

**Notes of the
Social Welfare Advisory Committee (SWAC) Meeting
held on 25 September 2024 at 10:00 a.m.
in Conference Room 6, G/F, Central Government Offices**

Present

Mr Lester Garson HUANG (Chairman)
Prof BAI Xue
Dr CHEUNG Sze-wing
Ms Alice LAU Oi-sze
Dr Wingco LO Kam-wing
Prof Petrus NG Yat-nam
Ms Rebecca TSAI Ching-yu
Mr John WONG Chung
Mr Barry WONG Man-sing

In Attendance

Labour and Welfare Bureau (LWB)

Mr Chris SUN Secretary for Labour and Welfare
(For discussion of item 1
only)

Ms Alice LAU Permanent Secretary for Labour and Welfare

Mr David LEUNG Deputy Secretary for Labour and Welfare
(Welfare) 1

Mr CHONG Wing-wun Deputy Secretary for Labour and Welfare
(For discussion of item 1 (Welfare) 2
only)

Mr Fletch CHAN Commissioner for Rehabilitation
(For discussion of item 1
only)

Mr Tony YIP	Principal Assistant Secretary for Labour and Welfare (Welfare) 1
Mr Anson WAN	Assistant Secretary for Labour and Welfare (Welfare) 1A (Secretary to SWAC)
Mr Adams WONG	Executive Officer (Welfare) 1A
Miss Sharon LAM	Executive Officer (Welfare) 1B

Social Welfare Department (SWD)

Miss Charmaine LEE	Director of Social Welfare
Miss CHAN Lai-chu (For discussion of item 2 only)	Assistant Director of Social Welfare (Youth & Corrections)

Absent with apologies

Mr Andy HO Wing-cheong
 Mr Frederick LAI Wing-hoi
 Dr LAM James Joseph
 Ms Anthea LEE Shuk-wai
 Mr Francis NGAI Wah-sing
 Dr PAN Pey-chyou
 Dr Ricky SZETO Wing-fu
 Dr Rizwan ULLAH
 Ms Eva WONG Ching-hung
 Prof Frances WONG Kam-yuet
 Ms Wendy YUEN Miu-ling

**Item 1: 2025-26 Welfare Services Suggestions
(SWAC Paper No. 05/2024)**

2. On Chairman's invitation, Members offered the following views and suggestions -

(a) Elderly Services

- i. With regard to the policy objective of promoting “ageing in place”, the Government should provide more support on after-death arrangements for elderly persons passing away at home, taking into account the potential depreciation of property prices as a result of the elderly persons’ death.
- ii. Noting that many elderly persons wish to age in the community, the Government should incorporate age-friendly designs in public spaces and facilities, with a view to encouraging elderly persons to actively participate in economic and social activities in an environment that is familiar to them. An example was to increase the number of both upward-moving and downward-moving escalator systems.
- iii. The Government should promote inter-departmental efforts to facilitate the building of an age-friendly community, such as increasing the collaboration with the District Services & Community Care Teams under the Home Affairs Department to strengthen identification of elderly needs in the community and provide better support in terms of welfare services.
- iv. A member noted that the cost of purchasing pills, especially the targeted therapy drugs, was a lot lower in the Mainland as compared with Hong Kong. The Government should consider how to leverage on the price differential of medicine to promote cross-boundary residential elderly care service and ageing in the Mainland.
- v. While encouraging more elderly persons in Hong Kong to reside in the Mainland, the Government should strengthen facilitation measures to their family members for fostering their understanding of the living conditions of the elderly persons in the Mainland and offering long-distance support.
- vi. To better support the needs of elderly who resided in the residential care home for the elderly and at the community, the Government might apply new technologies to provide elderly care services while promoting “ageing in place”.

- vii. To further develop the “silver economy”, the Government should collaborate with the business sector and develop the elderly care industry, so as to offer a range of elderly-related products and services that could cater for the diverse needs of the elderly population.
- viii. The Government should consider ways to promote the culture of later-life planning and integrate it under the service scope of District Elderly Care Centres and Neighbourhood Elderly Centres, with a view to fostering a proactive and preventive elderly care model.
- ix. Members supported the enhancement of elderly services to promote integration of elders with the society, and suggested that the Government should review elderly service areas from time to time to address the special care needs of the elderly.
- x. Members recommended that more targeted services should be provided to elderly persons of different age groups and health conditions so as to better cater for their distinctive service needs. Carer support should also be strengthened in view of the higher occurrence of “young-olds” taking care of “old-olds”.
- xi. With a view to building a better support network in the neighbourhood, the Government should introduce a “good neighbour scheme” to encourage the public to show care to elderly persons living around them.
- xii. In view of the trend that demented elderly persons were getting younger in recent years, the Government should provide more professional training to frontline staff and organisations to enhance the care services for demented elderly persons.

