

(Translation)

Minutes of the 6th Meeting of
Social Welfare Committee (5/24-25)

Date : 19 December 2024
Time : 4:30 p.m.
Venue : Main Conference Room, Tsuen Wan District Office

Present:

Mr CHU Tak-wing, MH (Chairman)
Ms LAM Yuen-pun (Vice Chairlady)
Ms WONG Shuk-fan, Luparker
Mr KOO Yeung-pong, MH
Mr NG Chun-yu
Mr CHOW Sum-ming
Ms CHEUNG Man-ka
Mr CHAN Chun-chung
Ms CHAN Shun-shun
Mr MOK Yuen-kwan
Mr TSANG Tai
Mr FUNG Cheuk-sum
Ms WAH Mei-ling
Mr WONG Kai-chun
Mr KOT Siu-yuen, MH
Mr CHENG Chit-pun
Mr LAU Chung-kong
Mr CHAN Shing-jee

Government Representatives

Mr KWAN Chun-kit, Eric	Assistant District Officer (Tsuen Wan), Tsuen Wan District Office
Ms YUEN Mo-kuen, Monita	Assistant District Social Welfare Officer (Tsuen Wan/Kwai Tsing)3, Social Welfare Department
Ms CHAN Ka-po	Social Work Officer 1 (Planning & Coordinating) (Acting), Social Welfare Department

Tsuen Wan District Council Secretariat Representatives

Miss LEUNG Wai-ching, Clementine (Secretary)	Executive Officer (District Council)1, Tsuen Wan District Office
Miss WONG Yuen-chee, Connie	Executive Assistant (Community Involvement)5, Tsuen Wan District Office

In Attendance:

For discussion of item 3

Miss TSUNG Ka-yee

Officer-in-charge (Central Foster Care Unit), Social Welfare Department
Assistant Social Work Officer (Central Foster Care Unit), Social Welfare Department

Miss NG Wing-yan

For discussion of item 5

Ms CHENG Pui-nai

Superintendent, Yan Chai Hospital
Buddha Light Association of Hong Kong
Day Activity Centre cum Hostel for
Mentally Handicapped

Mr CHENG Wui-kei, Jorge

Physiotherapist I, Yan Chai Hospital
Buddha Light Association of Hong Kong
Day Activity Centre cum Hostel for
Mentally Handicapped

I Opening Remarks and Introduction

The Chairman welcomed Members and representatives from government departments to the 6th meeting of the Social Welfare Committee (SWC).

2. The Chairman said that no Member had submitted an application for absence from this meeting.

3. The Chairman stated that according to the requirements stipulated in the Tsuen Wan District Council Standing Orders, if a District Council (DC) Member found that he/she had any direct personal or pecuniary interests in a discussion item or relevant matters when attending a meeting of the Council or dealing with matters related to the Council, the DC Member should declare the interests. The Chairman said that he himself, Ms CHEUNG Man-ka and Mr CHAN Shing-jee had made declarations of interests with regard to the subject matter of agenda item 5 to the Chairman of the Tsuen Wan District Council (TWDC) prior to this meeting. He disclosed himself as the Vice Chairman of the Board of Directors of Yan Chai Hospital (YCH). Ms CHEUNG Man-ka disclosed herself as the Chairlady of the Board of Directors of the YCH. Mr CHAN Shing-jee disclosed himself as the Vice Chairman of the Board of Directors of the YCH. The Chairman of the TWDC had ruled that he, Ms CHEUNG Man-ka and Mr CHAN Shing-jee might remain in the meeting as observers and were not required to withdraw from the discussion of the agenda item concerned.

II Item 1: Confirmation of Minutes of the 5th Meeting held on 4.11.2024

4. The Chairman said that the Secretariat had not received any proposed amendment prior to this meeting. The Chairman enquired whether Members had to put forth proposed amendments immediately. No Member put forth a proposed amendment immediately. Members unanimously endorsed the captioned minutes.

