

Sha Tin District Council
Minutes of the 5th Meeting of
the Social Welfare and Youth Committee in 2024

Date : 10 September 2024 (Tuesday)
Time : 2:30 pm
Venue : Sha Tin District Office Conference Room 441
 4/F, Sha Tin Government Offices

<u>Present</u>	<u>Time of joining the meeting</u>	<u>Time of leaving the meeting</u>
Mr LEUNG Ka-fai, MH (Chairman)	2:30 pm	4:11 pm
Miss TUNG Kin-lei (Vice Chairman)	2:30 pm	4:11 pm
Mr WONG Wai-shing	2:30 pm	4:11 pm
Mr KU Wai-ping	2:30 pm	4:11 pm
Mr CHU Wun-chiu	2:30 pm	4:11 pm
Miss LEE Ching-yee, Janet	2:30 pm	4:11 pm
Mr NG Kai-tai	2:30 pm	4:11 pm
Ms LAM Siu-man	2:30 pm	4:11 pm
Ms LAM Yuk-wa	2:30 pm	4:11 pm
Mr LAM Yu-sing	2:30 pm	4:11 pm
Ms LAM Chung-yan, Nancy, MH	2:30 pm	4:11 pm
Dr LAM Kong-kwan	2:30 pm	4:11 pm
Mr YIU Ka-chun, MH	2:30 pm	4:11 pm
Mr HA Kim-kwan	2:30 pm	4:11 pm
Ms GUO Xuanton	2:30 pm	4:11 pm
Mr LEUNG Chun-pong, Maverick	2:30 pm	4:11 pm
Mr CHAN Tan-tan	2:30 pm	4:11 pm
Miss CHAN Hiu-ying	2:30 pm	4:11 pm
Miss MOK Hei-man	2:30 pm	4:11 pm
Mr WONG Yue-hon	2:30 pm	4:11 pm
Ms WONG Po-yee	2:30 pm	4:11 pm
Mr YEUNG Ying-hon, Ronald	2:30 pm	4:11 pm
Mr TSOI Ming-yang	2:30 pm	4:11 pm
Mr DENG Kairong, BBS, MH, JP	2:30 pm	4:11 pm
Mr CHOI Wai-shing	2:30 pm	4:11 pm
Mr LAU Tak-wing	2:30 pm	4:11 pm
Miss LAW Yuen-pui	2:30 pm	4:11 pm
Ms LO Tai-suen, Ada	2:30 pm	4:11 pm
Ms PONG Scarlett Oi-lan, BBS, JP	2:30 pm	4:11 pm
Ms KUNG Mei-chi	2:30 pm	4:11 pm
Mr LEE Kang-pan	2:30 pm	4:11 pm
Mr CHAU Ping-him	2:30 pm	4:11 pm
Ms YIP Shuk-kuen	2:30 pm	4:11 pm
Ms WONG Kwok-sin, Kiko (Secretary)	Executive Officer (District Council)1, Sha Tin District Office	

In Attendance

Mr LEE Man-fai, Dave

Ms WONG So-man, Katrina

Mrs LAU HO Man-wai

Ms TONG Mai-mai

Station Sergeant SZE Sai-cheong

Ms WONG Mo-sze, Nancy

TitleSenior Executive Officer (District Council),
Sha Tin District OfficeExecutive Officer I (District Council)3,
Sha Tin District OfficeSenior School Development Officer (Shatin)5,
Education BureauAssistant District Social Welfare Officer (Sha Tin)2,
Social Welfare DepartmentAssistant Police Community Relations Officer
(Neighbourhood Police Coordinators),

Hong Kong Police Force

Labour Officer (Workplace Consultation Promotion),
Labour Department**In Attendance by Invitation**

Ms TSUNG Ka-yee

Ms NG Wing-yan

Mr CHAN Ka-kui

Ms LAM Wai-ki

Ms HO Wai-ling

Mr TAM Tak-hoi

Ms LI Zheng Zheng

TitleOfficer i/c (Central Foster Care Unit),
Social Welfare DepartmentAssistant Social Work Officer, Central Foster Care Unit,
Social Welfare DepartmentDistrict Environmental Hygiene Superintendent (Sha Tin),
Food and Environmental Hygiene DepartmentChief Health Inspector (Sha Tin)1,
Food and Environmental Hygiene DepartmentHousing Manager/Tai Po, North, Shatin 4,
Housing DepartmentAssistant Chief Executive,
Hong Kong Single Parents Association

Service Supervisor, Hong Kong Single Parents Association

Absent

Mr AU Chi-on, Paul

TitleDistrict Council
Member

(Application for leave of absence received)

The Chairman welcomed members and representatives of government departments to the fifth meeting of the Social Welfare and Youth Committee (SWYC) this year.

