

**Minutes of the
Social Welfare Advisory Committee (SWAC) Meeting
held on 31 May 2007 at 9:30 a.m.
in Room 1007, Citibank Tower, Garden Road, Central**

Present

Mr Wilfred Wong Ying-wai (Chairman)
Mr Bunny Chan Chung-bun
Dr Miranda Chung Chan Lai-foon
Ms Christine Fang Meng-sang
Mr Herman Hui Chung-shing
Mr Kwan Chuk-fai
Dr Lam Ching-choi
Mr Timothy Ma Kam-wah
Prof Tang Kwong-leung
Mr Tung Chi-fat
Dr Jimmy Wong Chi-ho
Ms Marina Wong Yu-pok
Mr Silva Yeung Tak-wah
Ms Lisa Yip Sau-wah
Ms Wendy Cheung (Secretary)

In Attendance

Former Health, Welfare and Food Bureau (HWFB)

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|-----------------|---|
| Ms Carol Yip | Deputy Secretary for Health, Welfare & Food (Elderly Services and Social Security) |
| Mr Freely Cheng | Principal Assistant Secretary for Health, Welfare & Food (Family) |
| Mr D C Cheung | Principal Assistant Secretary for Health, Welfare & Food (Elderly Services and Social Security)2 |
| Mr Tony Yip | Assistant Secretary for Health, Welfare & Food (Elderly Services and Social Security)4 |

Social Welfare Department (SWD)

Miss Nancy Law Acting Director of Social Welfare

Mr Chan Tak-kin Chief Social Security Officer (Social Security)⁴

The University of Hong Kong

Dr Leung Cho-bun, Joe Head, Department of Social Work and Social Administration (for item 1)

Dr Wong Yu-cheung Assistant Professor, Department of Social Work and Social Administration (for item 1)

Mr Yip Hak-kwong Director, Policy 21 (for item 1)

Absent with apologies

Dr Stephen Chow Chun-kay

Mr Vincent Lo Wing-sang

Prof Japhet Sebastian Law

Mr Quentin Fong King-sang

Dr Benjamin Lai Sau-shun

Dr Leung Wing-tai

Item 1: Powerpoint Presentation on a Study to Evaluate the New Dawn Project under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme

Members noted that the Social Welfare Department (SWD) had commissioned a tertiary institution to conduct an evaluation study on the New Dawn (ND) Project. The ND Project aimed to assist single parents and child carers on Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) to enhance their capacity for self-reliance and integration into society through work. Members were briefed on the initial findings of the evaluation study and asked to consider if the project should continue in its present form for the time being.

2. Members made the following comments:

- (a) the findings so far had their limitations in that the sample size was relatively small and the participants had only worked for a relatively brief period when the survey was conducted;
- (b) there was concern about the proposed recommendation of increasing sanction as the participants had made genuine efforts in seeking employment;
- (c) the media might be interested in knowing the wage level and benefit package of these participants and whether they were covered by the Employment Ordinance in their part-time jobs; and
- (d) positive messages such as “CSSA single parents were proactively seeking employment” should be conveyed to the public. At the same time, the Government should make it known that appropriate support services and monitoring mechanism were in place.

3. The Government and the consultant team made the following responses:

- (a) the findings presented were only initial ones and the picture would become clearer when the data from more samples were available. That said, given the similar background of the participants, it was anticipated that the findings would probably be similar even with more samples;
- (b) the recommendations made in the study reflected only the views of the consultant team, not the Government. The Government would study the recommendations carefully as some of them had far-reaching implications. ND participants received support from the relevant Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in enhancing their employability. Sanction would only be imposed on those who had defaulted appointments with SWD and/or refused to seek employment;
- (c) the reason why some participants were unable to find a job was probably due to the fact that the ND participants mainly came from two groups. The first group came from the Intensive Employment Assistance Projects and they might still be participating in job training and sharing before seeking

employment. The second group came from the Active Employment Assistance Programme and they could actually be in the process of seeking employment as they might have more working experience and skills; and

- (d) the positive messages that 28% ND participants had successfully got a job and that some of them had left the CSSA net would be conveyed to the media.

4. The meeting was pleased to note the encouraging results of the project so far, including the generally positive feedback received from the participant's family members and children, employers and operating agencies. They agreed that the project would be continued in its present form for a further 30 months. However, a more in-depth study on the project might be needed before deciding on the way forward in the longer-term.

Item 2 : Any Other Business

5. A Member said that, with the recent civil service pay rise, the subvented welfare NGOs could hardly maintain a stable workforce if the salary scales of NGOs was not in line with those of the civil service. Another Member believed that this would also affect service quality.

6. The Government responded that the recent salary adjustments of the civil service would impact not only on the welfare subvented sector, but also the medical and education subvented sectors. Though the salary scales of NGO staff had been delinked from those of the civil service, according to past practice, it was likely that the results of the pay trend survey would be taken into account in the calculation of subventions for welfare NGOs. However, for the Starting Salaries Review which would be carried out once every three years, the Administration would need to formulate a longer-term arrangement for such reviews.

7. The meeting hoped that the Administration would examine NGOs' requests carefully.