

Elderly Commission
Minutes of the 105th Meeting

Conference Room 6, G/F, Central Government Offices,
2 Tim Mei Avenue, Tamar, Hong Kong
10 a.m., 23 June 2021 (Wednesday)

Present:

Chairman

Dr LAM Ching-choi, SBS, JP

Members

Ms CHAN Mei-kit, Maggie, MH

Ms CHAN Yee-ching, Tammy

Mr CHEUNG Leong

Mr CHUA Hoi-wai, JP

Prof LEE Tze-fan, Diana, JP

Ms LI Fai, Grace

Dr LOU Wei-qun, Vivian

Mrs SO CHAN Wai-hang, Susan, BBS

Dr TSE Man-wah, Doris

Mr WONG Kit-loong

Dr YEUNG Ka-ching

Ms CHANG King-yiu, JP

Mr LEUNG Chung-tai, Gordon, JP

Ms LEE Lee-man, Lily

Dr FUNG Yu-kei, Anne

Mrs TANG FUNG Shuk-yin

Dr HA King-hang, Tony

Permanent Secretary for Labour and Welfare

Director of Social Welfare

Principal Assistant Secretary for Food and Health
(Health) 4

Assistant Director of Health (Elderly Health)

Assistant Director of Housing (Estate Management) 1

Chief Manager (Primary and Community Services),
Hospital Authority

In attendance:

Ms KWOK Wai-ling, Polly, JP

Ms LAW Lai-tan, Linda

Mr TAN Tick-ye

Deputy Secretary for Labour and Welfare (Welfare) 2

Principal Assistant Secretary for Labour and Welfare
(Welfare) 3

Deputy Director of Social Welfare (Services)
(Acting)/Assistant Director of Social Welfare
(Elderly)

Mr CHAN Pak-lam, Ashley	Assistant Secretary for Labour and Welfare (Welfare) 3B
Ms LEE Ngan-chau, Martina	Chief Executive Manager, Labour and Welfare Bureau
Ms KWAN Yee-ting, Elaine	Executive Officer (Welfare) 4, Labour and Welfare Bureau

Agenda item 3:

Prof CHONG Ming-lin, Alice	Senior Researcher, Research Unit, Labour and Welfare Bureau
Prof Hector TSANG	Chair Professor and Head, Department of Rehabilitation Sciences, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University
Dr Angela LEUNG	Associate Professor, School of Nursing, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University and Deputy Director, World Health Organization Collaborating Centre for Community Health Services
Dr Stephen CHAN	Project Manager, Department of Rehabilitation Sciences, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

Absent with apologies:

Ms CHUNG Wai-yee, Diana
Dr PANG Fei-chau
Mr WONG Tai-lun, Kenneth
Ms YU Chui-yee, BBS, MH

Secretary

Mr CHONG Kwok-wing, Gordon	Principal Assistant Secretary for Labour and Welfare (Welfare) 4
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Dr LAM Ching-choi, the Chairman, welcomed Members to the meeting and reminded them to make a declaration when there was a potential conflict between their own interests and the matters to be discussed.

Agenda item 1: Confirmation of the minutes of the 104th meeting

2. As Members had not proposed any amendments to the Chinese and English versions of the draft minutes of the 104th meeting issued by the Secretariat on 3 June 2021, the minutes were confirmed at this meeting.

Agenda item 2: Matters arising

3. Ms LAW Lai-tan, Linda, Principal Assistant Secretary for Labour and Welfare (Welfare) 3, briefed Members on the manpower shortage problem in residential care homes for the elderly (RCHEs) mentioned in the 104th meeting.

