

**Minutes of the  
Social Welfare Advisory Committee (SWAC) Meeting**

**5 March 2009 (Thursday) 11:00 am  
Room 215, Main Wing, Central Government Offices**

**Present**

Professor Chan Yuk-shee	(Chairman)
Miss Maggie Chan Mei-kit	
Mr Bunny Chan Chung-bun	
Dr Dorothy Chan Yuen Tak-fai	
Dr Miranda Chung Chan Lai-foon	
Mr Herman Hui Chung-shing	
Dr Lam Ching-choi	
Mr Vincent Lo Wing-sang	
Mr Timothy Ma Kam-wah	
Mrs Agnes Mak Tang Pik-yee	
Mrs Teresa Tsien Wong Bik-kwan	
Dr Jimmy Wong Chi-ho	
Ms Lisa Yip Sau-wah	
Miss Vicky Cheung, AS(W)1C	(Secretary)

**In Attendance**

**Labour and Welfare Bureau (LWB)**

Mr Paul Tang	Permanent Secretary for Labour and Welfare (PSLW)
Miss Eliza Lee	Deputy Secretary for Labour and Welfare (Welfare)1 (DS(W)1)
Ms Carol Yip	Deputy Secretary for Labour and Welfare (Welfare)2 (DS(W)2)

Ms Irene Young	Principal Assistant Secretary for Labour and Welfare (Welfare)1 (PAS(W)1)
Miss Hinny Lam	Principal Assistant Secretary for Labour and Welfare (Welfare)2 (PAS(W)2)
Ms Betty Ho	Principal Assistant Secretary for Labour and Welfare (Welfare)3 (PAS(W)3)
Mr Stephen Sui	Commissioner for Rehabilitation

**Social Welfare Department (SWD)**

Mr Stephen Fisher          Director of Social Welfare

**Absent with apologies**

Mr Quentin Fong King-sang  
Dr Benjamin Lai Sau-shun  
Ms Lam Shuk-yee  
Mr Christopher Law Kin-chung  
Dr Leung Wing-tai  
Professor Tang Kwong-leung  
Mr Tung Chi-fat  
Mr Benedict Wong Chung-mat  
Mr Silva Yeung Tak-wah

**Discussion Item: Briefing on welfare-related initiatives in the 2009-10 Budget [SWAC Paper No. 03/2009]**

Members were briefed on the welfare-related initiatives in the 2009-10 Budget.

2. Members asked the following questions / offered the following comments:

- (a) Whether the additional funding for the Family and Child Protective Service Units of the Social Welfare Department (SWD)

would be used to create posts in non-governmental organizations (NGOs);

- (b) Whether there was overlapping of resources given that both the Lotteries Fund (LF) and the Government provided resources for the Rehabus service;
- (c) The scale of operation of the Rehabus service in Hong Kong was large and the Government should closely monitor its operation and effectiveness;
- (d) The Rehabus service in Hong Kong was well managed and of a high quality;
- (e) The Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project (NSCCP) was an effective programme to ease the pressure of working parents in taking care of their children. It could also promote mutual help and build networks among neighbours, and should therefore be further expanded to meet the growing service demand;
- (f) The batterer intervention programme should become a mandatory requirement for all abusers in domestic violence cases;
- (g) Measures to tackle the youth drug abuse problem should be implemented at schools, and cross-departmental collaboration should be further strengthened. The Government should consider having police officers stationed at schools, so as to deter drug abuse and trafficking;
- (h) Although resources would be added to a wide range of family and child welfare services, there was no overall direction in the provision of a holistic family programme. Closer cross-departmental collaboration was needed for effective service integration;
- (i) An ageing population was inevitable and elderly care services should be the focus of social welfare in future. However, not all the elderly people required public welfare services. Resources should be allocated to help those genuinely in need;

