

立法會
Legislative Council

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seen by the Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/WS

Panel on Welfare Services

**Minutes of policy briefing-cum-meeting
held on Monday, 11 October 2021, at 10:45 am
in Conference Room 1 of the Legislative Council Complex**

Members present : Dr Hon CHIANG Lai-wan, SBS, JP (Chairman)
Hon YIU Si-wing, SBS (Deputy Chairman)
Hon Starry LEE Wai-king, SBS, JP
Hon Michael TIEN Puk-sun, BBS, JP
Hon LEUNG Che-cheung, SBS, MH, JP
Hon KWOK Wai-keung, JP
Hon POON Siu-ping, BBS, MH
Hon Holden CHOW Ho-ding
Hon Wilson OR Chong-shing, MH
Dr Hon Pierre CHAN
Hon LUK Chung-hung, JP
Hon LAU Kwok-fan, MH, JP
Hon Vincent CHENG Wing-shun, MH, JP

Members attending : Hon Elizabeth QUAT, BBS, JP
Hon Tony TSE Wai-chuen, BBS, JP

Public Officers attending : Items II and III

Dr LAW Chi-kwong, GBS, JP
Secretary for Labour and Welfare

Ms WONG Yin-yee
Deputy Director of Social Welfare (Administration)
Social Welfare Department

Items II and IV

Mr HO Kai-ming, JP
Under Secretary for Labour and Welfare

Item II

Labour and Welfare Bureau

Ms Alice LAU Yim, JP
Permanent Secretary for Labour and Welfare

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

Ms Polly KWOK Wai-ling, JP
Deputy Secretary for Labour and Welfare (Welfare) 2

Ms Manda CHAN Wing-man, JP
Commissioner for Rehabilitation

Social Welfare Department

Mr Gordon LEUNG, JP
Director of Social Welfare

Mr KOK Che-leung
Deputy Director of Social Welfare (Services)

*Working Family and Student Financial Assistance
Agency*

Mr Donald NG Man-kit, JP
Head

Home Affairs Bureau

Mr Jack CHAN, JP
Under Secretary for Home Affairs

Mr Kenneth CHAN
Principal Assistant Secretary for Home Affairs (Civic
Affairs)2

Miss Vinci CHAN
Principal Assistant Secretary for Home Affairs (Civic
Affairs)3

Item III

Mr Andrew TSANG Yue-tung
Principal Assistant Secretary for Labour and Welfare
(Welfare 1)
Labour and Welfare Bureau

Item IV

Ms Jeanne CHENG
Principal Assistant Secretary for Labour and Welfare
(Commission on Children)
Labour and Welfare Bureau

Mr Albert WONG
Partner
PricewaterhouseCoopers Advisory Services Limited

Ms Kate SHIEH
Senior Manager
PricewaterhouseCoopers Advisory Services Limited

**Clerk in
attendance** : Ms Maisie LAM
Chief Council Secretary (2) 3

**Staff in
attendance** : Ms Catherina YU
Senior Council Secretary (2) 3

Mr Roger CHUNG
Council Secretary (2) 3

Miss Alison HUI
Legislative Assistant (2) 3

Mr William LEE
Legislative Assistant (2) 8

I. Information paper(s) issued since the last meeting
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1533/20-21(01)]

Members noted that an information paper provided by the Administration on provision and promotion of sign language, which was related to the subject “Provision and accreditation of sign language interpretation services” (LC Paper No. CB(2)1533/20-21(01)) on the Panel’s list of outstanding items for discussion, had been issued since the last meeting. The Chairman suggested that subject to any views members might have, the item would be removed from the above List. Members raised no queries.