III Item 2: Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Previous Meetings

5. The Chairman said that there were no matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting.

IV Item 3: Briefing on the Foster Care Service

(TWDC SWC Paper No. 8/24-25)

6. The Chairman said that the Social Welfare Department (SWD) submitted the paper. The representatives from the department attending the meeting were:

- (1) Ms YUEN Mo-kuen, Monita, Assistant District Social Welfare Officer (Tsuen Wan/Kwai Tsing)³ (ADSWO(TW/KwT)³), SWD;
- (2) Ms CHAN Ka-po, Social Work Officer 1 (Planning & Coordinating) (Acting) (SWO1(P&C) (Atg.)), SWD;
- (3) Miss TSUNG Ka-yee, Officer-in-charge (Central Foster Care Unit) (Oic(CFCU)), SWD; and
- (4) Miss NG Wing-yan, Assistant Social Work Officer (Central Foster Care Unit) (ASWO(CFCU)), SWD.

7. ADSWO(TW/KwT)³, Oic(CFCU) and ASWO(CFCU) of the SWD introduced the paper.

8. The views and enquiries of Members were summarised as follows:

- (1) a Member was concerned about the schooling arrangements for foster children. The Member enquired whether children could stay in foster families near their schools, and whether it was necessary to arrange school transfer for children whose birth family and foster family resided in different districts;
- (2) a Member enquired about the ratio of children in need of foster care service to foster parents providing such service. The Member was worried that the foster care service might fall short of demand;
- (3) a Member enquired whether foster parents would receive grants and incentive payment;
- (4) a Member enquired about the number of registered foster families in Tsuen Wan district;
- (5) a Member enquired about the age limit of foster care service users; and
- (6) a Member enquired why children who were waiting for foster care service would still be offered with district options given that they were in a critical state.

9. Oic(CFCU) of the SWD responded as follows:

- (1) parents could choose the district in which the foster family resided for their children, and they would normally choose the same district as where the birth family lived and/or where the school was located. If there were no suitable foster families in the designated districts and the children had a pressing need for foster care service, the children staying in foster families in other districts might need to transfer to other schools;
- (2) as of November 2024, the number of foster families was 1 015, and 880

children had received foster care services as of October 2024. There were children still waiting for such service at present, the reasons included the parents' desire to choose a foster family in the district near the birth family and consideration of the health conditions of individual child, etc. If the children were physically unfit to receive foster care service, they might be placed on the waiting lists of other residential child care services, such as Small Group Homes or Children's Homes;

- (3) the Chief Executive had announced in the 2023 Policy Address that the incentive payment for foster parents would be doubled to encourage more people to become foster parents. The current monthly incentive payment for foster parents who provided ordinary foster care service was \$11,866, and that for the foster parents providing emergency foster care service was \$13,561. Foster parents taking care of children with special needs or children aged under 6 would receive additional grants. Moreover, foster parents would receive a maintenance grant for their foster child, which was approximately \$6,000 every month. The maintenance grant was intended to cover the basic daily expenses of children, such as their clothing and food, etc.;
- (4) the majority of foster families resided in Tuen Mun and Yuen Long district at present. There were currently 25 registered foster families in Tsuen Wan district;
- (5) the ultimate goal of foster care service was to facilitate the reunion of children with their birth families. Each child in care would have a referring social worker assigned to monitor the case. The social worker concerned would regularly follow up on the foster child's well-being and the welfare of the birth family. The referring social worker would also meet up and check in with the foster parents, the birth family as well as the child on a regular basis, and would determine when it was appropriate for the child to return to the birth family. Children could remain in foster care until 18 years old or until they were placed in adoptive families if necessary; and
- (6) if children had a pressing need, the Central Foster Care Unit (CFCU) would advise them to choose foster families in other districts. The CFCU would also keep the situations of the cases in view through the referring social workers.

10. ADSWO(TW/KwT)3 of the SWD called on Members acquainted with families in the district who were interested in providing foster care service to invite such families to contact the CFCU of the SWD.

