

**Minutes of the Fourth Meeting of
Social Welfare and Labour Committee
under Yuen Long District Council in 2024**

Date: 26 August 2024 (Monday)

Time: 2:30 p.m. to 4:25 p.m.

Venue: Conference Room, Yuen Long District Council, 13/F., Yuen Long Government Offices,
2 Kiu Lok Square, Yuen Long

Present

Chairman: Mr CHONG Kin-shing, MH, JP

Vice Chairman: Mr SZE TO Chun-hin

Members: Mr WONG Hiu-shan

Ms HO Hiu-man

Ms LI Ching-yee

Ms LAM Wai-ming

Mr YIU Kwok-wai, MH

Mr TSUI Wai-ngoi

Ms YUEN Man-yee, MH

Ms MA Shuk-yin

Mr CHEUNG Wai-sum

Mr LEUNG Ming-kin

Mr CHAN Ka-fai

Ms CHAN Yin-kwan, Yankie

Mr WONG Siu-chung

Ms WONG Wai-ling

Mr WONG Wing-ho, Allan

Ms CHIU Sau-han, MH

Ms LAI Yuet-kwan, Fennie

Mr TAM Tak-hoi

Co-opted Members: Mr WU Kin-keung, Calvin

Ms TAM Kam-lin, MH

Secretary: Mr YU Cheuk-yin, Victor Executive Officer (District Council) 6,
Yuen Long District Office

In Attendance

Mr CHUI Kwan-siu

Mr LAU Hiu-lap, Frederick

Senior Liaison Officer 4,

Yuen Long District Office

Ms WAN Yee-man, Fion

Assistant District Social Welfare Officer
(Yuen Long) 2, Social Welfare Department

Miss LUI Wing-man, Vivian

Labour Officer (Employment Services)

(Yuen Long), Labour Department

Item II

Ms KWONG Yuet-sum

Chairman, Tin Shui Wai Women Association
Limited

Miss WONG Ching-lui
(transliteration)

Social Worker, Neighbourhood Support
Child Care Project, Tin Shui Wai Women
Association Limited

Items III to V

Mr MAN Cho-wai

Social Work Officer 1 (Planning & Coordinating), Social Welfare Department

Ms CHU Yi-ting

Social Work Officer 3 (Planning & Coordinating), Social Welfare Department

Mr YEUNG Wing-hong

Assistant Social Work Officer 1 (Planning & Coordinating), Social Welfare Department

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Opening Remarks

The Chairman welcomed Members and department representatives to the fourth meeting of the Social Welfare and Labour Committee (“SWLC”) of the Yuen Long District Council (“YLDC”) in 2024.

2. The Chairman welcomed Mr Calvin WU and Ms TAM Kam-lin, MH as co-opted Members of the SWLC.

Item I: Confirmation of minutes of the third meeting of SWLC in 2024 held on 24 June 2024

3. Members confirmed the minutes of the third meeting of SWLC in 2024 held on 24 June 2024.

Discussion Item:

**Item II: Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project
(SWLC Paper No. 14/2024)**

4. The Chairman referred Members to Paper No. 14 and welcomed Ms KWONG Yuet-sum, Chairman of Tin Shui Wai Women Association Limited, and Miss WONG Ching-lui, Social Worker of the Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project (“NSCCP”), to the meeting.

5. After discussion, Members’ views and enquiries were summarised as follows:

- (1) Members were pleased to see the provision of home-based child care service (“HCCS”) by service operators in Tin Shui Wai and suggested that service operators could co-operate with District Council (“DC”) Members and Care Teams to promote the services provided under the NSCCP as well as the office locations of the service operators so that more local residents could be aware of the services;
- (2) In view of the suspected child abuse incidents involving home-based child carers (“HCCs”) early this year, Members enquired how service operators could ensure the service quality of HCCs, other than through home visits and training;
- (3) Members relayed feedback from residents that the workload of HCCs was heavy as they had to take care of several children, and suggested that service operators should recruit more HCCs in the community to increase their manpower. Members also enquired about the current maximum number of children each HCC was allowed to take care of; and

- (4) Members enquired about the application status and waiting time in respect of the HCCS.