II. Briefing by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare and the Secretary for Home Affairs on the Chief Executive’s 2021 Policy Address

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1522/20-21(01) and (02), The Chief Executive’s 2021 Policy Address and The Chief Executive’s 2021 Policy Address Supplement]

2. At the invitation of the Chairman, Secretary for Labour and Welfare (“SLW”) briefed members on the welfare initiatives and Under Secretary for Home Affairs (“USHA”) briefed members on the policy initiatives in respect of the Family Council, social enterprises (“SEs”) and the Community Care Fund set out in the Chief Executive’s 2021 Policy Address (“the 2021 Policy Address”), details of which were respectively set out in the Administration’s papers (LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1522/20-21(01) and (02)).

Policy implementation straddling two terms of the Government

3. Mr Michael TIEN said that the Chief Executive (“CE”) announced in January 2020 the initiative of enhancing the Old Age Living Allowance (“OALA”). Subsequently, it was announced in the 2021 Policy Address that the Administration planned to merge the Normal and Higher OALA in the second half of 2022, so that the more lenient asset limits of the Normal OALA would be adopted across-the-board, and eligible applicants would receive payment at the Higher OALA rate. Separately, for the new initiative announced in the 2021 Policy Address that a legislative proposal was being formulated to provide for a mandatory reporting mechanism on child abuse cases, the target of introducing the relevant bill into the Legislative Council (“LegCo”) was the first half of 2023. Given that the current term Government would end on 30 June 2022, he expressed concern about whether the next term Government would continue with the implementation

of these initiatives. Ms Elizabeth QUAT remarked that it was of utmost importance that the next term Government would honour the commitment of the current term Government in respect of these initiatives.

4. SLW advised that it was inevitable that any new initiative would take time to implement. The two new initiatives referred to in paragraph 3 above had just been announced in the 2021 Policy Address and they would need to be carried forward to the next term Government for implementation due to the considerable preparatory work required. The merging of the Normal and Higher OALA would require a large-scale update and testing under the computerized social security system of the Social Welfare Department (“SWD”) which would take about 10 months to complete. As regards the legislative exercise in respect of the mandatory reporting mechanism on child abuse cases which the Panel was consulted on the policy direction in September 2021, there was a need to solicit views from the relevant stakeholders on the legislative details and the whole legislative exercise would unlikely be able to complete within the current term Government.

Poverty alleviation

5. The Chairman enquired whether the Administration had assessed the number of current recipients of Old Age Allowance (“OAA”) (currently at \$1,475 per month) who would apply for OALA due to the merging of the Normal and Higher OALA and the additional recurrent annual expenditure so incurred. SLW advised that the 50 000 current recipients of Normal OALA (currently at \$2,845 per month) would receive the higher OALA rate (currently at \$3,815 per month). In addition, some current recipients of OAA and other eligible elderly persons might apply for OALA after the merger. The above was estimated to bring about an additional recurrent annual expenditure of \$0.8 billion. As a reference, there was a drop in the number of applications for elderly Comprehensive Social Security Assistance after the launch of the Higher OALA in 2018 which adopted more lenient asset limits when compared with the former.

6. Mr Michael TIEN expressed disappointment that while the implementation of the initiative would only involve an additional recurrent annual public expenditure of \$0.8 billion, it took the Administration two years to assess the financial implications for deciding whether to take forward the initiative. SLW explained that in the light of the outbreak of the coronavirus diseases 2019 epidemic in Hong Kong soon after the announcement of the initiative in January 2020, the Government had focused most of its efforts on fighting against the disease and assisting those business sectors and individuals hard hit by the epidemic through the setting up of the Anti-epidemic Fund and introducing various specific assistance

measures. Hence, there was a need to reassess the financial implications of the initiative to take into account the Government's latest fiscal position. In response to Mr KWOK Wai-keung's enquiry about the exact implementation period, SLW advised that it was expected that the initiative would be implemented in the third quarter of 2022.

7. Pointing out that the Consumption Voucher Scheme which was of a much larger scale only took a few months to implement, Mr POON Siu-ping asked whether there was room to advance the implementation time. The Chairman and Mr Wilson OR urged the Administration to expedite the preparation work. SLW reiterated that the implementation of the initiative required a large-scale update of the existing computerized social security system and time was required to test the new system and provide training to frontline staff in some 40 offices. The Administration would endeavour to implement the initiative in the third quarter of 2022.