(b) Rehabilitation Services

- i. The Government should strengthen coordination among departments and include mental healthcare services in the District Health Centres to better support both persons rehabilitated from mental illness and their caregivers.

- ii. In relation to the suggestion of introducing an education voucher assessment system for students with special education needs (SEN), the Government should consider using the vouchers to support SEN students to participate in rehabilitation classes and group trainings organised by non-governmental organisations (NGOs), given the high costs of these activities.
- iii. Apart from increasing wheelchair spaces in bus compartments, the Government should liaise with public bus companies to increase the number of seats and barrier-free facilities at bus stops to provide greater convenience to elderly and persons with disabilities.
- iv. In relation to the manpower planning of mental health rehabilitation services, the Government should consider introducing psychological counsellors to assist in performing psychiatric assessments and psychological counselling services for the prevention and treatment of mental health illnesses, as well as to relieve the work pressure of social workers and psychologists.
- v. With regard to the suggestion of introducing youth mental health vouchers to young people aged between 18 and 29, the Government should consider extending the services to cover those aged under 18.
- vi. The Government should review the waiting time for child assessment services such that SEN assessment could be conducted as early as possible to provide timely intervention and support to SEN students.

(c) Youth Services

- i. It was observed that there might be a mismatch of resources and over-supply of services at Children and Youth Centres and Integrated Children and Youth Services Centres. The Government should consider how to better coordinate resources for children and youth, so as to meet the needs of families with children in different age groups.
- ii. Noting that both the younger generation and the elder population were willing to communicate and interact with

each other, the Government should set up intergenerational services centres to encourage cross-generational integration.

- iii. In view that schizophrenia typically emerged in adolescence, the Government should conduct timely mental health assessment on adolescents and appropriate intervention.

(d) Others

- i. Noting the wide array of initiatives and suggestions to different services users, the Government should consider integrating similar welfare services such that resources could be redeployed to service areas that match the needs of the community.

3. The Chairman appreciated the Government for implementing a series of welfare-related measures and initiatives in addressing various needs of the community. He also thanked Members for their views and invited the Government to consider Members' comments.

**Item 2: Enhanced Measures of Child Development Fund Programme
(SWAC Paper No. 06/2024)**

4. At the Chairman's invitation, the Government briefed Members on the implementation of enhanced measures of the Child Development Fund (CDF) Programme after completion of an overall review in 2024. The Chairman then invited Members to offer comments.

5. Members generally welcomed the Government to implement enhanced measures of CDF programme. They raised the following questions/suggestions –

(a) Target Participants

- i. To allow more flexibility to the operators in planning and implementing the projects, members welcomed the new measure to lower the minimum number of participants to 25 and cap the maximum number of participants at 100 for all projects with a 15% buffer for upward adjustment.

- ii. A member enquired whether academic results would be part of the eligibility criteria for joining the CDF programme.
- iii. Acknowledging the effectiveness of the CDF programme, the Government should consider lowering the threshold of the target participants such that more underprivileged children could benefit from the programme.

(b) Mentorship

- i. Noting that students attached greater importance to career planning and development nowadays, the career plans of mentees and the occupation of mentors should be taken into account in the matching of mentors and mentees.
- ii. Given the importance of mentors towards the successful implementation of the CDF programme, members generally supported that training programmes for mentors and core activities should be organised in the first year of the project so that they could better understand and fulfil their roles in supporting the mentees to implement their personal development plans. The Government might also consider building a network among them.

(c) Project Components

- i. Members welcomed the decision to extend the existing “one-plus-one-approach” from NGO-led projects to all CDF projects under which all operators could apply for either a single three-year project or two consecutive three-year projects.
- ii. Considering that the target participants of programme would all be primary students after the review, the Government should adjust the programme content accordingly to fit their needs at this stage, with more focus on value education, personality development, character building and interpersonal skills.
- iii. The Government should consider evaluating the improvements shown by those participants who had joined the workforce in areas such as career choice, financial management, etc., so as to understand better the impacts of the CDF programme on the personal growth and

development of participants.