2. The Chairman introduced to members the three co-opted members, Mr LEE Kang-pan, Mr CHAU Ping-him and Ms YIP Shuk-kuen.

Application for Leave of Absence

3. The Chairman said that the Sha Tin District Council Secretariat (Secretariat) had received an application for leave of absence in writing from the following member prior to the meeting:

Mr Paul AU

Personal reasons

4. The SWYC unanimously expressed that consent should not be given to the application for leave of absence submitted by the above member.

Confirmation of Minutes of Meeting

Minutes of the Meeting Held on 16 July 2024
(SWYC Minutes 4/2024)

5. Members unanimously endorsed the above minutes.

Discussion Items

6. The Chairman said that the order of business on the agenda of this meeting would be slightly adjusted as the representatives of the Hong Kong Single Parents Association (HKSPA) had other important business to attend to. “Briefing on Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project” (Paper No. SWYC 14/2024) would be discussed first, followed by the discussion on “Briefing on Foster Care Service” (Paper No. SWYC 13/2024). The Chairman welcomed the representatives of the HKSPA to the meeting.

Briefing on Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project
(Paper No. SWYC 14/2024)

7. The representative of the HKSPA briefly introduced the paper (Paper No. SWYC 14/2024), and said that the association would provide an appropriate number of promotional leaflets to the Secretariat for distribution to members after the meeting. Members could obtain the promotional leaflets from the association directly if more were needed. He welcomed members’ joint participation as coaches or their assistance in the recruitment work.

[Post-meeting note: The relevant promotional leaflets were distributed to members by the Secretariat after the meeting.]

8. The Chairman thanked the HKSPA for their detailed introduction, and said that the HKSPA had taken root in Sha Tin for 15 years. It was believed that the project could provide substantive assistance to families in need.

Briefing on Foster Care Service
(Paper No. SWYC 13/2024)

9. The representative of the Social Welfare Department (SWD) briefly introduced the paper (SWYC 13/2024).

10. Members enquired about the following matters:

- (a) whether the minimum wage for foster parents had been increased, and whether the threshold for becoming a foster parent had been raised;
- (b) whether the “one-plus-one” recruitment programme (“one-plus-one” programme) supported more than one person to become foster parents together; and
- (c) the number of children on the waiting list for foster care service.

11. A member suggested that the SWD could produce Announcements of Public Interest (APIs) and advertise in public media to promote foster care service among retirees.

12. The representative of the SWD gave a consolidated response as follows:

- (a) foster care service was voluntary in nature. To encourage more willing individuals to become foster parents, the Government announced in the 2023 Policy Address that the incentive payment for foster families would be substantially increased starting from April this year. For foster care service, the payment would be more than doubled from around \$5,000 to about \$11,000 per month. For emergency foster care service, it would be doubled from around \$6,600 to about \$13,000 per month. Additional allowances would be provided to foster parents taking care of children with special needs or aged under 6;
- (b) thanks were extended to members for their suggestions on the “one-plus-one” programme, which would be considered by the SWD;
- (c) regarding publicity, the SWD had already carried out a series of publicity for foster care service, which included TV APIs. Promotion would also be carried out on buses and MTR in the future; and
- (d) at present, there were over 100 children on the waiting list for foster care service in Hong Kong, some of them were also waiting for other types of residential child care services. As at August this year, about 1 000 families had registered as foster families. Pairing could be affected by reasons including the child’s individual circumstances/care needs, foster families’ care experience and choice of districts. Some foster families might not have adequate experience in taking care of children with special needs. It was believed that such families could better meet the service demand after accumulating certain experience and receiving relevant training.

13. A member further suggested that the SWD could invite young people to join short film shooting competitions organised on social media to show the real facets of foster families to the community, so as to enhance public understanding.

14. The representative of the SWD agreed to the suggestion of the member and said that they would consider it, saying that the suggestion could encourage young people to be creative and make use of the vast network of social media.