8. Mr POON Siu-ping enquired about other efforts made by the Administration to narrow the disparity between the rich and the poor. SLW said that members could refer to the response given by him to a motion moved by a Member on "Resolving social conflicts and eradicating disparity between the rich and the poor" at the Council meeting of 1 September 2021.

Public expenditure on welfare

9. The Deputy Chairman noted that the public expenditure on elderly welfare, such as OALA, for which the estimated recurrent expenditure amounted to \$30.8 billion in 2021-2022, and the enhancement to the Government Public Transport Fare Concession Scheme for the Elderly and Eligible Persons with Disabilities, was substantial. Given that an ageing population with longer life expectancy would increase the public expenditure on elderly welfare, he suggested that the Administration should project the public expenditure on elderly welfare and assess the pressure on public finance so brought in the next five or 10 years.

10. Taking note of the suggestion, SLW added that the Working Group on Long-Term Fiscal Planning, which was set up in June 2013 and led by the Permanent Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury (Treasury), had explored ways to make more comprehensive planning for Hong Kong's public finances to cope with the ageing population and the Government's other long-term commitments. According to past analysis, expenditure on elderly welfare was projected to grow at around 4% per annum under an ageing population.

11. Mr Tony TSE noted that the recurrent expenditure on social welfare had increased significantly by 62% over the four years in 2017-2018 to 2021-2022. Given the finite public resources and a stronger sense of social responsibility in the business sector in recent years, he opined that the Administration should encourage the business sector to join hands with the Government in helping the disadvantaged. For existing measures which had already engaged the participation of third parties, such as the Special Scheme on Privately Owned Sites for Welfare Uses (“Special Sites Scheme”), the Administration should streamline the procedures to facilitate the business corporations and the non-governmental organizations (“NGOs”) concerned to play a greater role in this regard.

12. SLW advised that efforts had been made to promote tripartite partnership among the welfare sector, the business community and the Government since 2003 for creating a cohesive, inclusive and caring society. Cases in point included the setting up of the Partnership Fund for the Disadvantaged to support applicant organizations in running social welfare projects and the Child Development Fund to support the long-term development of children from a disadvantaged background. The Administration would review these measures as and when necessary.

Residential care services for the elderly

13. Mr POON Siu-ping expressed disappointment that there was no mention in the 2021 Policy Address about the macro planning to address the growing service demand for and manpower shortage of residential care homes for the elderly (“RCHEs”). Objecting to importing more care workers to address the manpower shortage of RCHEs, Mr LUK Chung-hung opined that efforts should be devoted to attract local labour to join the care sector. The Deputy Chairman asked whether the Navigation Scheme for Young Persons in Care Services (“Navigation Scheme”) had achieved its objective of encouraging young people to join the elderly and rehabilitation care sector, and whether the Administration had any plans to review the Navigation Scheme on a regular basis and import more labour to address the manpower shortfall of the sector. SLW advised that the Administration had reviewed and enhanced the Navigation Scheme through reducing the weekly working hours of the trainees and raising their salaries in order to attract more young people to join the elderly or rehabilitation care sector. As many young people would try out different jobs at their early career stage, job mobility of young people was high in general.

14. Pointing out that many RCHEs had adopted a twelve-hour work shift for their local care workers but an eight-hour work shift for imported care workers, Mr LUK Chung-hung called on the Administration to promote the

adoption of across-the-board eight-hour work shift for care workers in both private and subsidized RCHEs. SLW advised that the Administration would continue to explore ways to address the manpower shortage problem of RCHEs. It should however be noted that RCHEs would need to engage more manpower if three work shifts, instead of two work shifts, were to be adopted.

