

(Translation)  
**Elderly Commission**  
**Minutes of the 109th Meeting**

Conference Room 3, G/F, Central Government Offices,  
2 Tim Mei Avenue, Tamar, Hong Kong  
11 a.m., 7 December 2022 (Wednesday)

**Present:**

**Chairman**

Dr LI Kwok-tung, Donald, SBS, JP

**Members**

Dr BAI Xue

Dr CHAN Chi-kau, Johnnie Casire, SBS, JP

Ms CHAN Mei-kit, Maggie, MH

Ms CHAN Yee-ching, Tammy

Mr CHUA Hoi-wai, JP

Dr HUI Elsie

Prof LAI Wing-leung, Daniel

Prof LAM Chiu-wa, Linda

Mr LAU Tat-chuen

Ms LI Fai, Grace, MH

Mr LIT Hoo-yin, Horace

Dr LUK Ka-hay, James

Mr MA Heng, Theodore

Mr SIU King-wai, Kyrus

Ms WONG Chor-kei, Macy, MH

Ms YU Chui-yee, BBS, MH

Ms LAU Yim, Alice, JP

Miss LEE Pui-sze, Charmaine, JP

Mr FUNG Pan-chung, Chris

Dr LAM Chau-kuen, Yonnie

Mrs TANG FUNG Shuk-yin

Dr HA King-hang, Tony

Permanent Secretary for Labour and Welfare

Director of Social Welfare

Principal Assistant Secretary for Health 3

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	Deputy Secretary for Labour and Welfare (Welfare) 2
Miss WONG Sau-wai, Vega, JP	Commissioner for Rehabilitation
Mr LEE Lik-kong, Eddie	Deputy Secretary for Health 2
Ms LAW Lai-tan, Linda	Principal Assistant Secretary for Labour and Welfare (Welfare) 3
Mr TAN Tick-ye	Assistant Director of Social Welfare (Elderly)
Mr LAU Shun-tak	Executive Officer (Welfare) 4, Labour and Welfare Bureau

**Secretariat**

Ms LEE Ngan-chau, Martina	Chief Executive Manager, Labour and Welfare Bureau
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Dr LI Kwok-tung, Donald, the Chairman, welcomed all Members to the meeting.

2. The Chairman reminded Members to declare potential conflict between their interests and matters under discussion if any.

**Agenda item 1: Confirmation of the minutes of the 108th meeting**

3. Members did not propose any amendments to the Chinese and English versions of the draft minutes of the 108th meeting issued by the Secretariat on 1 November 2022. The minutes were confirmed.

**Agenda item 2: Matters arising**

4. There were no matters arising from the 108th meeting.

**Agenda item 3: Briefing on relevant initiatives in the Chief Executive's 2022 Policy Address**

(Legislative Council Panel on Welfare Services Discussion Paper: The Chief Executive's 2022 Policy Address - Policy Initiatives of the Labour and Welfare Bureau)

5. With the aid of a PowerPoint presentation, Ms KWOK Wai-ling, Polly, Deputy Secretary for Labour and Welfare (Welfare) 2, briefed Members on policy initiatives of the Labour and Welfare Bureau (LWB) announced in the Chief Executive (CE)'s 2022 Policy Address (PA).