15. The Chairman announced the end of discussion of the agenda item.

Questions

Question Raised by Miss LAW Yuen-pui on Child Care Services in Sha Tin District
(Paper No. SWYC 15/2024)

16. Members enquired about the following matters:

- (a) whether the SWD had strategies or other services to support young children aged between zero to three in Sha Tin District in the future, so that their parents could use relevant services;

- (b) regarding the 100 primary schools involved in the “School-based After School Care Service Scheme”, whether the SWD could provide the proportion of primary schools in Sha Tin District, total service places provided, and the distribution and list of schools; and
- (c) whether the SWD could provide the eligibility for becoming a service provider under the “School-based After School Care Service Scheme” so that members could further promote the scheme to charitable organisations and schools.

17. Members’ suggestions were as follows:

- (a) quite a lot of young people wished to build families and have children, and therefore they had expectations for relevant supporting services in the district. It was suggested that the SWD could increase services such as after-school care services for children or the “School-based After School Care Service Pilot Scheme”; and
- (b) it was suggested that the SWD could take the lead and work with other government departments (e.g. the Housing Department (HD)) to make good use of vacant spaces, such as sites of the former Mutual Aid Committees or shops to be closed (e.g. kindergartens), for providing after-school care services to benefit more young families.

18. A member said that services of aided standalone child care centres (CCCs) in Hong Kong must be provided in accordance with the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines (HKPSG), under which 100 service places should be provided for every 25 000 persons. However, there were only 177 service places in Sha Tin District, which reflected that the places provided did not comply with the relevant guidelines.

19. The representative of the SWD gave a consolidated response as follows:

- (a) the SWD said that for long-term planning, the Government incorporated the planning ratio for service places of aided CCCs (i.e. 100 service places of aided CCCs for every 25 000 persons) into the HKPSG in March 2020, with an aim to reserve suitable premises for operating CCCs in new residential development projects. For developed areas, the SWD would also consider the child care service provision in the districts and individual district characteristics such as service utilisation, the ratio of government subsidised child care services to those provided in the private sector, demand for services arising from changes in demographic structure, etc., to respond more appropriately to the service demand of the community;
- (b) the current utilisation of CCCs reflected a strong demand for child care service. The Government announced in the 2023 Policy Address a series of measures to further strengthen support for working families in childbearing, which included setting up 10 more aided standalone CCCs in phases over the next three years starting from this year, providing about 900 additional service places. For Sha Tin District, depending on the progress of the construction works, renovation works or licence approval, etc., it was expected that a day CCC with 100 service places would be set up in 2029/2030 to meet the community demand;
- (c) regarding child care services for children aged zero to three, the SWD had also adopted a multi-pronged approach. For example, starting from September 2024, the number of service places under the “Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project” would be doubled to about 2 000, with the estimated number of beneficiaries to be doubled to about 20 000. Starting

from 1 September this year, the number of service teams in Sha Tin District has been increased to two, and each agency was required to provide at least 92 service places at any time in the year to meet the actual service demand;

- (d) the Government extended the “School-based After School Care Service Scheme” to 2024/25 school year, covering a total of 100 primary schools across all 18 districts in Hong Kong. It was expected that about 6 000 service places would be provided. As at September 2024, seven primary schools in Sha Tin District have participated in the “School-based After School Care Service Scheme (Expanded Programme)”, and the actual number of places provided by each school depended on its individual circumstances. The relevant list was uploaded to the SWD website, and the SWD would contact relevant members directly after the meeting to provide more details; and
- (e) families of students could participate in the Expanded Programme free of charge, provided that the families meet the income requirements and the parents/guardians were unable to take care of their children during after-school hours owing to work, job seeking, participation in retraining courses/job attachment or other reasons.

[Post-meeting note: The representative of the SWD emailed the list of schools currently participating in the Expanded Programme in Sha Tin District in the 2024/25 school year to members who had raised the question on 11 September. The seven primary schools were located in Tai Wai, Ma On Shan, Lek Yuen and Kwong Yuen, etc. The approved service providers under the Expanded Programme should be non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and charitable organisations exempted from tax under Section 88 of the Inland Revenue Ordinance (Cap.112), and have experience in operating after-school care services.]

20. The Chairman announced the end of discussion of the agenda item.

Question Raised by Ms LAM Yuk-wa on the Elderly Dental Assistance Programme in Sha Tin District
(Paper No. SWYC 16/2024)

21. The Chairman said that as the Health Bureau (HB) did not send a representative to attend the meeting, supplementary questions and views from members would be conveyed to the bureau after the meeting.