- (j) Pleased to know that the Government would increase the supply of subsidized residential care places for frail elders through the Enhanced Bought Place Scheme (Scheme). The Scheme should be further expanded because it was more cost-effective than providing residential care places through Government subvented services. Elders who could afford it and were willing to pay a higher price could also choose private residential care homes of a better quality;
- (k) The work pressure faced by frontline care workers, especially those taking care of infirm and demented elders, was increasing. More resources should be allocated to strengthen the support to these care workers;
- (l) The Government's elderly policy objective of promoting "ageing in the community" and mutual care among family members and neighbours was supported. More day care centre places should be provided for the infirm and demented elders;
- (m) The Elderly Portal could serve as a platform to promote a positive image of elders and disseminate correct messages about ageing to the general public;
- (n) The Neighbourhood Active Ageing Project (NAAP) which aimed at promoting mutual help among elders at the community level was worthy of support;
- (o) More and more highly educated people retired at an early age, and they were valuable asset to our society. The Government should further promote volunteerism targeting this group of people;
- (p) Some overseas countries had established policies and systems to promote voluntary services and train volunteers. Some overseas corporations would offer incentive payments to retirees who continued to serve the organizations as volunteers. The Government could make reference to these overseas experiences in promoting volunteerism in Hong Kong and allocate more

resources for such purpose;

- (q) Some young volunteers were not fully committed to serving the community, and it was necessary to provide training to them;
- (r) Some NGOs in Hong Kong, especially the uniform groups, offered systematic training programmes to young volunteers to help them acquire the necessary interpersonal skills and develop a sense of responsibility;
- (s) In times of economic downturn, the Government should create more short-term job opportunities for the less-educated and low-skilled people. The Government could also consider providing subsidies for private companies to recruit more persons with disabilities;
- (t) The Internship Programme for University Graduates might distort the market salary. It might be more effective for the universities to arrange job placements for their students as part of the academic programmes;
- (u) The middle-class was hard hit by the financial tsunami. Many of them were under stress, and were in need of psychological treatment. As most of them were reluctant to seek help or receive welfare services, the Government should deploy more resources to provide timely assistance to this group of people; and
- (v) The mental well-being of the general public warranted attention. There was an imminent need for the Government to adopt a more holistic and active approach in helping people who had recovered from mental illness integrate into the community.

3. The Government gave the following response:

- (a) A media report mentioned that the overall welfare expenditure in 2009-10 would decrease by 6.4% as compared to 2008-09. The apparent decrease was the result of a substantial increase in the revised estimates of 2008-09 which included two months' additional standard-rate payment to recipients of Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA), and a one-off grant of \$3,000 as well as two months' additional standard-rate allowance to recipients of Old Age Allowance (OAA). If these one-off expenditures were discounted, there would be an increase in the welfare expenditure in 2009-10 as compared to 2008-09;
- (b) The additional funding for the family and child welfare service would be used to strengthen the manpower of SWD. A total of 12 Social Work Officer and 2 Clinical Psychologist posts would be created. The remainder would be allocated to NGOs for service enhancement and recruitment of additional staff;
- (c) The Transport Department was responsible for monitoring the operation of the Rehabus service. Funding was earmarked in 2009-10 for purchasing 6 new Rehabuses and replacing 4 old ones. The total number of Rehabuses would then increase to 115. Although NGOs could normally apply for LF for the replacement or purchase of vehicles, NGOs which had obtained funding from the Government for purchasing Rehabuses would not receive funding under LF for the same purpose;
- (d) The Government had been working with the Elderly Commission on the long-term planning of elderly welfare services. The study, which was expected to be completed by the end of 2009, would explore different ways to promote further development of quality self-financing / private residential care homes as well as encourage shared responsibilities among individuals, families and the community in meeting the long-term care needs of the elders;

- (e) The Internship Programme for University Graduates was an initiative implemented by the Labour Department to help university graduates acquire working experiences and enhance their employability;
- (f) Retirees could be good volunteers, although NGOs would need to take care of employment issues such as insurance, minimum wage, etc. if the volunteers were paid for their services; and
- (g) Regarding assistance to the middle-class who were affected by the financial tsunami, the Government had been funding community projects through the Community Investment and Inclusion Fund to promote mutual concern and help the needy build support networks.

Labour and Welfare Bureau  
September 2009

