

(Translation)

Elderly Commission
Minutes of the 115th Meeting

Date: 9 July 2024 (Tuesday)

Time: 11:00 a.m.

Venue: Conference Room 6, G/F, Central Government Offices,
2 Tim Mei Avenue, Tamar, Hong Kong,

Present:

Chairman

Dr LI Kwok-tung, Donald, GBS, JP

Members

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

Ms CHAN Man-yee, Grace

Ms IP Shun-hing, BBS, MH, JP

Prof LAI Wing-leung, Daniel

Prof LAM Chiu-wa, Linda

Mr LAU Tat-chuen

Mr LIT Hoo-yin, Horace

Dr LUK Ka-hay, James

Mr SU Yau-on, Albert, MH, JP

Ms WONG Chor-kei, Macy, MH

Ms LAU Yim, Alice, JP

Permanent Secretary for Labour and
Welfare

Ms LEE Pui-sze, Charmaine, JP

Director of Social Welfare

Dr SO Hon-ching, Frankie

Consultant (Oral Health Care), Health
Bureau

Dr HO Lei-ming, Raymond

Assistant Director of Health (Elderly
Health)

Ms AU Mo-ching, Katherine

Chief Manager/Management (Support
Services Section 2), Housing Department

Dr CHING Wai-kuen

Director (Strategy and Planning),
Hospital Authority

In attendance:

Mr CHONG Wing-wun	Deputy Secretary for Labour and Welfare (Welfare) 2
Ms YAN Lai-ming, Jenny	Assistant Director of Social Welfare (Elderly)
Ms LAI Wai-ye, Renie	Assistant Secretary for Labour and Welfare (Welfare) 3A
Mr Tommy FONG	Project Manager, Hong Kong Dental Association
Ms HO Koon-ling, Rosanna	Chief Executive Officer (Welfare) 4, Labour and Welfare Bureau
Mr LAU Shun-tak	Executive Officer (Welfare) 4, Labour and Welfare Bureau

Absent with apologies

Prof BAI Xue
Dr LEE Shun-wah, Jenny
Mr MA Heng, Theodore
Ms MAN Wei-yin, Queenie
Mr SIU King-wai, Kyrus
Ms YU Chui-ye, BBS, MH

Secretary

Ms CHAN Ah-wing, Ivy	Principal Assistant Secretary for Labour and Welfare (Welfare) 4
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Dr LI Kwok-tung, Donald, the Chairman, welcomed all Members to the meeting, in particular Dr SO Hon-ching, Frankie, Consultant (Oral Health Care), Health Bureau (HHB), who was attending for the first time.

2. The Chairman reminded Members that they must declare potential conflicts, if any, between their interests and matters under discussion.

Agenda item 1: Confirmation of the Minutes of the 114th Meeting

3. Members did not propose any amendments to the Chinese and English versions of the draft minutes issued by the Secretariat on 28 May 2024. The minutes were confirmed.

Agenda item 2: Matters arising

4. There were no matters arising from the 114th meeting.

Agenda item 3: Community Care Fund Elderly Dental Assistance Programme

5. Dr SO Hon Ching, Frankie, briefed Members on the details of the enhancement measures of the Community Care Fund Elderly Dental Assistance Programme (the Programme) launched on 2 July this year.

6. After the briefing, the Chairman and Members expressed views and raised questions as follows:

- (a) the enhancement measures of the Programme were welcomed as they would benefit more elderly persons. It was hoped that the measures could also cover the dental care needs of the elderly persons with dementia;
- (b) it was enquired that apart from promoting dental disease prevention among the old and the young, whether there were any strategies in place on promoting the importance of dental health to the middle-aged working people;
- (c) it was noted that the Programme targeted, among other groups, elderly persons who had not benefitted from the Outreach Dental Care Programme for the Elderly (ODCP) under the Department of Health (DH). Due to site and facility constraints in residential care homes (RCHs), the ODCP would only provide basic dental check-ups for the elderly RCH residents through its general outreach services but not more complicated dental procedures (e.g. denture fitting that should be carried out in dental clinics). Therefore,

there were concerns that the Programme could not adequately cover all elderly persons in need;

- (d) it was suggested that publicity should be enhanced in order to raise the elderly's awareness of the Programme and encourage their participation. Moreover, consideration could be given to the promotion of dental care services at District Health Centres (DHCs) in 18 districts; and
- (e) it was enquired about how the upcoming Primary Dental Co-care Pilot Scheme for Adolescents (Pilot Scheme) differed from the existing School Dental Care Service (SDCS) in terms of services covered, and whether dentists in the private sector had to pre-register with the Pilot Scheme.

