

**Minutes of the meeting of
Rehabilitation Advisory Committee (RAC)
held on 7 March 2008 at 2:30 pm
at Room 1007, Citibank Tower
3 Garden Road, Central, Hong Kong**

Attendance

Present

Dr Joseph KWOK (Chairman)

Prof Chetwyn CHAN

Mr CHEUNG Tak-hai

Mr Herman HUI

Dr James LAM

Mr Lawrence LEE

Dr Ernest LEE

Mr Hansen LEE

Mrs Connie LO

Mr Kim MOK

Mr Wilfred NG

Ms Scarlett PONG

Ms Ann SO

Mr David TSE

Mr Anthony YEUNG

Dr Daisy DAI

Chief Manager

(Primary & Community Services)
Hospital Authority

Mr Stephen FISHER

Director of Social Welfare

Social Welfare Department

Mrs Cecilia YUEN

Assistant Director
(Rehabilitation & Medical Social
Services)
Social Welfare Department

Mr Albert WONG

Principal Inspector (Special Education
Support 1)
(School Administration and Support)
Education Bureau

Dr POON Mo-tong

Senior Medical & Health Officer
(Child Assessment Service)
Department of Health

Miss Eliza LEE

Deputy Secretary for Labour & Welfare
(Welfare) 1

Mr Stephen SUI

Commissioner for Rehabilitation

Ms Elia WONG (Secretary)

Assistant Secretary for Labour & Welfare

In attendance

Mr William SUNG

Chief Executive Officer (Rehabilitation)
Labour and Welfare Bureau

Absent with apologies

Mr Raymond LEE (Vice-Chairman)

Mr IP Kwok-chung

Prof TANG Siu-wa

Ms Jane TSUEI

I. Confirmation of minutes of the last meeting held on 27 November 2007

Members had no further comments on the revised minutes of the last meeting, which were then taken as confirmed.

II. Matters arising

2. **The Administration** updated Members on the progress of the new *Design Manual: Barrier Free Access*. He reported that legislative amendments would be made in order to give legal effect to the obligatory requirements set out in the Design Manual and preparatory work for the legislative amendments was underway. The Administration planned to table the proposed Amendment Regulation in the Legislative Council within the current legislative session.

III. 2008/09 Budget Initiatives Relating to Rehabilitation Services [RAC Paper 1/2008]

3. **The Administration** introduced the various budget initiatives concerning persons with disabilities. He said that the overall budget for rehabilitation services would be around \$3 176 billion and an additional recurrent allocation of \$360 million would be provided for enhancing a host of rehabilitation services, which included increasing the provision of pre-school training, residential care, day training and vocational rehabilitation, as well as re-engineering district-based community support services to strengthen the support for persons with disabilities and their families and carers. In addition, a total of \$230 million recurrent funding had been earmarked for providing transport supplement for persons with disabilities. Members, in general, welcomed and supported the new initiatives.

4. **A member** said that information and communication technology was important in facilitating the self-reliance of persons with disabilities. This was one of the key aspects highlighted in the *2007 Hong Kong Rehabilitation Programme Plan (RPP)* and he hoped that the Rehabilitation

Advisory Committee could consider ways in supporting the further development in this regard at its future meetings.

IV. Transport Supplement Scheme for Persons with Disabilities **[RAC Paper 2/2008]**

5. **The Administration** introduced the proposed Transport Supplement Scheme. He said that while the existing Disability Allowance (DA) and Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme and the provision of Rehabus service would help meet the basic transport needs of persons with disabilities, the proposed additional provision of the monthly transport supplement of \$200 aimed to encourage persons with disabilities to participate more in social and community activities, thereby facilitating their integration into society. **The Administration** added that providing such transport supplement through the DA and CSSA Scheme was the fastest and most cost-effective way to ensure that all the resources allocated could benefit the persons with disabilities directly. The proposed arrangement did not directly involve any other organizations and could be implemented within a short lead time after securing funding approval. As payments would be effected through the existing DA and CSSA payment system, the administrative costs could be reduced to the minimum. Also, the provision of transport supplement was the most flexible arrangement in meeting the different needs of persons with disabilities. As the supplement would be paid directly into the recipients' bank accounts, persons with disabilities concerned were free to decide how to make the best use of the additional supplement to meet their transport needs having regard to individual circumstances. In tandem, the Administration would continue to encourage public transport operators to provide concessionary fares to persons with disabilities in the spirit of corporate social responsibility.

6. **Members** generally agreed that this was an important first step forward taken by the Administration in providing transport supplement to persons with disabilities in facilitating their integration into society. They welcomed the initiative and agreed that continued efforts should be made to persuade public transport operators to offer concessionary fares to persons with disabilities under the principle of shared responsibility. **A member**

said the request of the Disability Alliance on Concessionary Transport Fare was that persons with disabilities could use the Octopus card to use public transport at a concessionary rate with dignity. The eligible beneficiary group should also be expanded to cover those with cancer or other chronic illnesses but could not satisfy the criteria of 100% disability.