11. The views and enquiries of Members were summarised as follows:

- (1) a Member enquired about the maximum number of children that a foster family could take in at the same time;
- (2) a Member enquired whether foster parents were required to take care of the children on a full-time basis;
- (3) a Member enquired whether the SWD would assess the eligibility of foster parents by considering their race, language and living environment, for

instance, whether families residing in public rental housing (PRH) estates were eligible to provide foster care service;

- (4) a Member was aware that the vetting process for foster parents was very stringent, and enquired whether there were interim assessments for foster parents;
- (5) a Member enquired whether the birth parents of foster children would be informed about the foster families where their children were staying in;
- (6) a Member enquired who were the legal guardians of foster children;
- (7) a Member enquired whether the application procedures of maintenance grant for foster children were cumbersome;
- (8) a Member enquired whether the grants and incentive payment for foster parents were taxable;
- (9) a Member enquired who would decide whether children would be placed in foster families or residential care homes for children; and
- (10) a Member enquired whether foster parents were allowed to take their foster children with them when travelling outside Hong Kong.

12. Oic(CFCU) responded as follows:

- (1) generally speaking, every foster family would only take care of one child. If the foster parents needed to take leave, the child would temporarily stay in the family of relief parents. The relief parents were also foster parents. Such approach might temporarily increase the number of children to be taken care by the relief parents, but the SWD would consider the caring capability of each foster family and make flexible arrangements;
- (2) there was one principal applicant in each foster family as the carer of the child. Although most of the foster parents were dual-income parents at present, they were able to manage their time well to care for the children. For example, there were foster families in which family members were able to take turns to take care of the child as they worked at different hours, while some other foster families would have family members worked at home or worked part-time only during the child's school hours, etc.;
- (3) foster parents should have good communication with their children, therefore it was necessary for them to speak the same primary language as the children. Many foster parents were current residents of PRH estates. The windows in PRH estates were equipped with window grilles, which would meet the safety requirements for the living environment of foster families. In addition to the installation of secured window grilles on windows, other safety requirements for the living environment included having a door or gate in the kitchen to prevent children from entering, etc. As for the size of the living space, it must also meet the per capita living area (i.e. at least 5.5 square metres) stipulated by the Housing Department. Besides, foster families must provide each child with a separate bed, space for doing homework and storage space, etc.;
- (4) foster parents were required to pass a detailed and comprehensive family assessment before providing services. The SWD and foster care service providers would emphasise to applicants the importance of children

protection, such as prohibition on administering corporal punishment to children and leaving children unattended at home. Moreover, social workers from foster care service providers would regularly meet up and checked in with foster parents to follow up on their situation as well as that of the foster child;

- (5) the consent of birth parents was required for children to use foster care service, and a consent form signed by the children's birth parents should be submitted;
- (6) although children lived in foster care families, they would still keep contact with their birth families. Generally speaking, the children's birth parents would remain their legal guardians. However, under special circumstances, such as when the parents of a child disclaimed their guardianship after court proceedings, the Director of Social Welfare would become the legal guardian of the child concerned;
- (7) at the beginning of a child being placed in a foster family, the foster parents would receive a one-off grant (about \$3,000) on a reimbursement basis to purchase personal items for the child. However, the monthly maintenance grant was non-accountable. Social workers would ensure that the grants were spent on children through regular home visits;
- (8) incentive payments to foster parents could be exempted from tax. Besides, half of the incentive payments could be excluded from the calculation of income declared under the Well-off Tenants Policies;
- (9) children were required to be assessed by referring social workers (social workers from the SWD or non-governmental organisations) before receiving residential care services. The social workers concerned would decide on the residential care services suitable for the children by taking into account factors such as the child's family situation, emotions and physical condition, etc.; and
- (10) foster parents were required to obtain consent from the foster child's birth parents/guardians before taking the foster child with them for travelling outside Hong Kong.

V Item 4: Enquiry about the Shortage of Social Welfare Facilities in Tsuen Wan
(TWDC SWC Paper No. 9/24-25)

13. The Chairman said that Mr KOO Yeung-pong, Mr NG Chun-yu, Mr WONG Kai-chun, Mr TSANG Tai, Mr CHAN Chun-chung, Mr LAU Chung-kong, Mr CHOW Sum-ming and Mr MOK Yuen-kwan submitted the paper. The representatives from the department responsible for giving responses were:

- (1) Ms YUEN Mo-kuen, Monita, ADSWO(TW/KwT)3, SWD; and
- (2) Ms CHAN Ka-po, SWO1(P&C) (Atg.), SWD.