6. A consolidated reply provided by Ms KWONG Yuet-sum and Miss WONG Ching-lui of Tin Shui Wai Women Association Limited was as follows:

- (1) Generally speaking, service operators would arrange HCCS as soon as possible after applicants had submitted the necessary application documents;
- (2) Each HCC was allowed to take care of a maximum of three children attending primary school or below at the same time, including both children receiving the HCCS and the HCC's own children. Typically, no more than one in the three children being taken care of by an HCC could be a child with special educational needs ("SEN") or under the age of three to prevent overburdening the HCC; and
- (3) Before HCCs were formally employed, they were required to complete training and undergo assessment. In addition, service operators would assess the safety of their home environment. Subsequently, HCCs would be subject to unannounced monthly inspections, and video calls would be made to find out how HCCs were taking care of the children and the condition of their home environment. The service operators would also seek feedback from the matched applicants to ensure the quality of the HCCs.

7. The Chairman concluded that the HCCS could relieve the burden of working parents in taking care of their children and help unleash the workforce. He hoped that relevant service operators would do more to promote the service so that more families in need could receive appropriate support.

Questions Raised by Members:

Item III: Mr WONG Hiu-shan and Mr TAM Tak-hoi proposed a discussion on 'Proposal to "Enhance mental health support service in Yuen Long District"' (SWLC Paper No. 15/2024)

8. The Chairman referred Members to Paper No. 15 and the written reply from the Social Welfare Department ("SWD").

9. Members' views and enquiries on the item were summarised as follows:

- (1) Members expressed concern about the recent upward trend in suicides attributed to mental health problems in the district with an increasing prevalence among younger age groups. It was hoped that the SWD would strengthen support for relevant groups or individuals;
- (2) In view of the fact that the service expo and a series of respite activities for carers organised by the SWD from September to November 2024 were provided by social service units, Members suggested that the SWD should more frequently invite different local partners, such as local organisations, DC Members, and Care Teams, to collaborate in promoting mental health information and providing timely and appropriate assistance to citizens in need;

- (3) Members considered that it was often more difficult to detect and identify mental health problems in adults and schoolchildren at an early stage. It was suggested that the SWD should provide training and information to the local community, such as DC Members and Care Teams, on how to identify individuals at high risk of mental health problems in order to facilitate early referrals of cases in need to the SWD or other welfare service units for follow-up. In addition, Members suggested increasing the number of school social workers to address students' mental health problems. For cases involving students with special conditions which required comprehensive assistance, Members suggested that the SWD should collaborate with different government departments and units to address their mental health needs;
- (4) Members enquired about the collaboration details and effectiveness of the Working Group for "Six Heungs Collaboration Platform";
- (5) Members considered that the subventions provided by the SWD to non-governmental organisations ("NGOs") for deploying promotion trucks for mental health awareness activities and emotional support services in the district could help improve the mental health of the public. It was suggested that the SWD should enhance promotion of relevant services to the local community;
- (6) In view of the vast area of Yuen Long with a population of 670 000, Members considered that the current provision of only two Integrated Community Centre for Mental Wellness ("ICCMWs") providing mental health support services in the district was insufficient. They suggested that the SWD should set up more ICCMWs in the district to facilitate preventive education and publicity. They also enquired whether the number of mental health cases handled by the two existing ICCMWs reached the performance indicators set by the SWD and the reasons why the SWD had not been able to set up more ICCMWs in the district;
- (7) Members suggested that the SWD should strengthen its emotional support services in rural areas and public housing estates to help resolve neighbourhood disputes arising from mental health problems; and
- (8) Members thanked the SWD for providing appropriate services and follow-up support to the families of suicide victims.

10. A consolidated reply provided by Ms Fion WAN, Mr MAN Cho-wai, Ms CHU Yi-ting and Mr YEUNG Wing-hong of the SWD was as follows:

- (1) The SWD was saddened by the recent suicide incidents in the district and said that social workers of the Integrated Family Service Centres ("IFSCs") would approach the families of suicide victims through the Police or hospitals to render appropriate assistance according to their welfare needs as soon as possible;
- (2) IFSCs would set up street counters in different locations in the district from time to time to introduce social welfare services to the public. For those with welfare needs, social workers of IFSCs were also available to follow up and assist in making referrals to other appropriate services;
- (3) The SWD had deployed MVP Service on Mental Wellness in five designated regions of Hong Kong (i.e. Hong Kong Island, Kowloon East, Kowloon West, New Territories East and New Territories West) and would promote these services at the meeting of the "Six Heungs Collaboration Platform" to be held in September this

year. Members were welcomed to continue liaising with relevant organisations on the parking locations and schedules of MPVs to cater for the needs of rural residents;