15. Mr KWOK Wai-keung called on the Administration to increase the provision of subsidized RCHE places in Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (“Greater Bay Area”) and welfare benefits for those elderly persons who wished to reside in the Greater Bay Area after retirement. Mr LUK Chung-hung asked about the implementation of the initiative to extend OALA to the Guangdong Scheme and Fujian Scheme.

16. SLW advised that since January 2020, OALA, in addition to OAA, had been provided to eligible Hong Kong elderly persons who had chosen to reside in Guangdong or Fujian. As at end-August 2021, this new arrangement benefitted over 13 000 Hong Kong elderly persons residing in the two provinces. As announced in the 2021 Policy Address, the Administration would explore the relaxation of absence limit under the pre-application one-year continuous residence requirement of the Social Security Allowance (“SSA”) Scheme to provide greater flexibility to Hong Kong elderly persons who resided on the Mainland. On the provision of subsidized residential care services (“RCS”), the Administration currently purchased services from two RCHEs located in Guangdong and operated respectively by the Hong Kong Society for Rehabilitation and the Helping Hand. The Administration would encourage NGOs and private organizations of Hong Kong with a good track record in the provision of such services to set up RCHEs in the mainland cities of Greater Bay Area, and explore different ways, including through purchasing services, to provide more options to elderly persons. Mr Wilson OR opined that the Administration should make more efforts in this regard, and expressed concern about whether the relaxation of absence limit under the SSA Scheme could be implemented during the current term of office of the Government. The Chairman remarked that the Administration should study the portability of medical services for elderly persons residing in the Greater Bay Area.

Residential care services for persons with disabilities

17. Ms Elizabeth QUAT expressed concern about the long-standing problem of acute shortage of RCS for persons with disabilities. Pointing out that the waiting time for hostels for severely mentally handicapped persons had reached 13 years, she enquired whether the Administration had any plan to reduce the waiting time for RCS for persons with disabilities.

18. SLW advised that as a long-term strategy to meet the service demand for residential care homes for persons with disabilities (“RCHDs”), the Administration would incorporate the planning ratio for various types of RCS for persons with disabilities into the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines (“HKPSG”) in 2021-2022. This would facilitate the relevant departments to reserve suitable premises during the planning process of new development projects for the construction of RCHDs. As for the developed districts, any proposal to set up RCHDs often met opposition from the community. As a medium strategy, various types of hostels for persons with disabilities would be provided in these districts through redevelopment of suitable vacant government premises and the Special Sites Scheme. A case in point was the redevelopment of the ex-Siu Lam Hospital site as an Integrated Rehabilitation Services Centre, which was expected to commence and provide, among others, residential services for persons with disabilities in 2022.

19. Mr Wilson OR enquired about the progress of the short-term strategy adopted by the Administration to meet the imminent need for premises for the early provision of welfare facilities by purchasing premises in the private market. SLW said that providing updates on the progress of the purchase exercise prematurely might affect the negotiation of the Administration. The Administration would brief the Panel on the subject as and when appropriate.

20. Ms Elizabeth QUAT expressed disappointment that while RCHD places had been in shortage for more than a decade, the Administration had dragged its feet in addressing the problem. SLW advised that under the efforts of the current term Government, a new Persons with Disabilities and Rehabilitation Programme Plan had been formulated following a review which took about two years to complete. The incorporation of the planning ratio for various types of RCS for persons with disabilities into HKPSG was a recommendation put forth in the Plan.

Support for carers

21. Ms Elizabeth QUAT said that in view of the inadequate supply of RCS for elderly persons and persons with disabilities, some carers who were elderly persons or persons with disabilities themselves had to take care of their elderly or disabled family members. Holding the view that carers were under tremendous pressure and were in need of emotional support and in-kind assistance to prevent the occurrence of family tragedies, she urged the Administration to take on board the repeated calls from members to regularize the Pilot Scheme on Living Allowance for Carers of Elderly

Persons from Low-income Families and the Pilot Scheme on Living Allowance for Low-income Carers of Persons with Disabilities (“Pilot Schemes on Living Allowance for Carers”), relax the eligibility criteria including the monthly household income limits under these Pilot Schemes and increase the provision of respite services, particularly emergency respite services. Mr Wilson OR asked whether the Administration would formulate and incorporate the planning ratios of residential respite services for elderly persons and persons with disabilities into HKPSG in view of the keen demand for such services.