Besides, the written reply of the SWD was tabled at the meeting.

14. Mr KOO Yeung-pong, Mr NG Chun-yu, Mr CHOW Sum-ming and Mr WONG Kai-chung introduced the paper.

15. ADSWO(TW/KwT)3 of the SWD responded as follows:

- (1) the SWD had been adopting a multi-pronged approach to identify suitable sites or premises for the provision of welfare facilities. Regarding the services of residential care homes for the elderly (RCHEs), as of September 2024, there were 32 RCHEs in Tsuen Wan district providing 4 170 places of various types, 20 of which provided a total of 1 994 subsidised places. As stated in the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines (HKPSG), the population-based planning standard for elderly services and facilities was 21.3 subsidised beds for every 1 000 elderly persons aged 65 or above. According to the figures released by the Census and Statistics Department in 2023, the population of Tsuen Wan district was about 310 000, of which about 63 700 were aged 65 and above. By pro-rata calculation, about 1 400 subsidised places were required. The SWD would plan residential care services on a five-cluster basis (namely Hong Kong, East Kowloon, West Kowloon, New Territories East and New Territories West), applying the aforementioned standards flexibly at the cluster level and taking into account a number of factors that needed to be considered, in particular the distribution of residential care services in various districts of the clusters. When applying for RCHEs, elderly persons in Tsuen Wan district could choose a suitable cluster or RCHE based on their personal circumstances and special needs;
- (2) the SWD was concerned about the problem of ageing population. With a view to continuously increasing the number of subsidised places to meet the keen demand for residential care services, the SWD was implementing 60-odd development projects of RCHEs in various districts across the territory. Two of them were contract homes to be opened in Tsuen Wan district (which would be located at a PRH development project covering the site of the former Kwai Chung Public School and the adjacent government land as well as at another PRH development project near Cheung Shan Estate respectively);
- (3) at present, there was one District Elderly Community Centre and seven Neighbourhood Elderly Centres (NECs) in Tsuen Wan District. The SWD would set up an NEC sub-base and a Child Care Centre (CCC) at the Joint-user Complex at Texaco Road, Tsuen Wan. The SWD would also set up a new NEC at the PRH development project near Cheung Shan Estate; and
- (4) as of September 2024, there were one aided standalone CCC and one private/non-profit making standalone CCC in Tsuen Wan district, providing a total of 244 service places for children under 3 years old. The overall utilisation rate was 52%. In addition, there were 23 CCCs attached to kindergartens in Tsuen Wan district, of which 10 were aided CCCs attached to kindergartens, providing a total of 1 114 service places with an overall utilisation rate of 68%. The SWD had planned to set up four additional aided standalone CCCs in Tsuen Wan district, and would continue to identify suitable sites or premises for the provision of welfare facilities.

16. The views and enquiries of Members were summarised as follows:

- (1) although residential care services were divided into five clusters, a Member

hoped that elderly persons residing in Tsuen Wan district would be placed to RCHEs in the same district as far as possible;

- (2) a Member enquired about the progress of the PRH development project near Cheung Shan Estate;
- (3) a Member said that some residents might not welcome the provision of additional RCHEs, and suggested that the Government should explain the rationales to residents;
- (4) a Member enquired about the last updated date of the HKPSG and whether the services provided by RCHEs and elderly centres had been adjusted in response to policy changes;
- (5) a Member was pleased to see that the number of CCCs had increased in accordance with the increasing population, and hoped that other services would also be adjusted accordingly; and
- (6) a Member opined that the Residential Care Service Scheme in Guangdong (the “GDRCS Scheme”) could effectively ease the shortage of subsidised places arising from the ageing population and insufficient hardware facilities in Hong Kong in the future. The Member hoped that the GDRCS Scheme would be promoted by, for example, assisting elderly persons to go on a two-day visit to the RCHEs in the Greater Bay Area so that they could experience a one-night stay in local residential care homes and would be encouraged to use relevant services. The Member enquired whether the Government had relevant plans to publicise and support the GDRCS Scheme.