- (4) In response to the three-year Care the Carers Campaign launched by the SWD in 2023, the Yuen Long District Social Welfare Office would organise a series of activities, with mental health care for carers being one of the key themes. The Yuen Long District Social Welfare Office would co-organise a service expo with 18 social welfare service units to allow carers of different age groups to learn about various welfare service units, including mental health services;
- (5) Two service providers in the district were dedicated to providing support to ethnic minorities. These included Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui Outreaching Team for Multi-Cultural Community and Yuen Long Town Hall Support Service Centre for Ethnic Minorities. They would set up street counters and organise group activities from time to time to introduce mental health support services to ethnic minorities;
- (6) The Wellness Centre (Tin Shui Wai) of New Life Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association would organise a training course in November this year on the concept of mental illness and recovery. The course was aimed at community leaders and anyone interested in understanding mental health. Members interested in learning more about mental health topics were welcomed to attend; and
- (7) The two ICCMWs in Yuen Long District handled approximately 780 new cases in 2023-24, exceeding the output standards set by the SWD.

11. Mr Frederick LAU of the Yuen Long District Office (“YLDO”) said that the YLDO had invited the Hong Kong Red Cross to conduct a mental health seminar for Care Team members in April this year. In addition, the YLDO collaborated with the Health Bureau to provide a 12-hour training course on mental health for Care Team members to enhance their awareness and concern regarding mental health.

12. In conclusion, the Chairman hoped that the SWD and the local community would strengthen their co-operation on matters relating to the mental health of local residents to prevent unfortunate incidents from occurring.

Item IV: Mr CHEUNG Wai-sum, Mr TAM Tak-hoi and Mr WONG Hiu-shan proposed a discussion on “Matters relating to support for carers of children” (SWLC Paper No. 16/2024)

13. The Chairman referred Members to Paper No. 16 and a written reply from the SWD.

14. Members’ views and enquiries on the item were summarised as follows:

- (1) It was opined that the existing Designated Hotline for Carer Support, run by the SWD, primarily catered to carers of the elderly and those with mental illness, rather than providing focused support for carers of children. It was recommended that the SWD should demonstrate greater concern for carers of children and enhance awareness of relevant support services in communities;
- (2) A Member raised a suggestion from Hung Shui Kiu residents that the SWD should establish a separate cluster for Hung Shui Kiu to increase the number of child care

service places in the district and neighbouring rural areas. He added that this would cater for the growing residential population in Hung Shui Kiu and the additional population that would result from the future development of the Northern Metropolis;

- (3) A query was raised as to whether the thresholds and documentation requirements for applications for child care services were the same across various social welfare organisations. Additionally, there was a question as to whether these services covered other child carers than those caring for students with disabilities or SEN; and
- (4) A request was made for a list of organisations and matching schools that would be joining the School-based After School Care Service Scheme in September.

15. A consolidated reply provided by Ms Fion WAN, Mr MAN Cho-wai, Ms CHU Yi-ting and Mr YEUNG Wing-hong of the SWD was as follows:

- (1) Members could contact the Yuen Long District Planning and Coordinating Team for any questions about the thresholds or documentation requirements for applications for child care services from organisations;
- (2) The SWD would enhance the provision of support services for child carers in rural areas by doubling the number of places for the HCCS from September onwards. Discussions would also be held with the Hong Kong Women Development Association Limited about ways to reinforce services in rural areas, for instance by promoting these services in rural areas and recruiting HCCs;
- (3) The Designated Hotline for Carer Support also served carers of children with SEN. The St. James' Settlement – Family Joy Together (Parents/Relatives Resource Centre) and the District Support Centre for Persons with Disabilities, both of which operated in the district, provided assistance and support services to children with SEN or disabilities and their carers with the aim of reducing the caring burden on parents;
- (4) All child carers could contact the IFSCs in the district for support services; and
- (5) In 2024/25, a total of 100 primary schools across the territory implemented the School-based After School Care Service Scheme. Twelve primary schools in Yuen Long District had also participated in the service scheme. This year, three of these schools had commenced the provision of relevant services. These included Lok Sin Tong Leung Kau Kui School (Branch) (served by Pok Oi Hospital), Tun Yu School (served by the Original Youth Limited), and Tin Shui Wai Methodist Primary School (served by Yang Memorial Methodist Social Service).