22. Members enquired about the following matters:

- (a) some elderly people reported that they found the quality of their dentures unsatisfactory after crowning, causing discomfort, and needed to spend extra money to have their dentures redone in private dental clinics. Members wished to know whether there were strict requirements on the quality of dentures under the assistance programme, and whether patients could upgrade their quality at their own expense; and
- (b) There had been cases in which members of the public who went to designated dental clinics to receive free publicly-funded dental services were advised by dentists to undergo dental services which were considered by the elderly as unnecessary. For example, for toothache problems, dentists would suggest that the elderly take tooth removal treatment that was originally considered unnecessary. Members had doubts about the benefits received by dentists and wished to know the details of the current reporting channels and monitoring mechanisms.

23. Members' suggestions were as follows:

- (a) the HB could review the quality of dentures under the assistance programme to ensure that resources were used appropriately to avoid wasting public funds;
- (b) the Chief Executive proposed in last year's Policy Address that adolescents aged between 13 and 17 would be included in the Primary Dental Co-care Pilot Scheme for Adolescents in 2025. It was recommended that the HB should provide more dental health care education;
- (c) as the fees charged by Mainland dentists were lower than those in Hong Kong, many Hong Kong people went to the Mainland for dental treatment. Recently, there were false advertisements on social media showing the words "Hong Kong Dental Association" (HKDA), but the HKDA did not provide the relevant services, and its links would even connect users to other individual dental institutions. It was suggested that the Government should enhance publicity in this regard and educate the public to receive dental treatment at major hospitals on the Mainland or hospitals designated by Hong Kong's health care vouchers;
- (d) the Shatin (Tai Wai) General Out-patient Clinic would be relocated to a new site. It was proposed that the HB could consider making optimal use of land resources and integrating the medical facilities adjacent to the old Tai Wai Clinic site to establish the first primary medical building in Sha Tin District or even the New Territories East, including a woman health centre and a primary dental centre. It was hoped that this could serve the people in Sha Tin District; and
- (e) some elderly people were not eligible for the Elderly Dental Assistance Programme under the Community Care Fund, so they searched for low-cost dentists on their own on social media, which increased the risk of encountering unscrupulous dentists. It was suggested that the HB should implement more dental services for the elderly.

24. A member said that the HB had not provided the numerical information on the contents of the discussion paper and hoped that the HB could supplement the relevant information.

25. The Chairman invited the Secretariat to convey members' queries and suggestions to the bureau and announced the end of discussion of the agenda item.

Question Raised by Ms LAM Chung-yan, Nancy on the Community Support for Preventing, Intervening and Handling "Garbage Apartments"

(Paper No. SWYC 17/2024)

26. Members enquired about the following matters:

- (a) whether the SWD would proactively search for "garbage apartments" in the community or follow up the cases through reports;
- (b) the details of the entire handling procedure for cases of "garbage apartments" encountered in the community; and

- (c) how the SWD would intervene in or follow up cases of “garbage apartments” found in private housing estates and provide support to them.

27. Members’ views were as follows:

- (a) according to the information in the Paper No. SWYC 17/2024, there were only two cases of “garbage apartments” in Sha Tin District in the past 5 years, one in a private housing estate and the other in a public rental housing (PRH) estate. Members had doubts about the authenticity of the figures;
- (b) “garbage apartments” were not only a matter of environmental hygiene, but might also be a psychological problem for the tenants, which showed that the needs of some individual persons had not been responded to; and
- (c) a case of “garbage apartment” in Sun Chui Estate was revealed from the loss of keys by an elderly person. Since his children were not cooperative, it was difficult to follow up the case on a long-term basis. In the end, it was only through the intervention of various parties that the miscellaneous objects were successfully cleared and fleas were eliminated, thus improving the environment of the community.

28. The representative of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) explained that in the case of private housing estates, the FEHD needed to consider whether the “garbage apartment” caused an environmental hygiene nuisance, including pest infestation, or the level of filth was sufficient to constitute a nuisance or cause a public health hazard, before handling it according to relevant procedures. In brief, the FEHD would first issue a written notice requiring the owner or occupier of the flat to clean up the flat within a specified period (not less than 24 hours after the service of the notice). In case of non-compliance by the occupier or owner of the flat, the FEHD might take further action in conjunction with other departments, including applying to the court for a warrant of entry and arranging for clean-up of the flat in respect of its environmental hygiene problems.