17. ADSWO(TW/KwT)3 of the SWD responded as follows:

- (1) the SWD would formulate appropriate proposals of welfare facilities for different development projects based on various circumstances, and would make complementary efforts having regard to the construction progress of relevant development projects;
- (2) the SWD expected to take forward the arrangements for setting up relevant welfare facilities as soon as possible upon completion of the Joint-user Complex at Texaco Road, Tsuen Wan;
- (3) the HKPSG had been last updated in January 2024; and
- (4) the SWD noted Members’ views. It was arranging and encouraging referring social workers as well as organisations to conduct site visits to the RCHEs in Guangdong for facilitating their introduction of relevant services to elderly persons. In addition, the SWD could provide Members with the promotional video of the GDRCS Scheme for publicity.

18. Assistant District Officer (Tsuen Wan) of the Tsuen Wan District Office responded that the construction of the Joint-user Complex at Texaco Road, Tsuen Wan was undertaken by the Architectural Services Department. The project was progressing well and was expected to be completed in 2025 to 2026 at the earliest. The provision of two welfare facilities in the complex would be followed up by the SWD upon completion of the project. It was anticipated that such facilities would alleviate the demand pressure for relevant services in the district.

19. The views of Members were summarised as follows:
- (1) a Member was pleased to see that the SWD had actively provided service places, and suggested that the SWD should make reference to some research studies that estimated future service demand for detailed planning, such as the final report of the Consultancy Study on the Long-term Development of Child Care Services, the Elderly Services Programme Plan and Persons with Disabilities and Rehabilitation Programme Plan;
 - (2) a Member proposed that the SWD should make use of the funding allocated for “purchase of welfare premises” under the Capital Works Reserve Fund to acquire vacant shops (e.g. shops at Riviera Plaza and former Tsuen King Circuit Market) for welfare purposes; and
 - (3) a Member had inspected the services provided by the RCHEs in Zhuhai earlier and found that their services were of high quality. The RCHEs concerned had provided entertainment facilities such as cinemas and were in close proximity to hospitals, making it very convenient for elderly persons to undergo physical examinations and seek medical treatment. The Member encouraged elderly persons to inspect and experience relevant services in person.
20. The enquiries of Members were further summarised as follows:
- (1) the GDRCS Scheme required elderly persons to reside in Hong Kong for no less than 60 days each year. However, many elderly persons had sold their domestic properties in Hong Kong and did not have a fixed abode in the region. They had to pay expensive rent for accommodation to meet the aforesaid requirement. Hence, the Member enquired whether discretion would be exercised in handling the situation concerned.
21. ADSWO(TW/KwT)3 of the SWD responded as follows:
- (1) as far as she knew, the SWD and non-governmental organisations were gradually arranging staff to conduct site visits in the Greater Bay Area so as to learn about the elderly care services concerned;
 - (2) a number of government departments had participated in the Tsuen Wan District Study. The SWD would reflect the situation of welfare facilities on the platform concerned in a timely manner and formulate proposals for the provision of appropriate welfare facilities in different development projects;
 - (3) the SWD welcomed property owners to provide the Government Property Agency (GPA) with information on properties suitable for use as welfare facilities in regard to the “purchase of welfare premises” for consideration by the SWD. Property owners could learn about the details through visiting the relevant websites of the SWD or GPA; and
 - (4) as regards the relevant regulations of the GDRCS Scheme, the SWD would supplement the information concerned after the meeting.

