

(Translation)

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**Elderly Commission
Minutes of the 48th Meeting**

Room 2005, 20/F, Murray Building, Garden Road, Central

2:30 p.m., 13 December 2006 (Wednesday)

Present:

Chairman

Dr the Honourable LEONG Che-hung, GBS, JP

Vice-Chairman

Prof CHAN Cheung-ming, Alfred, BBS, JP

Members

Ms WONG Yiu-ming, Anita

Mr CHAN Iu-seng, Star, BBS

Dr LAM Ching-choi, JP

Prof Jean WOO

Mr CHAN Chi-yuk, Kenneth

Rev LAU Wai-ling, Dorothy, JP

Mr MA Chan-hang, Leo

Dr YAM Yin-chun, Loretta, BBS

Dr WONG Yee-him, John

Mr TANG Kwok-wai, Paul, JP Director of Social Welfare

Mr. LAU Kai-hung, JP Deputy Director of Housing

Dr CHAN Wai-man, JP Representative of Director of Health

In Attendance:

Ms YIP Man-kuen, Carol, JP	Deputy Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food	
Dr LAW Chi-kwong	Associate Professor, Department of Social Work and Social Administration, the University of Hong Kong	} In Attendance for Agenda Item 3
Dr KO Suk-fun, Lisanne	Research Officer, Department of Social Work and Social Administration, the University of Hong Kong	
Mr LEE Kar-mut, Carmel	Fieldwork Supervisor, Department of Social Work and Social Administration, the University of Hong Kong	
Mr FUNG Kin-yip, Eugene	Principal Assistant Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food	
Mrs Kathy NG	Assistant Director (Elderly), Social Welfare Department	
Mrs YUK KWOK Lai-sum, Kitty	Chief Social Work Officer, Social Welfare Department	
Mr LAM Ka-tai	Chief Social Work Officer, Social Welfare Department	
Mrs Senna SMITH	Executive Manager, Social Welfare Department	
Ms MAK Suk-kwan, Lorensa	Senior Social Work Officer, Social Welfare Department	
Mrs KWOK LI Mung-yeek, Helen	Senior Social Work Officer, Social Welfare Department	
Mr YAM Mun-ho	Senior Social Work Officer, Social Welfare Department	
Mr LAU Ka-wing, Eric	Assistant Social Work Officer, Social Welfare Department	
Dr THAM May-keed	Senior Medical and Health Officer, Department of Health	
Dr NG Ping-sum, Sammy	Senior Medical and Health Officer, Department of Health	

Ms LOW Looi-looi Senior Research Scientist,
Health, Welfare and Food Bureau

Miss CHAN Nga-sze, Joyce Assistant Secretary for
Health, Welfare and Food

Ms Rosaline WONG Chief Executive Officer,
Health, Welfare and Food Bureau

Ms POON Ming-soo, Bonita Executive Officer,
Health, Welfare and Food Bureau

Absent with Apologies:

Dr LUM Shun-sui, Susie

Mr CHAN Han-pan

Prof CHIU Fung-kum, Helen
Chief Executive of Hospital Authority
Secretary for Education and Manpower

Secretary

Mr CHEUNG Doi-ching Principal Assistant Secretary for
Health, Welfare and Food

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The Chairman, Dr the Honourable LEONG Che-hung, welcomed all to the meeting, in particular Dr. LAW Chi-kwong, Dr Lisanne KO and Mr Carmel LEE from the Department of Social Work and Social Administration of the University of Hong Kong (HKU) who attended the meeting for Agenda Item 3.

Agenda Item 1: Confirmation of the Minutes of the 47th Meeting

2. The minutes of the last meeting were endorsed without amendments.

Agenda Item 2: Matters Arising

3. There was no matter arising from the minutes of the 47th meeting.

Agenda Item 3: Evaluation Study on the Re-engineered NECs and DECCs

(Information Paper No. EC 03-06)

4. Dr. LAW Chi-kwong, Associate Professor of the Department of Social Work and Social Administration of the HKU, briefed Members on the evaluation study on the effectiveness and user satisfaction of the re-engineered Neighbourhood Elderly Centres (NECs) and the District Elderly Community Centres (DECCs) since April 2003, and the improvement recommendations.
5. Members put forth the following views/questions after the briefing by the consultant team (the team):

Membership of the Centres

- (1) What were the reasons for male members being outnumbered by their female counterparts in the centres? In the team's views, what should the centres do to attract more male elders to their activities? Would the physical size of the centres have a direct effect on the level of their participation?
- (2) Did the centres have the capacity to cater for the needs of more than 1 million elders aged between 60 and 100 in Hong Kong and did the team define who were the "target users" of the centres?

Roles of the Centres

- (3) Did the team make any recommendations regarding the main roles and functions of the DECCs and NECs?
- (4) The NECs had all along been providing only supportive counselling services and the scope of their service seemed different from that of the DECCs. Should the NECs train more social workers to provide more direct counselling service?