29. The representative of the SWD gave a consolidated response as follows:

- (a) some of the victims of miscellaneous objects accumulation were the elderly, and the SWD had been endeavouring to liaise with various government departments, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) or local organisations to identify hidden elders and/or people in need, and some of these households had been found to have accumulated miscellaneous objects. Taking Shui Chuen O Estate as an example, the Sha Tin District Social Welfare Office of the SWD actively liaised with the HD and the Neighbourhood Elderly Centres and visited the singleton/doubleton elderly households from door to door in the estate, so as to identify hidden or high-risk elders as early as possible; and
- (b) The Support Teams for the Elderly attached to the District Elderly Community Centres identified elders with potential needs through a variety of outreach and community networking methods, such as home visits or visits to parks, in the hope that early identification and support could be provided to those in need. If a household was suspected to have begun accumulating miscellaneous objects excessively, the teams could intervene as early as possible.

30. The representative of the HD gave a consolidated response as follows:

- (a) upon receipt of complaints about tenants accumulating miscellaneous objects, the HD would send staff to understand the situation. If no nuisance was caused, the staff would first advise the tenants to clean up and clear the miscellaneous objects, but if the situation caused disturbance to other tenants, the HD would issue a warning to the tenants and require them to rectify the situation within 14 days. If there was no improvement in the situation, the HD would allot points to the tenants, and upon the allotment of 16 points within two years, a Notice-to-Quit would be issued to them; and
- (b) If the tenant under complaint reflected that he had difficulties in cleaning up, the HD would assist him in doing so or seek support from other departments. If the tenant indicated that he had other needs, the HD could also seek counselling services for him or, with his consent, refer the case to the SWD or social welfare organisations.

31. The representative of the Sha Tin District Office (STDO) appreciated members' concern about the problem of "garbage apartments". If the STDO received relevant complaints, they would refer them to appropriate departments such as the SWD, the HD and the FEHD as necessary, and the STDO would play a coordinating role by inviting members, District Services and Community Care Teams, etc. to visit the relevant units to provide appropriate assistance.

32. Members enquired about the following matters:

- (a) what was the definition of "nuisance";
- (b) how the HD would deal with the "garbage apartment" tenants if they were unwilling to accept further referrals; and
- (c) if a tenant of a "garbage apartment" was unwilling to approach a social worker and the HD was unable to make a formal referral of the case, how the SWD would provide assistance so that the client would be given psychological support.

33. The representative of the HD gave a consolidated response as follows:

- (a) it was difficult to define "nuisance", as odour and hygiene problems, etc. might constitute a nuisance; and
- (b) there was a case in which the client was an elderly person and the case was revealed only after residents had complained about the flea problem. However, the client was uncooperative when the case was followed up. Later, the client needed to be hospitalised for treatment due to the flea problem. With the advice of his family, he agreed to let the HD staff help clean up the miscellaneous objects and carry out pest control. Successful handling of cases might require the help of multiple stakeholders.

34. The representative of the SWD pointed that upon learning about the relevant cases, case officers of the SWD would first establish relationship and communication with the clients and their family members, and then understand the background and needs of the cases. With the cooperation of the clients, the SWD would progressively assist them in dealing with the problem of accumulation of miscellaneous objects at home and follow up on their welfare needs. Case officers would also refer the needy cases to appropriate community support and care services, including psychological counselling services. Other departments and NGOs would be contacted to provide assistance to the clients and/or their families when necessary.

35. The Chairman announced the end of discussion of the agenda item.

Information Papers

Number of Children Referred to Public Sector Primary and Secondary Schools in Sha Tin District Provided by the Education Bureau (June to July 2024)

(Paper No. SWYC 18/2024)

36. Members noted the above paper.

37. The Chairman announced the end of discussion of the agenda item.

Report on Youth Crimes in Sha Tin District (June 2024)

(Paper No. SWYC 19/2024)

38. Members noted the above paper.

39. The Chairman announced the end of discussion of the agenda item.

Date and Time of Next Meeting

40. The next meeting was scheduled to be held at 2:30 pm on 12 November 2024 (Tuesday).

41. The meeting was closed at 4:41 pm.

Sha Tin District Council Secretariat
STDC 13/15/80

November 2024