7. **A member** said that because of the difficulty in defining persons with disabilities, the public transport operators found it difficult to manage a concessionary scheme without knowing the number of beneficiaries. In the case of the MTR Corporation, despite being the majority shareholder, the Government should refrain from dictating the policies of the MTR Corporation so as to avoid conflict of interests.

8. **A member** said that the public transport operators could not shift their responsibilities of provision of concessionary fares to the Government by simply classifying the offer of concessionary fare to persons with disabilities as a welfare initiative as concessions had already been offered to elderly persons. He said that strategies should be formulated to persuade the public transport operators to fulfill their corporate social responsibilities.

9. **A member** said that public transport operators could start with a trial scheme, e.g. by offering concessionary fare to persons with disabilities once a month. **Another member** said that the public transport operators had already offered free transportation for all persons with disabilities on the International Day for Disabled Persons. She suggested that as a step forward, public transport operators could consider extending the concessionary offer to other days by phases. The **Chairman** said that public transport operators could start with offering concessionary fare on weekends/holidays and other off-peak hours. He opined that the increased use of public transport by persons with disabilities during such hours would create a win-win situation for stakeholders. He hoped that the Transport and Housing Bureau could actively promote such measure.

V. **Promotion of the 2007 Hong Kong Rehabilitation Programme Plan [RAC Paper 3/2008]**

10. **The Administration** reported that the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Permanent Secretary for Labour and Welfare and Chairman of the RAC had written to various Government Bureaux, Advisory Bodies, non-government organizations (NGOs), District Councils, Chambers of Commerce, etc. to introduce to them the RPP and to solicit their support in promoting full integration of persons with disabilities through tripartite partnership. He would like to seek Members' advice and suggestions on the strategy in formulating concrete collaboration programmes with the various sectors.

11. **A member** suggested setting one or a small number of themes for all the 18 District Councils to work on so as to create synergy, and to offer funding for district organizations as an incentive for the latter.

12. On rehabilitation services, **a member** suggested reviewing the existing funding mode for rehabilitation services by supporting NGOs with good performance to expand their services instead of inviting all NGOs to submit bid for operating new services.

13. **A member** advised that when promoting the RPP to the business sector, one should highlight that the programme would benefit the society as a whole instead of highlighting persons with disabilities being the beneficiaries, and that such programme would not have negative impact on the business environment.

14. The **Chairman** said that on tripartite partnership, he noted that the business sector was getting more ready to accept the concept of "diversity and inclusion". Nevertheless, the business sector might have reservation in supporting social enterprises, as the latter might be seen to be using public money to compete with private businesses. On the other hand, rehabilitation service providers also need to review their manner of operation and adopt an open-door policy to welcome other people in the community to participate in their programmes.

15. **The Administration** said that the discussion on promotion strategy for the RPP could focus on how to create a sustainable impact on the community through “tripartite partnership” and “community-based approach”. The RAC could set one or more themes for the promotion campaign. For example, if “accessibility” was a theme, the RAC could encourage its community partners to publish “barrier free reports” and mobilize different sectors to collaborate to follow up the findings and recommendations of these reports.

16. **A member** supported that the promotion should have a sustainable impact, and considered that the RAC should set a target that was achievable and pay attention to the cost-effectiveness of the use of resources. He stressed that the RAC’s promotional efforts should target the youths, whom he considered most effective in terms of nurturing an inclusive culture in the long run. He added that it was desirable to set a theme for each year and to review the achievement and direction of the promotional efforts annually. **Another member** suggested that primary and secondary school students be involved in district barrier free check-walks.

17. **A member** suggested that the promotional efforts should include publicizing to the general public the achievements of rehabilitation NGOs and groups of persons with disabilities.

18. **A member** said that it was very important that the target audience should be set at the planning stage. Different strategies should be formulated and presentation packages prepared for different groups of target audience. He shared his experience of lining up a partnership among the Rotary, Hong Kong Council of Social Service and the Hong Kong Economic Times to publish a magazine targeting employers for promoting employment of persons with disabilities. The magazine would provide information on various supports and resources available and step-by-step guides to help employers recruit employees with disabilities. Before launching the magazine in early May, a half-day seminar cum visit to vocational programmes for persons with disabilities would be arranged for potential employers. Such an intensive and concise programme, if successful, could serve as a model for future programmes targeting the business sector.

19. The **Chairman** asked the Secretariat to prepare presentation materials for Members' comments, and asked Members to actively provide their further suggestions and to participate in organizing and attending the various promotional programmes.

VI. Any Other Business

20. There being no other business. The **Chairman** concluded the meeting and said that the Secretary would inform Members of the date and other details of the next meeting once scheduled.

Secretariat
Rehabilitation Advisory Committee
June 2008