16. The Chairman concluded that parents could be adequately supported through the support services for child carers and looked forward to the SWD strengthening the services.

Item V: Mr SZE TO Chun-hin, Ms MA Shuk-yin, Ms Fennie LAI, and Ms LAM Wai-ming proposed a discussion on “Matters relating to proposed operation of community canteen in Yuen Long District” (SWLC Paper No. 17/2024)

17. The Chairman referred Members to Paper No. 17 and a written reply from the SWD.

18. Members' views and enquiries on the item were summarised as follows:

- (1) Community canteens enjoyed great popularity in the Mainland, providing affordable meals to people in need. Currently, Hong Kong citizens had to be referred by either a hospital or the SWD to qualify for the meal delivery service. Due to the fact that some vulnerable members of the public might not meet the referral criteria, and given the large elderly population in need of the meal service in the district, it was suggested that the SWD should follow Mainland practice by setting up community canteens in the district so as to serve a greater number of vulnerable people and meet their basic needs;
- (2) In addition to providing affordable meals to those in need, community canteens offered the additional benefit of fostering social cohesion among elderly persons in the neighbourhood and strengthening community ties. Furthermore, the Government could use community canteens as platforms for publicising their policies and disseminating information, such as medical information, and information about services designed to protect and enhance the health of the elderly;
- (3) It was suggested that the SWD should implement a pilot scheme to operate community canteens in the district, particularly in rural areas. Subject to the effectiveness of the pilot scheme, the department would further consider expanding the range of services on offer;
- (4) It was suggested that the SWD should collaborate with social enterprises and restaurants in the district with a view to revitalising the catering economy and expanding the target beneficiaries of the scheme; and
- (5) In view of the time needed to set up a community canteen, it was suggested that the SWD should collaborate with local groups to repurpose existing venues or schools as community canteens during certain time slots prior to their official launch.

19. A consolidated reply provided by Ms Fion WAN, Mr MAN Cho-wai, Ms CHU Yi-ting and Mr YEUNG Wing-hong of the SWD was as follows:

- (1) Currently, elderly persons who were assessed as being in need of community care services through the Standardised Care Need Assessment Mechanism for Elderly Services were eligible to be placed on the waiting list for home-based community care services for the elderly. Furthermore, elderly persons, persons with disabilities, and individuals or families with social needs living in the community could also apply for home-based community support services independently. In 2023-24, the total number of users of home-based community care and support services for elderly persons in Yuen Long District was 2 350 for the entire year;
- (2) There were currently a total of five Integrated Home Care Services Teams operating in the district. These teams provided home-based community care and support services for elderly persons, such as meal services, which provided low-cost meals to eligible elderly persons;
- (3) There were also two District Elderly Community Centres and one Neighbourhood Elderly Centre in Yuen Long District to provide centre-based meal services to elderly persons in need of such assistance. The SWD, through subvented NGOs, was also operating short-term food assistance service teams to provide basic food assistance for a maximum of eight weeks to individuals with short-term food needs. In Yuen

Long District, the short-term food assistance service team was operated by the Blue Sky Short-term Food Assistance Service Team under Po Leung Kuk; and

- (4) The suggestions made by the Members regarding the community canteens were noted. Relevant views would be forwarded to the relevant departments for reference.

20. The Chairman concluded by expressing his hope that the SWD would leverage the strengths of local community members to actively push for the establishment of community canteens.

Reports of government departments

**Item VI: Statistics on Comprehensive Social Security Assistance caseload and domestic violence reports in Yuen Long District
(SWLC Paper No. 18/2024)**

21. With regard to the statistics on Comprehensive Social Security Assistance caseload and domestic violence reports in Yuen Long District, as shown in the paper, the Chairman requested the SWD continue to follow up on such cases and, where necessary, refer them to the law enforcement departments as soon as possible.

Item VII: Any other business

Item VIII: Date of next meeting

22. The Chairman said that the next SWLC meeting would be held in the Conference Room of the YLDC at 2:30 p.m. on 28 October 2024.

23. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 4:25 p.m.

Yuen Long District Council Secretariat
October 2024