6. After the briefing, the Chairman and Members raised the following views and questions:

- (a) the PA announced that more than 1 700 additional students would be subsidised to enrol in Enrolled Nurse (General) training programmes, and the skill and qualification requirements of residential care home for the elderly (RCHE) and residential care home for persons with disabilities (RCHD) staff would be reviewed to establish professional standards and a career progression path. These initiatives were welcomed. As training takes time, the Government was suggested to consider providing half-year theoretical and clinical training for registered care workers of private residential care homes (RCHs) for them to become enrolled nurses upon completion of training, in order to resolve manpower shortage within a short time;
- (b) the time-limited relaxation of certain requirements under the Supplementary Labour Scheme for RCHEs and RCHDs to import care workers by LWB was appreciated. Currently, the care workers were gradually reporting for duty at their respective RCHEs and RCHDs;
- (c) whether the new services (such as retirement planning and promotion of gerontechnology) would only be provided at the 16 new Neighbourhood Elderly Centres (NECs) and whether individual centres had the discretion to introduce new services;
- (d) it was hoped that the Government could expedite the implementation of the Special Scheme on Privately Owned Sites for Welfare Uses ("the Special Scheme") for increasing the number of subsidised RCHs; and
- (e) whether the Government would consider introducing new performance indicators, such as that on the waiting time for residential care service places within five years.

7. The Chairman indicated that providing care workers with a career progression path was important for encouraging more people to join the healthcare sector. He believed that the Government would actively consider the suggestion on training registered care workers of private RCHs to become enrolled nurses.

8. In response to Members' views and questions, Ms LAU Yim, Alice, Permanent Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Ms Polly KWOK, Deputy Secretary for Labour and Welfare (Welfare) 2 and Mr TAN Tick-ye, Assistant Director of Social Welfare (Elderly) gave consolidated replies as follows:

- (a) all District Elderly Community Centres and NECs across the city, instead of only those 16 new NECs, would expand their services to cover areas such as retirement planning and promotion of gerontechnology;
- (b) concerted efforts of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) were crucial to the implementation of the Special Scheme. Not only would the Social Welfare Department (SWD) co-ordinate within the Government, the Department would also step up efforts to maintain close communication with the management of NGOs for their timely deployment of necessary manpower, so that the Special Scheme would be implemented in a smooth and effective manner; and
- (c) not all indicators stated in the PA were performance-based, and some were input-based and output-based. The indicator for the provision of additional RCH places was output based. The Government would prioritise on catching up progress and work to encourage the participation of the private sector in development. With the consolidated efforts of various parties, the floor area dedicated for social welfare use might be increased, thereby creating favourable conditions for setting performance indicators in the future.

9. With the aid of a PowerPoint presentation, Mr LEE Lik-kong, Eddie, Deputy Secretary for Health 2, briefed Members on policy initiatives of the Health Bureau (HHB) in the CE's 2022 PA.

10. After the briefing, the Chairman and Members raised the following views and questions:

- (a) on the development of Chinese medicine (CM), it was hoped that the HHB would not only focus on therapeutic efficacy alone, but also explore ways to build up a multi-disciplinary primary healthcare team in the community in collaboration with the CM sector, with a view to providing the elderly with mental healthcare and psychological therapy in addition to CM treatment of illnesses;
- (b) regarding the mental health support hotline, while it would be a good approach to provide emotional support for ethnic minorities on a trial basis, it was suggested that the HHB should explore ways to assist ethnic minority elderly persons with formal mental health support so that their needs for social services or mental healthcare could be

attended to;

- (c) telehealth services, which reduced the waiting time for medical consultations in public hospitals and avoid cross-district consultations by elderly persons, had been well received by healthcare workers and the RCHE sector. However, some RCHEs did not have the equipment required for the services. It was considered necessary to review their equipment for enabling the use of telehealth services, so as to reduce unnecessary hospitalisation of RCHE residents, thereby relieving the burden on public hospitals. In addition, it was suggested that training be provided for healthcare staff at RCHEs so that they could coach elderly residents on the use of telehealth services;
- (d) it was hoped that the HHB could select proposals with brighter ideas under the Mental Health Initiatives Funding Scheme (“the Funding Scheme”) for discussion and sharing;
- (e) it was considered that primary healthcare played an important role in mental health support and that District Health Centres (DHCs) could perform functions in “early identification” and “reducing stigmatisation” at the district level. Furthermore, Our Hong Kong Foundation would soon release a research report on the mental health of Hong Kong citizens, in which the importance of primary healthcare in mental health support was outlined; **【Post-meeting note: The research report entitled “Towards a Fit-for-Purpose Mental Health System” was circulated to Members by email on 13 December 2022.】**
- (f) it was high time for the Government to review the dental care services as public dental services were considered inadequate. It was hoped that the relevant working group would devote more efforts to oral health education. It was suggested that an oral health indicator be introduced and that oral health education be strengthened. A Member opined that in addition to dentistry experts, school principals and other persons from the education sector should also participate in the working group, so as to enhance the knowledge on oral care in the education sector and instil the importance of maintaining oral health among students; and
- (g) data on the coverage of outreach services provided by the Community Geriatric Assessment Teams (CGATs) to RCHEs, and the underlying reasons for the generally unsuccessful application for such services by new RCHEs in recent years.