Others

- (5) What was carer support service by definition? Had the team carried out any research on the level of service demand for volunteer elderly-sitter service, a type of respite service for elders?
 - (6) Had the team conducted any study on how to deliver outreaching services to reach the frail or “hidden” elders?
 - (7) Had the team recommended the centres to forge closer collaboration with the management staff of housing estates under the Housing Department (HD) and to assist them in their “sweeping” operations conducted in the housing estates with a view to improving the success rate of reaching the singleton or hidden elders in need of help?
 - (8) What were the views of the centres-in-charge on the re-engineering exercise in general?
6. The team’s response to Members’ views/questions was as follows:

Members of the Centres

- (1) The team had not conducted any in-depth study on the phenomenon of male members being outnumbered by their female counterparts. However, the team would not rule out the possibility that an expansion to the physical size of the centres for holding activities or an increase in the number of rooms for counselling services might help attract more male members.
- (2) The team considered that grassroots elders were the “target users”, and the centres had the capacity to cater for their needs. From the welfare perspective, grassroots elders should benefit from the re-engineered service.

Roles of the Centres

- (3) The team was of the view that the roles of DECCs and NECs were not clearly defined in terms of the provision of counselling service for elders. The team considered that adequate number of rooms for counselling services and achievement of successful counselling cases were far more important to elders than training social workers for counselling work.

Others

- (4) The team had not carried out any study on the demand for or supply of the volunteer “elderly-sitter” service. The team considered that the policy consideration and discussion with the centres for such service could be left to the Social Welfare Department (SWD).

- (5) The team agreed that elders might stay away from strangers out of personal safety consideration and therefore it was difficult in general for the centres to reach the frail or “hidden” elders through outreaching services.
- (6) The team’s study did not cover issues related to improving HD’s estate management or forging closer collaboration with the HD.
- (7) The centres-in-charge generally considered that the re-engineering exercise had produced positive impact on service users.

7. Mrs Kathy NG from the SWD had the following response to the findings and recommendations of the study:

Physical size of the Centres

- (1) The Multi-service Centres (M/Es) and most of the Social Centres for the Elderly (S/Es) had been upgraded to DECCs and NECs respectively since 2003. Since then, the SWD had made continuous efforts urging and helping the centres to identify appropriate premises for expansion so as to meet the standard schedule of accommodation. Over the past few years, the SWD had strived to relocate the centres or increase the number of service bays. Up till now, about half of the DECCs and one-third of the NECs had been expanded in area. Nonetheless it was not easy to identify appropriate premises near the centres for expansion purpose. The SWD would continue to work closely with the Planning Department, the HD, non-government organisations (NGOs) and the District Officers with a view to acquiring more service bays for the centres to expand their services.

Members of the Centres

- (2) At present, Hong Kong had more than 1.1 million of elders aged over 60, and among them 170,000, or 17% to 18% of the elder population, were members of the centres.
- (3) The Government had been encouraging elders to join the centres as their members and participate in their activities on a voluntary basis. The SWD agreed to the findings of the team. They also agreed that in view of limited resources, the centres should accord priority to the grassroots elders when it came to the provision of services.
- (4) On the point of male members being outnumbered by their female counterparts, Members noted that the SWD consulted five relatively large NGOs in September 2006 on how to attract more male members and invited the NGOs to launch service programmes for that purpose. The SWD would consider arranging experience sharing sessions with the welfare sector upon completion of the service programmes.

Roles of the Centres

- (5) Regarding the roles or functions of the centres, Mrs Kathy NG remarked that in order to facilitate elders to age in the community the Government had already encouraged the centres to attach importance to the developmental and educational functions for the benefit of elders, on top of meeting their social and recreational needs. The SWD also allowed the centres flexibility in providing different activities in their respective districts to cater for the specific needs of the elderly residents. For instance, where social and recreational activities in a district had already been duly provided by the District Council or the Leisure and Cultural

Services Department, the centres should focus on activities with developmental and educational functions.

Training and Support

- (6) The SWD would take the recommendations of the team and work with the welfare sector to study the support and training services for the carers of elders living at home and the development of home-based volunteer “elderly-sitter” service, so that informal carers could obtain carer support service in the centres. As part of the study, the SWD would collaborate with the Elderly Commission (EC) to look into the provision of training for informal carers.
- (7) The SWD agreed and undertook to enhance the service of the Support Team for the Elderly.
- (8) In the coming year, the SWD would also strengthen the training for the staff of the centres in respect of district collaboration, carer support and counselling skills. Apart from NGOs, the SWD would also step up cooperation with the Elderly Health Service of the Department of Health (DH) and the Community Geriatric Assessment Team of the Hospital Authority (HA).