4. Ms LAW said that the Labour and Welfare Bureau (LWB) had compiled a supplementary note containing information on training programmes offered by the Social Welfare Department (SWD) and the Employees Retraining Board (ERB) for attracting job seekers to take up front-line care posts in the elderly service sector. A copy of the supplementary note had been enclosed with the minutes of the 104th meeting for Members' reference. Such training programmes included the Navigation Scheme for Young Persons in Care Services, the "First-Hire-Then-Train" Scheme, the Love Upgrading Special Scheme and regular retraining programmes. In parallel, the Labour Department was implementing the Work Trial Scheme to help enhance job seekers' employability through one-month (30-day) full-time or part-time work trial. Under the scheme, there was no employment relationship between job seekers (i.e. participants) and participating organisations. During the work trial, participating organisations should provide on-the-job training and assign an experienced staff member as mentor to participants. On completion of the one-month full-time work trial, each participant would receive an allowance of up to \$8,300, of which \$500 would be contributed by the participating organisation. Participating organisations might offer additional allowances/bonuses to participants to attract more potential job seekers.

5. In addition, the ERB had reduced the number of training hours required of care workers of RCHEs and offered more flexible working hours under the "First-Hire-Then-Train" Scheme. Since the implementation of these new arrangements, over 60 RCHEs had expressed interest in the scheme, involving more than 360 vacancies. The training bodies of the ERB were discussing details with the interested RCHEs. Recruitment was expected to take place from August this year.

6. The Chairman invited Members as well as the Elderly Services Association of Hong Kong and the Hong Kong Council of Social Service to help promote the Work Trial Scheme so as to facilitate better understanding of the scheme among the elderly care sector and help attract more people to join the sector.

Agenda item 3: Study of support for carers

(Information Paper No. EC/I/04/21)

7. The Chairman welcomed Prof CHONG Ming-lin, Alice, Senior Researcher, Research Unit of the LWB, Prof Hector TSANG, Chair Professor and Head of Department of

Rehabilitation Sciences of The Hong Kong Polytechnic University and Dr Angela LEUNG, Associate Professor, School of Nursing, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University and Deputy Director, World Health Organization Collaborating Centre for Community Health Services to the meeting. Prof CHONG and Prof TSANG briefed Members on the findings and initial recommendations of the Consultancy Study on Needs and Support Required of Carers of Elderly Persons and of Persons with Disabilities in Hong Kong with the aid of a PowerPoint presentation (See Annex 1).

8. The Chairman and Members welcomed the findings and initial recommendations of the Consultancy Study. After the briefing, they put forward the following views and questions:

- (a) given the diverse backgrounds and service needs of carers of elderly persons and carers of persons with disabilities, Members enquired whether separate analysis and comparison had been conducted for the two carer groups or combined analysis and recommendations were made instead in the Consultancy Study;
- (b) carers played a very significant role in taking care of elderly persons and persons with disabilities, but if all carers were to be supported by the Government, social resources would be strained. In the long run, the Government should, by making reference to more statistical information, estimate the growth in the number of carers according to the pace of population ageing with a view to examining the severity of the issue and identifying the most needy and high-risk carers who deserved priority assistance;
- (c) worn out by stress and long working hours, some working carers might have difficulties in balancing their employment and caregiving work. They may choose to quit their jobs and devote themselves to taking care of their family members who are elderly or persons with disabilities. This, however, would lead to higher expectation to be put on carers from their families and the community. Hence, support for carers should be strengthened;
- (d) currently, there were 19 Parents / Relatives Resource Centres across the territory, providing community support for parents and relatives/carers of persons with disabilities and facilitating experience-sharing and mutual support among those in need. As the major target groups were parents and relatives/carers of persons with disabilities, it was recommended that similar resources centres should be set up in all districts to serve family members and carers of elderly persons;
- (e) as revealed by the findings of the Consultancy Study, the utilisation rate of some services were low. This, coupled with the fact that it was difficult to identify

hidden carers, reflected the inadequacies of large-scale publicity and educational programmes. It was suggested that incentives should be provided to encourage service providers to proactively reach out to hidden cases so that carers would be aware of relevant support services available in the community and those in need could be directed to such services;

- (f) it was suggested that the Government should integrate the existing information dissemination channels, so as to facilitate carers to obtain the needed information and seek support in a timely manner. For example, an Internet platform consolidating online information or a 24-hour service hotline could be set up to inform carers of the number and availability of service places in various districts/service units. In addition, service hotline operators or social workers should possess the professional knowledge to provide appropriate advice to carers of elderly persons from different backgrounds;
- (g) carers might be reluctant to arrange care services for elderly persons for various reasons such as long travel distance and concern about their difficulty in adapting to unfamiliar environments at the service facilities. It was proposed that home support service be provided for elderly persons and carers, such as home visits to identify the actual needs of carers, so appropriate social services could be matched to them; and
- (h) Members were concerned with how the Government would provide financial assistance for carers. It was hoped that the consulting team would further explain its Consultancy Study findings to the Commission and listen to Members' views when making recommendations on financial assistance in the future.