11. In response to Members' views and questions, Mr Eddie LEE, Deputy Secretary for Health 2, and Dr HA King-hang, Tony, Chief Manager (Primary and Community Services), Hospital Authority (HA) gave consolidated replies as follows:

- (a) the HHB had been maintaining close liaison with the CM sector to promote the multi-faceted development of CM with concerted efforts, including further enhancing the professional training and development of CM practitioners and CM drug personnel, and exploring ways to strengthen the role of CM in the primary healthcare as well as the overall healthcare system. With the commissioning of the first CM Hospital in Hong Kong in 2025, the HHB considered it timely to explore the collaboration between CM practitioners and other healthcare professions in the clinical setting of hospitals;
- (b) regarding the Funding Scheme, the HHB intended to select proposals with brighter ideas and examine their effectiveness before exploring subsequent arrangements. The HHB also planned to discuss with the Advisory Committee on Mental Health regarding some of these proposals and share the discussion results with the Elderly Commission (EC) in due course;
- (c) the DHCs, which commenced operation not long ago, still needed time to customise their functions. By enhancing medical-social collaboration, they would play a more holistic role in promoting mental health, CM development, chronic disease management and even tobacco control;
- (d) it was agreed that both dental care and oral health education were vital to the prevention of dental diseases. The working group would review the existing dental care services and examine matters including enhancement of the service scope and mode. The working group would discuss various proposals on strengthening pre-school oral health education and promoting oral health care among secondary students. Also, it would review the level of essential primary dental care services required by citizens at different life stages, with a view to examining the Government's role in public dental services and providing advice and recommendations to the Government on the future development of dental care services in Hong Kong; and
- (e) CGATs were currently providing outreach services to about 90% of RCHEs. As a number of larger RCHEs commenced operation in recent years, the HA needed time to recruit additional manpower for providing outreach services for these new homes. The HA was also strengthening its support for RCHEs through different service modes, such as telehealth services and collaboration with different community service units.

#### **Agenda item 4: Enhancing Support for Carers of Elderly Persons and of Persons with Disabilities**

12. With the aid of a PowerPoint presentation, Miss WONG Sau-wai, Vega, Commissioner for Rehabilitation, briefed Members on the new measures to enhance support for carers of elderly persons and of persons with disabilities.

13. After the briefing, the Chairman and Members raised the following views and questions:

- (a) the Government's implementation of recommendations on enhancing support for carers of elderly persons and of persons with disabilities proposed in the Consultancy Study was welcomed;
- (b) with regard to the regularisation of the financial assistance schemes under the Community Care Fund (CCF) in future, whether the Government would consider relaxing the eligibility criteria under the Pilot Scheme on Living Allowance for Carers of Elderly Persons from Low-income Families, so that carers of elderly persons who were not wait-listed for long-term care services could be eligible to apply for allowance under the Scheme as well;
- (c) in respect of setting up a designated carer hotline, it was considered that some enquiries made or assistance sought through the hotline might require intervention or referral by district organisations. Therefore, it was necessary to explore ways to establish a stronger community support network to enable more effective responses and follow-up actions by district service organisations on carers' cases;
- (d) launching a city-wide publicity campaign was supported as it could further raise public awareness of the important role of carers and help explore ways to enhance the provision of necessary professional services to carers;
- (e) the situation of the Integrated Home Care Services (IHCS), which was considered essential for rendering assistance to both carers and elderly persons;
- (f) it was suggested that the HA should help identify needy carers upon discharge of patients from hospitals; and

- (g) whether a discussion forum could be set up at the one-stop information gateway, and whether publicity of the designated carer hotline could be stepped up to improve high-risk carers' awareness of the hotline.