Way Forward

- (9) The SWD would discuss with the NGOs on the research findings and recommendations of the team, and would adopt a positive approach to implement the recommendations in phases subject to availability of resources.
8. Dr CHAN Wai-man of the DH added that since the establishment of its Elderly Health Service in 1998, the DH had been working closely with the DECCs in all districts to

organise various health education programmes for and disseminate health education messages to elders, including the vulnerable singleton elders. The DH would continue to collaborate with the welfare sector to promote the message of “prevention is better than cure” among elders. In parallel, the outreaching teams would also provide hospital-discharged elders and their families with information on elderly care skills.

[Dr. LAW Chi-kwong, Dr Lisanne KO and Mr Carmel LEE left the meeting at this juncture.]

Agenda Item 4: Drug Management in Residential Care Homes for the Elderly (RCHEs)

9. With the use of a powerpoint presentation, Dr CHAN Wai-man of the DH briefed Members on the work progress of the DH in the compilation of the drug management manual (manual) for the RCHEs and the content of the manual. Members noted that the DH had exchanged views and discussed with the SWD, the HA, pharmacist associations and frontline staff of RCHEs about the content and format of the manual. Relevant input had been incorporated into the manual to enrich its content. The pharmacist associations had undertaken to assist in the briefing for RCHE staff scheduled in early 2007 upon completion of the manual. They were also actively planning the Visiting Pharmacist Officer Scheme to provide further support to RCHEs.

10. Members thanked the DH for its efforts and had the following comments:

- (1) The SWD should lay down regulatory standards to facilitate compliance by the operators.
- (2) The manual would hopefully lead to a paradigm shift, by using user-friendly and practicable means to guide and help the RCHEs to enhance their drug management capacity.

- (3) Appreciated SWD for its practice : when an error in distributing drugs occurred, the SWD would not only issue a warning letter to the RCHE but also a letter to the staff member involved, alerting him/her that he/she was also responsible for the incident.
- (4) It was hoped that more efforts could be made to promote a culture of reporting drug incidents among the staff and encourage them to take the initiative to report any incident to their supervisors for prompt remedial actions. Supervisors should also foster a “no blame culture” by replacing punishment with advice and encouragement.

11. Dr CHAN added that the manual also advised the RCHEs to prepare a detailed report to record each drug incident for internal reference so that their staff could learn from mistakes and avoid a recurrence of similar incidents.

12. In response to Members’ comments, Mrs Kathy NG remarked that the inspectors of Health Inspectorate Team (post taken up by nurses) of the Licensing Office of Residential Care Homes for the Elderly would carry out surprise inspections to the RCHEs without giving them prior notification, so as to monitor if the RCHEs had complied with the drug management requirements stipulated in the Ordinance or Code of Practice for Residential Care Homes (Elderly Persons). When irregularities were identified, the SWD would issue a verbal and/or written warning to the RCHE concerned and prosecution would be considered for repeated violation. In general, the RCHEs would make rectification and take improvement measures upon receipt of a warning letter.

[EC Member Mr Leo MA and Ms Carol YIP, Deputy Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food, left the meeting at this juncture.]

**Agenda Item 5: Progress Reports of the Working Group on Long Term Care Model
and the Working Group on Active Ageing**

13. The Chairman invited Dr LAM Ching-choi, Chairman of the Working Group on Long Term Care Model and Prof Alfred CHAN, Chairman of the Working Group on Active Ageing, to brief Members on the work progress of the two Working Groups.

14. The Chairman agreed to Dr LAM Ching-choi's proposal that representatives from the Housing, Planning and Lands Bureau and the HD should be invited to the meetings in future to brief the EC on their housing and land supply policies and how such policies could match with the housing needs of elders. He also hoped that the HA would brief the EC on the discharge arrangements for elders in different clusters. For instance, it came to his knowledge that the Hong Kong East Cluster provided a hotline namely the "nursing call bell"(護訊鈴) to render nursing support and short-term assistance for hospital-discharged elders.

15. To promote active ageing, Professor Alfred CHAN said that the EC would launch a pilot school-based elder learning scheme (the pilot scheme) in early 2007. It was hoped that schools from the 18 districts in the territory would join the pilot scheme to save elders from cross district travel. Professor CHAN continued to brief Members on the details of the pilot scheme, which included, among others, the funding for the pilot scheme and the mode of learning. The Radio 5 of the RTHK and the DH were now preparing the lecture notes for the pilot scheme. Healthy diet and self-care would form the compulsory subjects and each course would have a total of 10 to 13 sessions. The Chairman expressed his support for the scheme and reminded the Working Group on Active Ageing that the school selection process should be fair and open.

Agenda Item 6: Any Other Business

16. Apart from the presentation of awards to informal carers scheduled to be held next year, the Chairman invited Professor CHAN to study the provision of training for informal carers. Their skills should be recognised and that opportunities should be given for them to take up other jobs or to provide an articulation path for them.

Date of Next Meeting

17. The next EC meeting would be held on 2 March 2007 (Friday).

Time of Adjournment

18. The meeting was adjourned at 5:15 p.m.

18 January 2007