(Post-meeting note: The GDRCS Scheme provided an additional option for elderly persons who were waiting for subsidised places of RCHEs on the Central Waiting List for Subsidised Long Term Care Services and wished to retire in the mainland cities of

the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, so that they could reside in RCHEs under the GDRCS Scheme according to their own wishes. For details of the GDRCS Scheme and relevant regulations, please visit the following website:

https://www.swd.gov.hk/tc/pubsvc/elderly/cat_residentcare/subrcheplace/guangdong/index.html)

22. The Chairman said that as the paper for the next agenda item was submitted by the Vice Chairlady, and he himself had already made a declaration of interests with regard to the subject matter of that agenda item. Thus, the Chairman of the TWDC had appointed Mr KOO Yeung-pong to be the Acting Chairman and to preside over the meeting temporarily.

VI Item 5: Concern about the Exercise Arrangements for Mentally Handicapped Persons in Sheltered Centres/Hostels in Tsuen Wan
(TWDC SWC Paper No. 10/24-25)

23. The Acting Chairman said that Ms LAM Yuen-pun submitted the paper. The representatives from the department responsible for giving responses were:

- (1) Ms YUEN Mo-kuen, Monita, ADSWO(TW/KwT)3, SWD;
- (2) Ms CHAN Ka-po, SWO1(P&C) (Atg.), SWD;
- (3) Ms CHENG Pui-nai, Superintendent, Yan Chai Hospital Buddha Light Association of Hong Kong Day Activity Centre cum Hostel for Mentally Handicapped (the “Day Activity Centre cum Hostel”); and
- (4) Mr CHENG Wui-kei, Jorge, Physiotherapist I, the Day Activity Centre cum Hostel.

Besides, the written reply of the SWD was tabled at the meeting.

24. Ms LAM Yuen-pun introduced the paper.

25. ADSWO(TW/KwT)3 of the SWD responded as follows:

- (1) with a view to assisting mentally handicapped persons who were unable to live independently and to be cared for by their family members, the SWD provided them with residential care services. Among such services, the hostel for severely mentally handicapped persons provided home living for persons with severe/moderate intellectual disabilities who lacked basic self-care skills and required daily personal care as well as nursing care. The SWD had also established day activity centres to provide day care as well as training on daily living and simple work skills for mentally handicapped persons who were unable to benefit from vocational training;
- (2) as some service users could no longer benefit from long-term intensive training due to ageing or deteriorating health conditions, the SWD had allocated additional resources to day activity centres for the provision of extended care programmes. The focus of the programmes was to maintain or improve the health and body functions of service users through systematic rehabilitation training or fitness activities provided by physiotherapists; and
- (3) at present, there were four day activity centres cum hostels for severely

mentally handicapped persons subvented by the SWD in Tsuen Wan district. Two of them were the Day Activity Centre cum Hostel (I) and (II). The SWD had invited Ms CHENG Pui-nai and Mr CHENG Wui-kei, Jorge, Superintendent and Physiotherapist I of the aforementioned Day Activity Centre cum Hostel to briefly introduce its services at this meeting.

26. Superintendent and Physiotherapist I of the Day Activity Centre cum Hostel gave a brief account.

27. The views and enquiries of Members were summarised as follows:

- (1) a Member commended the services of the Day Activity Centre cum Hostel, and hoped that other centres in Tsuen Wan district would also step up their efforts in encouraging mentally handicapped persons to exercise regularly; and
- (2) a Member suggested that the SWD should set up a monitoring mechanism for regular inspections of day activity centres and hostels, as well as formulate basic service standards and guidelines.

28. ADSWO(TW/KwT)3 of the SWD responded as follows:

- (1) the relevant service divisions of the SWD would regularly inspect or patrol day activity centres cum hostels for severely mentally handicapped persons to learn about and monitor their service quality; and
- (2) taking into account the trend of an ageing population in Hong Kong, the SWD had allocated additional resources to day activity centres to provide extended care programmes. Through systematic rehabilitation training or fitness activities provided by physiotherapists, the programme aimed to maintain or improve the health and body functions of service users, thereby enhancing their quality of life.

29. The Acting Chairman said that the Chairman would continue to preside over the meeting.

VII Adjournment of Meeting

30. The Chairman reminded Members that the next meeting was scheduled for 20 February 2025 (Thursday) and the deadline for submission of papers was 5 February 2025 (Wednesday).

Tsuen Wan District Council Secretariat
10 January 2025