee Chairpersons could follow up by drawing up concrete plans.

IV. Reports by the Sub-committee on Public Education on Rehabilitation and the Sub-committee on Employment

26. **A member** reported on the efforts and work plan of the Sub-committee on Public Education on Rehabilitation under his charge. He said that the Subcommittee had diligently followed the directions stipulated in the RPP to step up the publicity efforts and to encourage cross-sector participation in promoting social inclusion and integration of persons with disabilities. Initiatives included:

- (a) setting the general theme of the 2007/08 Public Education Funding, as “work towards an inclusive and barrier-free society for persons with disabilities”. The Labour and Welfare Bureau had increased resource allocation for the Sub-committee to step up its publicity efforts in this regard;
- (b) continuing to organize the “Mental Health Month” in October this year in collaboration with over 20 non-governmental organizations and the mass media. Activities included –
 - (i) organizing “2007 Mental Health Month”, with an opening ceremony scheduled on 21 October 2007 at 2:30 pm at the Olympian City 2. SLW would officiate the event. Members of the RAC were encouraged to attend and support;
 - (ii) producing a half-hour TV Special on mental health which would be aired on TVB Jade; and
 - (iii) arranging psychiatrists to appear in TVB’s TV programmes for consultation by the public;

- (c) organizing a prize-awarding scheme – “Caring Environment Recognition Scheme” – in the latter half of 2007, in collaboration with the Hong Kong Joint Council for People with Disabilities, the Hong Kong Council of Social Services and the 18 District Councils. The prize presentation ceremony would be held on 9 December 2007 at 2 pm at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre. SLW would officiate the event. Members of the RAC were encouraged to attend and support;
- (d) producing two announcements in the public interests on television (APIs) to step up the scale of propaganda on mental health and barrier free, and to raise public awareness and acceptance of persons with disabilities by leveraging on the mass media;
- (e) including in the publicity agenda of the 2008/09 Public Education on Rehabilitation programme, efforts to reinforce parents’ understanding of Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder and Specific Learning Disabilities;
- (f) considering ways to step up the coordination with non-profit organizations and the marketplace for the promotion of social inclusion and integration of persons with disabilities.

27. **A member** appealed to all Members to help to contribute ideas and also to take actions to promote the RPP.

[A member left the meeting at this point.]

28. **A member** reported on the efforts made by the Sub-committee on Employment, and briefed Members on a number of employment related issues discussed by the Sub-committee, which included:

- (a) adjusting vocational rehabilitation and skills training for persons with disabilities in accordance with the changing market needs;

- (b) the impact of the “minimum wage” measure on employees with disabilities. He said that Members were of the view that the impact could be negative. There was a suggestion of setting up an assessment mechanism for exempting some persons with disabilities from the “minimum wage” stipulated. However, most members did not support it because –
 - (i) such proposed mechanism would further stigmatize persons with disabilities;
 - (ii) repeated assessment would be required as work ability improved, and this would impose unnecessary pressure and unfairness on the employees with disabilities;
 - (iii) different job positions require different assessments, and this would delay the employment process and create hurdles for employment of persons with disabilities; and
 - (iv) work attitude, which should be an essential part of work performance, could not be assessed;
- (c) supporting the Government and NGOs’ keeping an internal indicator of employees with disabilities but not highlighting it to avoid stigmatizing employees with disabilities; and
- (d) visiting vocational rehabilitation workshops and social enterprises to acquire a better understanding of their situations, advantages and challenges faced.

29. **A member** suggested formulating measures targeting human resource personnel. **Another member** agreed that obtaining the support of the middle management was usually more difficult than persuading the heads of companies. **Another member** said that medium and large companies usually put aside some budget for charities, while small companies were directed by their owners. **Another member** said that a comprehensive and user-friendly package was needed before appealing to the business sector.

30. **A member** raised that consideration might be given to supporting self-employed persons with disabilities, who usually had little means of promoting their own businesses. **Another member** said that some persons with disabilities preferred part-time employment, and this might meet the needs of some enterprises. Based on her own experience, she appreciated the loyalty of her employees with disabilities.

31. **Two members** shared the view that the most important thing was that persons with disabilities should have the abilities required for the job, the drive for self-improvement and self-respect, while they should also know their own rights in order to protect themselves.

V. Any Other Business

32. Having no other business, **Chairman** concluded the meeting, and said that Secretary would inform Members of the date and other details of the next meeting once scheduled.

Secretariat
Rehabilitation Advisory Committee

October 2007