9. In response to Members' views and questions, Prof CHONG, Prof TSANG and Dr LEUNG replied collectively as follows:

- (a) under the Consultancy Study, separate studies had been carried out on carers of elderly persons and carers of persons with disabilities with an overall analysis of both groups as a whole. The findings revealed that despite the differences in demographic characteristics and backgrounds, the support needed by both groups, such as emotional support and access to comprehensive information, were largely the same. Moreover, the Consultancy Study also found that in overseas countries such as Australia and Singapore, support services were not provided separately for carers of elderly persons and carers of persons with disabilities. In view of these, the recommendations put forward in the Consultancy Study had covered

both carer groups with a view to offering comprehensive support services to carers through multi-party collaboration;

- (b) the consulting team agreed that providing support services for all carers would place an immense burden on the Government and thus suggested that priority should be given to support high-risk carers; and
- (c) based on the feedback from respondents during group interviews, the consulting team opined that the low utilisation rate of certain support services (e.g. respite service) did not mean that there was no service demand, but rather that carers were unaware of the services in the community due to information gaps. Therefore, the consulting team suggested exploring how to raise awareness of carers and encourage them to use those services when necessary.

10. In conclusion, the Chairman remarked that the study on carers was complex in that it involved a range of issues which had to be resolved and addressed with innovative approaches and recommendations. The Chairman thanked the consulting team for its hard work, and hoped that the team would provide statistical information that could help understand the needs of carers of elderly persons and persons with disabilities and come up with feasible recommendations.

Agenda item 4: Progress report of the Elderly Services Programme Plan

(Information Paper No. EC/I/05/21)

11. Ms KWOK Wai-ling, Polly, Deputy Secretary for Labour and Welfare (Welfare) 2, briefed Members on the progress report of the follow-up work on the Elderly Services Programme Plan (ESPP).

12. Ms KWOK said that there were a total of 20 ESPP recommendations, involving 36 follow-up actions (see Annex 2), of which 21 had been completed/were on-going while the remaining 15 had commenced. One of the major tasks in the past year was the study of support for carers, which had been discussed under Agenda item 3 of this meeting. Having reviewed the functions and roles of district elderly community centres (DECCs) and neighbourhood elderly centres (NECs) with regard to the ESPP, the LWB and the SWD put forward seven initial recommendations as follows:

- (a) to lower the minimum age for DECC and NEC membership to 55, with members aged 60 or above remaining as the primary service recipients. It was suggested that DECCs and NECs should organise activities suitable for pre-retirees and promote “a self-programming group model”;

- (b) to revise the requirements on output standards specified in the Funding and Service Agreements by incorporating specific output indicators for elderly health activities (including those related to dementia) as healthy ageing hinges on physical and mental health;
- (c) to provide space for putting simple health check equipment at DECCs and NECs in order to promote self-health management;
- (d) to establish a collaborative mechanism among DECCs/NECs and District Health Centres (DHCs)/Elderly Health Centres, under which the former would refer vulnerable elderly persons with potential health issues to the latter for health assessment, preventive care and follow-up services. Elderly centres would continue to co-organise health talks with the visiting health teams of the Department of Health and progressively extend the co-operation to DHCs;
- (e) to increase the area of offices and activity rooms in DECCs and cease the provision of laundry facilities in newly built DECCs; and to increase the office areas in NECs;
- (f) to give NECs the flexibility to choose whether or not to provide meal services having regard to the size of their existing premises and the actual needs of their local communities, while meal services would be provided at DECCs; and
- (g) to encourage the organisation of activities which promote the wider use of digital technology and gerontechnology.

The above initial recommendations had been reported at the 17th meeting of the Working Group on ESPP. The SWD would consult relevant stakeholders on these recommendations in due course.