7. In response to Members' views and questions, Dr SO Hon-ching, Frankie gave a consolidated reply as follows:

- (a) the interim report released by the Working Group on Oral Health and Dental Care (Working Group) last year recommended that future dental services should aim to enhance the overall level of citizens' oral health through retention of natural teeth. The interim report also proposed strategies for the development of primary dental care services suitable for different age groups and the provision of appropriate targeted dental services to three underprivileged groups, namely persons with financial difficulties, persons with disabilities or special needs, and high risk groups (including persons with dementia). In addition, a pilot scheme was developed by a non-governmental organisation (NGO) with the support of the Hong Kong Jockey Club for offering dental services to elderly persons with initial-stage dementia to facilitate early prevention measures;
- (b) NGOs currently providing services under the ODCP of the DH would regularly assess the oral health condition of elderly RCH residents and arrange escort services for them to receive more complicated care procedures at dental clinics, such as denture fitting, according to their actual needs. Due to the generally poorer physical condition of elderly RCH residents, the provision of dental services should take into consideration their needs and adaptability;
- (c) the Government would place emphasis on promoting the concept of

“prevention is better than cure” among the elderly, urging them to pay attention to the prevention of dental diseases and understand the importance of regular check-ups. The enhancement measures launched this July under the Programme aimed to help the elderly address their existing dental problems as soon as possible, followed by regular check-ups with the use of Elderly Health Care Vouchers issued annually, thus putting prevention, early identification and timely intervention of dental diseases into action. It was hoped that Members could also help disseminate the message of early prevention of dental diseases and regular dental check-ups in different sectors;

- (d) the Working Group also recommended in its interim report released last year that subject to manpower considerations, the use of the existing primary healthcare service system (such as DHCs) should be optimised to promote primary dental care services. In addition to facilitating the admission of more eligible non-locally trained dentists, the Dentists Registration (Amendment) Bill 2024, upon its passage, would allow other dental care professionals, such as dental therapist and dental hygienists, to provide greater assistance and support in the provision of preventive dental services. Meanwhile, the Government would strengthen training and increase the number of dental care professionals to cater for its development of preventive primary dental services;
- (e) at present, the SDCS under DH primarily provided preventive and simple restorative dental services (such as filling and extraction), and parents only needed to pay a nominal fee. The upcoming Pilot Scheme aimed to interface with the SDCS for primary students by partially subsidising private dental check-up services for adolescents aged between 13 and 17. This would facilitate them to establish a long-term partnership with dentists in NGOs or the private sector, thereby guiding them to develop a life-long habit of regular dental check-ups to prevent dental diseases; and
- (f) upon completion of the preparatory work for the Pilot Scheme, the HHB would proceed with an open recruitment of dentists from the private sector. A list of participating dentists would be made available in due course for selection by adolescents and their parents.

Agenda item 4: Special Scheme to Import Care Workers for Residential Care Homes

8. With the aid of PowerPoint slides, Ms YAN Lai-ming, Jenny, Assistant Director of Social Welfare (Elderly), briefed Members on the Special Scheme to Import Care Workers for Residential Care Homes (the Special Scheme).