14. In response to Members' views and questions, Miss Vega WONG, Commissioner for Rehabilitation, and Mr TAN Tick-ye, Assistant Director of Social Welfare (Elderly), gave consolidated replies as follows:

- (a) the regularisation of financial assistance schemes under the CCF involved the use of public money and should be prudently considered. Since the existing eligibility criteria for long-term care services had been effectively adopted and the amount of allowance would be increased, it was necessary to cautiously assess the number of cases received and the implementation of the schemes. At present, there were no plans to relax the eligibility criteria. Currently, the SWD was also providing other financial assistance to care recipients;
- (b) recognising the importance of co-ordination between the designated hotline for carers and District Service Units (DSUs), the liaison between hotline staff and DSUs would be enhanced to facilitate case referral;
- (c) in addition to promoting peer support, the Government would also step up publicity to help carers understand how to seek support and professional assistance;
- (d) recognising the importance of the IHCS in providing support for elderly persons, the Government would regularise the Pilot Scheme on Home Care and Support Services for Elderly Persons with Mild Impairment in January 2023, under which service places of about 4 000 would be provided to help relieve the burden on carers;
- (e) the existing Integrated Discharge Support Programme for Elderly Patients provided support for elderly persons discharged from public hospitals after treatment. The LWB and the HA would examine the suggestion on identifying needy carers;
- (f) the SWD would examine the feasibility of setting up a discussion forum at the one-stop information gateway and its operation mode, including the approach of handling discussions and help-seeking requests; and
- (g) recognising the importance of stepping up publicity on the designated hotline for carers, it was planned that the hotline would be included in relevant large-scale publicity events



in 2023 to highlight the needs of carers.

### **Agenda item 5: Progress reports by Working Groups and Committee**

#### **Working Group on Elderly Services Programme Plan and Working Group on Ageing in Place**

15. Ms LEE Ngan-chau, Martina of the EC Secretariat reported that the joint meeting of the Working Group on Elderly Services Programme Plan and the Working Group on Ageing in Place was held on 27 September 2022, during which Members were briefed by the Community Investment and Inclusion Fund (CIIF) Secretariat and the Hong Kong Council of Social Service on the Supporting the Elderly to Age in Place Project under the CIIF and the Gerontechnology Platform respectively.

#### **Committee on Elder Academy Development Foundation**

16. Ms LEE said that the last meeting of the Committee on Elder Academy Development Foundation (EADF) was held on 27 October 2022 to discuss the work progress of its three sub-committees (namely the Vetting Sub-committee, the Investment Sub-committee and the Sub-committee on Publicity and Development) and the arrangements of fund deployment under the EADF. As the financial situation of the EADF was relatively stringent, it was proposed that funding injection from the Government be sought and donations from outside parties be solicited.

17. The second round of funding applications to the EADF in 2022 was closed on 31 October 2022. The Vetting Sub-committee would meet in late December 2022 to assess the applications. 【Post-meeting note: The meeting of the Vetting Sub-committee was held on 23 December 2022.】

### **Agenda item 6: Any other business**

18. There was no other business for discussion at the meeting.

#### **Time of adjournment**

19. The meeting was adjourned at 12:30 p.m.

#### **Date of next meeting**

20. The next meeting was tentatively scheduled for 24 March 2023. The Secretariat would advise Members of the meeting details in due course.

January 2023