22. SLW advised that the commissioned consultancy study on support for carers aimed at exploring more thoroughly the needs of carers and providing more effective support to them. The provision of respite services was covered in the study. The Panel would be briefed on the outcome of the study in the next legislative session.

23. Pointing out that many elderly persons were not aware of the Pilot Schemes on Living Allowance for Carers and the Pilot Scheme on Community Care Service Voucher for the Elderly, Mr LUK Chung-hung called on the Administration to step up publicity in this regard. SLW admitted that more had to be done to enhance the awareness of carers of the support available.

Mandatory reporting mechanism for child abuse cases

24. Mr KWOK Wai-keung and Ms Elizabeth QUAT noted with concern that according to the Police, the number of child abuse cases recorded in the first eight months of 2021 had risen by about 70% to 780 when compared with the same period in 2020. They urged the Administration to expedite the legislative work in relation to mandatory reporting of child abuse cases. Mr Wilson OR sought explanation as to the reason why the relevant bill could not be introduced into LegCo at an earlier time. Ms Elizabeth QUAT considered that the Administration should also take forward the legislative work in tandem with the recommendation put forth by the Law Reform Commission of Hong Kong (“LRC”) to introduce a new offence of “failure to protect a child or vulnerable person where the child’s or vulnerable person’s death or serious harm results from an unlawful act or neglect” for better protection of children and vulnerable persons.

25. SLW explained that the Administration would work out a legislative proposal for further consultation with stakeholders. Relevant professions also needed to consider beefing up the codes of practice or guidelines of the respective professions and enhance training for the relevant professional practitioners to facilitate the implementation of the mandatory reporting

mechanism. All these tasks would take a considerable amount of time to complete. On the new offence proposed by LRC, the Administration would consider it in the context of the legislative work in relation to mandatory reporting of child abuse cases.

26. Mr KWOK Wai-keung called on the Administration to meet with and listen to the views of the affiliated unions of teachers, social workers and healthcare workers, etc. under the Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions on the mandatory reporting mechanism for child abuse cases before the completion of the drafting of the relevant bill. SLW assured members that the relevant professionals would be consulted on the legislative proposal.

Social enterprises

27. Considering that the number of SEs was on the low side as compared to the total number of enterprises in Hong Kong, the Deputy Chairman asked whether the Administration had scrutinized the overall development trend of SEs to see if it was sustainable. USHA considered the development of SEs in Hong Kong to be successful as evidenced by the increase in the number of SEs from about 260 in 2008 to about 660 in 2021. Numbers aside, it was highly encouraging to witness the increasing numbers of SEs being set up by large corporations and district organizations, and that more and more young people were willing to pursue a lifelong career in SEs. Since the launch of the Enhancing Self-Reliance Through District Partnership Programme in 2006, the Administration had approved around \$360 million of funding to support the setting up or scaling up of SEs. Around 80% of the funded SEs remained in operation after the three-year funding period, and around 60% of them could achieve financial breakeven or make a profit after the funding period. Over 6 000 persons had been directly employed by the funded SEs thus far, with about 80% of them being socially disadvantaged. Separately, the Home Affairs Bureau had been providing funding support to the Center for Entrepreneurship of the Chinese University of Hong Kong since 2008 to organize the annual “Hong Kong Social Enterprise Challenge”, a competition which invited tertiary students and graduates to come up with innovative and feasible SE business plans. The competition had thus far attracted more than 8 800 participants and received over 1 500 business plans.

