

**Minutes of the  
Social Welfare Advisory Committee (SWAC) Meeting  
held on 3 May 2007 at 3:00 p.m.  
in Room 2005, Murray Building, Central**

**Present**

Mr Wilfred Wong (Chairman)  
Mr Bunny Chan Chung-bun  
Dr Stephen Chow Chun-kay  
Dr Miranda Chung Chan Lai-foon  
Ms Christine Fang Meng-sang  
Mr Quentin Fong  
Dr Benjamin Lai Sau-shun  
Dr Lam Ching-choi  
Prof Japhet Sebastian Law  
Dr Leung Wing-tai  
Mr Vincent Lo Wing-sang  
Mr Timothy Ma Kam-wah  
Prof Tang Kwong-leung  
Mr Tung Chi-fat  
Dr Jimmy Wong Chi-ho  
Ms Marina Wong Yu-pok  
Ms Lisa Yip Sau-wah  
Ms Wendy Cheung (Secretary)

**In Attendance**

**Health, Welfare and Food Bureau (HWFB)**

Mr Freely Cheng Acting Deputy Secretary for Health, Welfare & Food  
(Family and Women) / Principal Assistant Secretary for  
Health, Welfare & Food (Family)

Miss Hanny Lam Principal Assistant Secretary for Health, Welfare &  
Food (Women)

**Social Welfare Department (SWD)**

Mr PY Fung Deputy Director (Service)

Mrs Anna Mak Assistant Director (Family and Child Welfare)

Ms Pang Kit-ling Chief Social Work Officer (Domestic Violence)

**Absent with apologies**

Mr Herman Hui Chung-shing

Mr Kwan Chuk-fai

Mr Silva Yeung

**Item 1: Pilot Project on Child Fatality Review (SWAC Paper No. 4/07)**

Members were briefed on the proposed arrangements and the implementation plan of a pilot project on child fatality review.

2. Members made the following comments:

- (a) some Members asked about the resource requirement for the project;
- (b) Members agreed that document review was an appropriate approach so as to avoid hurting the feelings of the child and family members again. Moreover, this would be sufficient as the main purpose of the review was to identify the case pattern/trend so as to help identify ways to prevent re-occurrence of similar incidents;

- (c) some Members suggested that, to complete the picture, the duration and scope of the study be extended. For example, besides child abuse cases, domestic violence cases and cases involving serious injuries and drugs, etc. might also be included. The most extensive approach would be to include all cases of children aged under 18 irrespective of whether the fatalities were resulted from natural or unnatural causes;
- (d) it would be very time-consuming and ineffective for non-social work professionals to conduct document review. A Member suggested that the Government commission an academic institute to conduct a study on the child fatality and domestic violence cases for the past 20 years instead;
- (e) the composition of the Review Panel should include different professionals, such as clinical psychologists, doctors and legal professionals. Parents could be included as well; and
- (f) some Members asked if there was any legal implication of the review findings as they might establish a precedent for similar cases in future. If so, the review findings should be phrased carefully so that only prospective actions, not retrospective ones, would be affected.

3. The Government made the following response:

- (a) resources were required to provide two social workers and one clerical staff to set up the secretariat in the Social Welfare Department (SWD);

- (b) the Review Panel would focus on the pattern and trends for the causes of deaths so as to help the Government formulate prevention strategies, if possible. It was recognized that both approaches of document review and interviews had their own merits and the Committee on Child Abuse chaired by the Director of Social Welfare had taken all these into consideration before putting forward the present proposal;
- (c) at the moment, SWD expected that about 100 cases would be reviewed, making reference to the records provided by the Coroner's Court. As a start, a more pragmatic approach covering only unnatural deaths which aroused public concern and having implications on the social welfare services such as cases of domestic violence and suicide was proposed. Members' proposal of taking a more comprehensive review of the children deaths would be outside the scope of this pilot project and could be considered in the review of the pilot project;
- (d) the Government would invite professionals with relevant experience on child development to the Panel. Members with special expertise would also be invited to join the Panel on an ad hoc basis. This would facilitate the review process;
- (e) while SWD would further consider the composition of the Review Panel in the light of Members' comments, it might not be necessary to appoint additional parents, as some

professionals to be appointed were also parents themselves,;

- (f) on the legal implications of the review findings, the Government thanked Members for their suggestion and SWD would consider inviting legal professionals to join the Review Panel.

4. The Meeting supported the pilot project as proposed. While the study might cover more cases and last for a longer time, the estimated 100 cases for review with the project lasting for two years should be sufficient. SWD could draw on more reference from overseas experience in reviewing cases involving child fatalities. Even though the project was not intended to be fault-finding, the review process should be handled with care and on an anonymous basis to avoid any unnecessary controversy.

**Item 2 : Family Support Programme – Progress of Implementation  
(SWAC Paper 3/07)**

5. Members were briefed on the progress of implementation of the Family Support Programme (FSP).

6. Members made the following comments:

(a) Members welcomed the concept of the FSP as it would develop and enhance neighborhood relations so as to encourage mutual help in the localities;

(b) information collected from the FSP would enable the

Government to analyze the risk levels of the districts concerned and facilitate early identification and intervention;

- (c) Members would like to know the duration of additional resources and whether it was a new service or an enhancement of existing services as a result of the new resources; and
- (d) the programme would cultivate a caring spirit in the society. However, Members were concerned that with more at-risk families identified through this programme, the follow-up services might not be adequate given the present stringent manpower position.

7. The Government made the following responses:

- (a) the additional resources allocated were recurrent in nature. The additional resources available under FSP had generally enabled the Integrated Family Service Centres (IFSCs), Family and Child Protective Services Units and Psychiatric Medical Social Services Units to take a much more proactive role in outreaching to the needy. For example, some IFSCs tried to include more community partners (e.g. property management companies) in the community support networks;
- (b) with problems identified and dealt with at an early stage, it would save resources to take subsequent remedial actions. Besides, on top of social workers, volunteers were recruited and trained to contact at-risk families and provide the latter with

support and assistance. Moreover, the IFSCs could make use of services of other social service units and other community resources to help the identified families/individuals.

8. The Meeting appreciated the concept of the FSP and hoped that Members would continue to be kept posted.

Health, Welfare and Food Bureau

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