- iv. The current requirement of targeted savings was maintained at up to \$4,800 with equal matching contributions from CDF and the donors. Since it might be difficult for donors to make the contribution given the economic downturn in recent years, the Government should consider lowering donors' percentage of matching contribution so as to achieve the targeted savings more easily.
- v. A member enquired whether the training for mentors consisted of a series of courses or simply one to two training activities such as talks and seminars.
- vi. The Government might consider incorporating financial literacy education as part of the programme content to cultivate the knowledge on financial planning and management skills of the participants. The Investor and Financial Education Council would be a suitable partner in this regard.

(d) Others

- i. CDF could serve as a means to help parents acquire the skills they need to build good parent-child relationships and develop their children's personal values.
- ii. The Government should stress the essence of innovation to both participants and their parents, and encourage the younger generation to explore possibilities of career aspirations in new industries other than conventional professions.
- iii. The Government should organise exchange sessions among operators of the CDF programme on a regular basis to facilitate experience sharing and further enhancement of the programme content.

6. The Government Representatives thanked Members' views and suggestions, and made the following responses –

- i. The Government had already conducted three evaluation studies in the past on the CDF programme since its

implementation to assess the effectiveness of the CDF projects. All these studies showed that CDF programme had positive impacts on participants. The current review focused on enhancing the operation of the programme and ensuring better interface with another newly introduced programme. The Government would keep in view its implementation and watch out for opportunities for further improvement.

- ii. The Government would consider the possibility of the suggestion to adjust the matching contribution ratio of donors from the business sector. Meanwhile, Strategic Partners of the programme might help CDF operators in securing the required funding.
- iii. As the CDF programme was targeted at children from disadvantaged backgrounds, the target participants need to meet the relevant means tests for enrollment in the programme.
- iv. In response to a member's enquiry, the Government Representative explained that academic results would not affect the eligibility of children participants of the programme. The Government encouraged and supported underprivileged children to broaden their horizons and explore new possibilities in their surroundings regardless of their academic results.
- v. The recruitment of mentors and their pairing up with mentees were arranged by individual operators of the CDF projects. To ensure an effective matching, operators would generally conduct matching based on mentees' interested areas and career aspirations.
- vi. Acknowledging the different needs of participants at various stages of education, the Government would review and adjust the content of the programme as necessary to put more emphases on positive personal values and interpersonal skills regarding primary students.
- vii. There were two types of trainings for mentors: (i) training by SWD to CDF operators to assist them to train their mentors and (ii) training by CDF operators to mentors to

guide them on how to assist their mentees. The needs of specific groups of mentors and mentees were taken into consideration in the design of these thematic trainings.

- viii. With regard to a member's suggestion to conduct sharing sessions among CDF operators from time to time, the Government Representative agreed that sharing sessions could help CDF operators exchange views and knowledge for enhancing the operations of the programme, and hence would consider following up on this.

7. The Government Representative thanked Members for their suggestions on the implementation of the CDF programme, and advised that –

- i. Since the operation of the programme in 2008, CDF had undergone a few rounds of transformation to provide more effective support to underprivileged children. One of the key changes of the current review was to reposition the CDF programme by changing the target beneficiaries from students of Primary 4 to Secondary 4 to students of Primary 3 to 6, so as to create better synergy with the Strive and Rise Programme which targets students of Secondary 1 to 4. Together, the two programmes provide students of the two age segments with support that meet their needs at different developmental stages.
- ii. The Government acknowledged that both schools and parents were important partners of the Government in supporting children's development and growth, and hence there was a need to promote positive parenting. Apart from that, mentors under the CDF programme could also help fill in the gaps in children's development and widen their exposure in society, especially from the career perspective.
- iii. Noting that the current career development of the younger generation was more inclined towards the traditional professions, the Government would consider recruiting mentors from a wider range of professions for the Strive and Rise Programme to inculcate an innovative mindset in the younger generation and pave the way for incubation of talents in new industries.

8. The Chairman thanked Members for their suggestions and views. He invited the Government to take note of Members' comments throughout the implementation of the programme.

SWAC Secretariat
October 2024