III. Registration of social workers

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1522/20-21(03) and (04)]

28. At the invitation of the Chairman, SLW briefed members on the Administration’s proposal to amend Schedule 2 to the Social Workers Registration Ordinance (Cap. 505) (“the Ordinance”) to the effect that a

person convicted of any offence endangering national security would not be entitled to be or continued to be a registered social worker, unless all members of the Social Workers Registration Board (“the Board”) resolved otherwise (“the proposed legislative amendment”), details of which were set out in the Administration’s paper (LC Paper No. CB(2)1522/20-21(03)).

29. Members noted the information note prepared by the LegCo Secretariat (LC Paper No. CB(2)1522/20-21(04)) on the subject under discussion.

The proposed legislative amendment

30. The Chairman, the Deputy Chairman, Mr LEUNG Che-cheung, Mr POON Siu-ping and Mr Wilson OR expressed support to the broad direction of the proposed legislative amendment. Mr Wilson OR held the view that the social worker profession had to shoulder social responsibility towards their service users with whom they were in frequent contact. Persons convicted of offences endangering national security, if permitted to discharge the duties of social workers, would put the interest of the service users at stake. The Deputy Chairman pointed out that there were social workers participating in the “black-clad violence” in 2019. If registered social workers exerted concepts endangering national security on their service users that included students and disadvantaged groups, who might not have the ability to distinguish right from wrong, might lead to social unrest. Hence, it was reasonable to include offences endangering national security in Schedule 2 to the Ordinance. He asked whether the legislative amendments would be drafted in general terms as set out in paragraph 6 of the Administration’s paper (i.e. the offences of “secession”, “subversion”, “terrorist activities” and “collusion with a foreign country or with external elements to endanger national security” stipulated in the Law of the People’s Republic of China on Safeguarding National Security in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (“NSL”), and the offences of “treason” and “sedition” in the Crimes Ordinance (Cap. 200)) or be more specific for the avoidance of doubt.

31. SLW advised that the proposal of the Administration was to add “offences endangering national security” to Schedule 2 to the Ordinance as it was not feasible to list all the offences concerned specifically. He added that the Administration was also taking forward proactively the enactment of local legislation to implement Article 23 of the Basic Law in Hong Kong, which would include relevant amendments to the Crimes Ordinance.

32. The Deputy Chairman was of the view that the proposed legislative amendments should come into operation as early as possible. In response to the enquiries of the Deputy Chairman and Mr POON Siu-ping about the

concrete timetable in this regard, SLW advised that the proposed legislative amendments would be subject to scrutiny by LegCo pursuant to the negative vetting procedure. The Administration would take forward the proposed legislative amendments in the Seventh LegCo, with the concrete legislative timetable to be mapped out after taking into account the macro views and relevant laws in coordination with other government bureaux.

33. The Chairman opined that registered social workers should uphold a high standard of conduct as they had frequent contact with their service users. Citing that offence relating to abuse of elderly persons was not specified in Schedule 2 to the Ordinance as an example, she was of the view that the Schedule should be reviewed in a comprehensive manner. SLW advised that the Board was empowered under the Ordinance to appoint disciplinary committees to conduct hearings and recommend to the Board actions to be taken in respect of any complaint concerning any disciplinary offence. The Board would make the final decision in respect of the complaint.

34. Mr Wilson OR considered it necessary to enhance the transparency of the Board's complaint handling mechanism. SLW advised that while the proceedings of the inquiries were not open to the public, the disciplinary orders of the Board would be published. The Administration welcomed any suggestions to further improve the Board's complaint handling mechanism.