9. After the briefing, the Chairman and Members expressed views and raised questions as follows:

- (a) the Special Scheme was supported. Given the challenges faced by RCHs in remote areas in recruiting care workers (CWs), it was hoped that the quotas for importation could be increased;
- (b) as RCHs might engage intermediaries for recruiting CWs upon obtaining quotas for importation, enquiries were made regarding the recruitment procedures and relevant criteria, as well as the potential adaptation difficulties faced by imported CWs;
- (c) obtaining quotas for importation presented the greatest challenge for RCHs. Once the quotas had been successfully secured, the recruitment procedures through designated Mainland labour service enterprises were straightforward. Interviews could also be scheduled for recruiting suitable candidates;
- (d) it was observed that RCHs generally preferred hiring CWs from Guangxi Province who were able to communicate in Cantonese, and that some RCHs would share with Mainland training schools the operation procedures and service standards of Hong Kong RCHs, with a view to enhancing training on the Mainland and thereby facilitating adaptation to local jobs by those intended to work in Hong Kong;
- (e) with gatekeeping by designated Mainland labour service enterprises, the general performance of the imported CWs was satisfactory, which helped enhance the service quality of RCHs; and
- (f) imported CWs were generally younger and could share out the manual work of older local staff. Moreover, local CWs might be promoted by

RCHs to team leader to guide their imported peers, which might enhance the continued appeal of the industry to local staff.

10. In response to Members' views and questions, Ms YAN Lai-ming, Jenny gave a consolidated reply as follows:

- (a) when applying for a quota, RCHs were required to demonstrate that futile recruitment attempts of local CWs had been made to fill vacancies through the means specified by the Director of Social Welfare for a continuous period of 14 calendar days within one month prior to the application. RCHs should submit Information Form of Full-time Local Employees for assessing the permitted number of imported CWs to be employed. For example, subvented and contract RCHs may apply to import one CW at most for every two full-time local employees (regardless of their posts). Upon quota allocation, RCHs were normally required to submit visa/entry permit applications to the Immigration Department within six months for prospective imported CWs. These CWs were not required to complete designated courses prior to their arrival in Hong Kong. Generally, RCHs preferred recruiting CWs from the Mainland due to cultural similarities. The recruitment of CWs had to be arranged through labour service enterprises approved by the relevant Mainland authorities; and
- (b) in general RCHs would assist imported CWs to integrate into their new working environment. For example, the imported CWs would be added to existing messaging groups of in-service CWs to foster mutual support and assistance. RCHs should arrange for all staff (including local and imported CWs) to receive ongoing on-the-job training and supervision.

Agenda item 5: Progress Reports by Working Groups and Committee

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

11. Ms CHAN Ah-wing, Ivy, Secretary to the Commission, reported that the fourth joint meeting of the two working groups was held on 22 May this year, during which the SWD representative updated Members on the latest development of the Pilot Scheme on Training for Foreign Domestic Helpers in Elderly Care and the integrated

Home Support Services. Members noted the content of the paper and supported the SWD's plan for service integration. The fifth joint meeting of the working groups was tentatively scheduled for the fourth quarter this year.

Committee on Elder Academy Development Foundation

12. Ms CHAN Ah-wing, Ivy, reported that:

- (a) to thank various sectors of the community for their staunch support to the Elder Academy (EA) Scheme and commend outstanding elderly learners, the Labour and Welfare Bureau organised the EA Appreciation and Award Ceremony at the Auditorium of the Central Government Offices on 30 April this year, which was attended by some 200 participants. Members could visit the EA Scheme website to revisit the highlights of the ceremony (<https://www.elderacademy.org.hk/media-room/>);
- (b) several outstanding elderly learners were interviewed by “news.gov.hk” and the media in June this year to share their experiences in lifelong learning and active ageing;
- (c) the Secretariat of the Committee on EA Development Foundation was discussing with the Hongkong Bank Foundation on a new EA financial literacy course, which was targeted to be launched this year; and
- (d) a total of around 30 applications had been received for the first round of EA Development Foundation funding exercise in 2024-25. The Vetting Sub-committee would meet between July and August 2024 to assess these applications.

(Posting-meeting note: The Committee on EA Development Foundation endorsed the funding recommendations of the Vetting Sub-committee in August this year.)

Agenda item 6: Any Other Business

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

Time of Adjournment

14. The meeting was adjourned at 11:50 a.m.

Date of Next Meeting

15. The next meeting was tentatively scheduled for 24 September 2024. The Secretariat would advise Members of the meeting details in due course.

August 2024