13. Furthermore, to improve the Standardised Care Need Assessment Mechanism for Elderly Services (SCNAMES), the SWD had commissioned the Sau Po Centre on Ageing of The University of Hong Kong to update the assessment tool based on the latest internationally recognised clinical assessment tools and make initial recommendations on the practical application. Since February 2019, the SWD and the consultant had started to gather views from different stakeholders through exchanges with non-governmental organisation operators, social worker organisations, accredited assessors, front-line social workers, elderly persons, carers and concern groups as well as organising sharing sessions. The SWD had submitted a progress report on the update of the SCNAMES to the Panel on Welfare Services of the

Legislative Council in July 2020. The new SCNAMES would be implemented in July this year.

14. The Government had since October 2019 provided an additional 2 000 service places under the Enhanced Home and Community Care Services (EHCCS) to provide services for frail elderly persons. Having taken into account the suggestions of the sector and reviewed the funding mode of the EHCCS, the Government had changed the contract-based funding mode to lump sum grant for EHCCS in September 2020, which tallied with the funding mode of the Integrated Home Care Services (Frail Cases) (IHCS(FC)). With regard to catchment areas, all cluster teams of the EHCCS had been converted to district teams accordingly to enhance service efficiency. Besides, a total of 3 000 additional service places had been provided in two phases under the IHCS(FC) in October 2020 and April 2021. Having reviewed the catchment areas and discussed with various operators and relevant stakeholders, the SWD had re-demarcated the catchment area of each IHCS(FC) Team to enhance service effectiveness. The new demarcation had come into effect in October 2020.

15. Having been briefed on the progress report on the follow-up work of the ESPP and the initial recommendations, the Chairman and Members did not raise any questions.

Agenda item 5: Progress reports by Working Groups and Committee

Working Group on Elderly Services Programme Plan

16. The Chairman said that the 17th meeting of the Working Group on Elderly Services Programme Plan had been held on 28 May 2021 to discuss, among others, the report on the review of the functions and roles of DECCs and NECs with regard to the ESPP.

Working Group on Ageing in Place

17. The Chairman said that the 6th meeting of the Working Group on Ageing in Place would be held on 14 July 2021 to discuss the Support for Carers Project and public education activities related to dementia.

Committee on Elder Academy Development Foundation

18. Mr CHONG Kwok-wing, Gordon, Secretary to the Commission, reported that the 8th meeting of the Committee on Elder Academy Development Foundation would be held on 30 June 2021 to discuss the long-term development and resource utilisation of the elder academies.

Agenda item 6: Any other business

19. The Chairman said that the vaccination rate of elderly persons under the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme was relatively low. He hoped that publicity efforts would help clear the misconceptions that elderly persons and their family members might have about the side effects of the vaccines so that the vaccination rate of elderly persons in both the community and RCHEs would increase. Dr Ha King-hang, Tony, Chief Manager (Primary and Community Services) of the Hospital Authority (HA) said that starting from 25 June 2021, the HA would provide assessment services for patients with regular follow-up consultations at general out-patient clinics to help those who intended to receive vaccination with the decision to get vaccinated.

20. The Chairman said that the six-year tenure of the seven Members below would expire and retire from the Commission in July 2021:

- Mr CHEUNG Leong
- Prof LEE Tze-fan, Diana, JP
- Mrs SO CHAN Wai-hang, Susan, BBS
- Dr TSE Man-wah, Doris
- Mr WONG Kit-loong
- Mr WONG Tai-lun, Kenneth
- Dr YEUNG Ka-ching

In addition, Dr PANG Fei-chau and Ms CHUNG Wai-yee, Diana had decided to leave the Commission upon expiry of their current tenure in July 2021 for personal reasons. Meanwhile, Ms CHANG King-yiu, Permanent Secretary for Labour and Welfare, would soon retire from the civil service. On behalf of the Commission, the Chairman extended heartfelt gratitude to all of them for their contribution.

Time of adjournment

21. The meeting was adjourned at 12 noon.

Date of next meeting

22. The next meeting was tentatively scheduled for 19 November 2021.