Composition of the Social Workers Registration Board

35. Mr LEUNG Che-cheung said that there was a concern that no disciplinary action had been taken by the Board against those registered social workers who had been convicted of other criminal offences that were not specified in Schedule 2 to the Ordinance. He called on the Administration to adjust the composition of the Board to the effect that lay members would account for more than half of the membership of the Board to enhance the Board's public accountability and credibility in discharging its functions. Raising the concern that the current composition of the Board might give rise to the impression that the Board might not handle cases involving professional misconduct impartially, Mr POON Siu-ping asked whether the Administration would include in this legislative exercise amendments to amend the composition of the Board. Mr Wilson OR opined that there was a need to review the composition of the Board to include persons from different strata in the community.

36. SLW advised that members from the professional sector concerned in general accounted for more than half of the membership of the statutory self-regulatory professional bodies. The current ratio of eight elected

members out of the 15 members of the Board was already the lowest ratio among similar bodies. In considering any proposal to amend the membership ratio of the Board, the Administration had to take into account the overall arrangements for different self-regulatory professions and consult the views of these professions. He further advised that riding on the opportunity that the term of office of the current members of the Board would end on 15 January 2022, the Administration was considering increasing the proportion of lay persons among the six persons to be appointed by CE to the Board. SLW assured members that the Administration would monitor the operation and performance of the Board in discharging its statutory functions and consider further legislative amendments as necessary.

37. Mr LEUNG Che-cheung said that he did not agree that registered social workers had to account for more than half of the membership of the Board in order to preserve professional autonomy. The Chairman sought clarification as to whether a person convicted of criminal offences could be an elected member of the Board. SLW advised that a prerequisite for a person to be an elected member of the Board was being a registered social worker. Under the Ordinance, the application for registration or renewal of registration as a social worker from a person who had been convicted in Hong Kong or elsewhere of any offence which might bring the profession of social worker into disrepute and was punishable with imprisonment could be refused by the Board by a majority of votes. For persons convicted of any of the offences specified in Schedule 2 to the Ordinance (“scheduled offence”), the Board had to refuse their applications for registration or renewal of registration unless all the members for the time being of the Board, after considering all the circumstances of the case, resolved that they be so registered.

38. Mr POON Siu-ping enquired about the number of social workers whose name had been removed from the Register due to conviction of a scheduled offence since the establishment of the Board in 1998. SLW advised that while he did not have on hand the number of applications for registration or registration renewal which had been refused by the Board due to conviction of the scheduled offences, he recalled that the Board had not received any application for registration from persons who had committed a scheduled offence during his terms of office as a member of the Board for nine years. To his understanding, the high threshold of unanimous agreement by the Board deterred persons convicted of scheduled offences from applying for registration or registration renewal in the first place. He was not aware of such application in the past 10-odd years.

Training on safeguarding national security for registered social workers

39. Mr Wilson OR said that it was necessary to provide registered social workers with training on safeguarding national security and national development on a regular basis to facilitate them to better discharge their duties. SLW advised that SWD was updating the Service Performance Monitoring System to incorporate NSL under the relevant Service Quality Standard as a legislation which governed the operation and service delivery of the service units. The service units concerned had to put in place policy and procedures to monitor and ensure the compliance of their employees (including registered social workers under their employment) with NSL.

IV. Consultancy study for developing a central databank on children
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1522/20-21(05)]

40. At the invitation of the Chairman, Under Secretary for Labour and Welfare (“USLW”) briefed members on the progress of the consultancy study on developing a Central Databank on Children (“CDC”) in Hong Kong (“the Study”). Mr Albert WONG of PricewaterhouseCoopers Advisory Services Limited then gave members an overview of the Study. Details of the above briefings were set out in the Administration’s paper (LC Paper No. CB(2)1522/20-21(05)).

41. Mr POON Siu-ping and Mr Wilson OR expressed support for the development of a CDC in Hong Kong to enable the Government and/or relevant non-government stakeholders to collect and share useful data on children. Mr Wilson OR enquired about the development timeline. Mr POON Siu-ping raised the same enquiry, and sought information about the concrete details including arrangements of data sharing, participation of stakeholders as well as the manpower and financial resources required for the development.

42. USLW advised that having regard to the views collated through the local stakeholder engagement exercise, the Commission on Children (“CoC”) had selected “Risk of Abuse and Neglect” and “Children with Special Educational Needs” as the priority areas for further examination by the consultant in its final analysis. CoC aimed to complete the Study in around mid-2022. The Administration would decide the way forward of developing a CDC in Hong Kong taking into account the recommendations of the Study. The Chairman held the view that the CDC to be developed in Hong Kong should cover all but not only a particular segment of children, and should focus not only the welfare (e.g. to identify children vulnerable to abuse) but also the development of children. USLW explained that given

the complexity of the development of CDC, it was proposed that a central databank on selected themes or segments would be built in the initial stage. Mr Albert WONG of PricewaterhouseCoopers Advisory Services Limited advised that overseas experience suggested that the development of CDC could facilitate the government to formulate policies for the well-being of children. Mr Wilson OR urged the Administration to map out a detailed work plan for the development of a CDC in Hong Kong.

43. Mr POON Siu-ping noted that the consultant had conducted a literature review of five overseas CDC projects as set out in Annex A to the Administration's paper. He asked why the consultant included a project which had been terminated (i.e. ContactPoint of the United Kingdom) in the Study. The Chairman asked about the reasons of selecting these five projects for reference. Mr Albert WONG of PricewaterhouseCoopers Advisory Services Limited advised that these five CDC projects were selected because they were relatively more mature and of reference value to Hong Kong. The termination of ContactPoint was mainly relevant to the concerns over privacy, inappropriate data access and cost overruns. It was suggested that an incremental approach be adopted in developing a CDC in Hong Kong, with utmost importance placed on data privacy and system security when considering the type of databank and the data governance mechanism.

44. Noting that overseas CDC projects were usually overseen by a dedicated government department or a public body, Mr Wilson OR asked which government bureaux/departments ("B/Ds") would be responsible for the governance of the CDC to be developed in Hong Kong. Sharing his experience that there were some obstacles in data sharing among different government departments for domestic violence or child abuse cases due to concern over data privacy, he sought elaboration about how a CDC would facilitate the sharing of data for case intervention and the formulation of policies to help the vulnerable children given the various technical issues identified by the consultant and CoC under the guiding principles and key parameters for the development of a CDC in Hong Kong.

45. USLW stressed the importance to ensure data privacy in the development of a CDC in Hong Kong. To support data linkage, it was proposed that a federated model with a two-tier database structure be adopted. At the macro-level, the administrator of CDC would keep a central databank with non-identifiable data from B/Ds for the purpose of "trend monitoring" and "policy appraisal". At the micro-level, the relevant B/Ds would retain data with identifiable data in their respective databanks for the purposes of "prevention and early intervention" and "case tracking" as per prevailing practice. The administrator of CDC would set data standards to

be endorsed by CoC for unified definitions or formats to be adopted by different B/Ds, and administer the procedure and protocol of data storage and management. The issue of which B/D would be responsible for the governance of the future CDC would be worked out when the Administration considered the way forward after the completion of the Study. Mr Albert WONG of PricewaterhouseCoopers Advisory Services Limited added that among the five overseas CDC projects studied in the literature review, “case tracking” did not constitute an objective of four projects. ContactPoint was the only project with the purpose of “case tracking”. In considering the proposed framework for the development of a CDC, the Study would give due regard to the expectations of the local stakeholders on safeguarding data privacy.

46. In closing, the Chairman requested the Government to set out clearly the objectives of developing a CDC in Hong Kong, including how wider benefits could be brought about by using the data for “prevention and early intervention” purpose, and revert to the Panel in the next LegCo term on the outcome of the Study.

V. Any other business

47. This being the last meeting of the Panel in the current legislative session as well as in the Sixth LegCo, the Chairman thanked the Administration and members of the Panel for their support to the work of the Panel.

48. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 1:09 pm.