

**Notes of the 25th Meeting of
the Task Group on Implementation of Integrated Family Service Centres**

Date : 13 March 2008 (Thursday)

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

Venue : Conference Room 1, Social Welfare Department (SWD) Headquarters, 9/F, Wu Chung House, 213 Queen's Road East, Wan Chai, Hong Kong

Present

Social Welfare Department (SWD)

Miss Maria LAU	Chief Social Work Officer (Family and Child Welfare)1	(Convenor)
Ms WONG Sin-ying, Grace	Assistant District Social Welfare Officer (Wong Tai Sin / Sai Kung)1	
Ms LEE Kam-yung	Assistant District Social Welfare Officer (Wong Tai Sin / Sai Kung)2	
Miss CHAN Wai-chun	Assistant District Social Welfare Officer (Tsuen Wan / Kwai Tsing)1	
Mrs WONG HO Fung-see	Assistant District Social Welfare Officer (Tuen Mun)2	
Daniel CHU	Assistant District Social Welfare Officer (Kwun Tong)2	
Ms WONG Yin-yee	Assistant District Social Welfare Officer (Tai Po / North)2	
Mrs CHOY WONG Lai-chun, Sarah	Assistant District Social Welfare Officer (Eastern / Wan Chai)1	
Ms CHU Wing-yin, Diana	Assistant District Social Welfare Officer (Shatin)1	
CHAN Wah	Assistant District Social Welfare Officer (Sham Shui Po)1	
Mrs KWONG TAM Lai-yi, Heidy	Assistant District Social Welfare Officer (Kowloon City / Yau Tsim Mong)1	
Mrs KUANG YEUNG Ngan-hoo	Assistant District Social Welfare Officer (Central Western, Southern and Islands)1	
Ms LAU Yee-shan	Officer-in-charge Tseung Kwan O (East) Integrated Family Service Centre	

Miss HAU Suk-kwan	Officer-in-charge Kwai Chung (East) Integrated Family Service Centre
AU YEUNG Wing-on	Officer-in-charge Tuen Mun (South) Integrated Family Service Centre
Ms POON Shuk-tak, Joan	Social Work Officer / Integrated Family Service (Tuen Mun)2
Mr LEE Kai-yan, Albert	Social Work Officer / Integrated Family Service Centre (Sham Shui Po)
Miss KO Hay-man, Hermione	Social Work Officer / Integrated Family Service Centre (Kowloon City / Yau Tsim Mong)2
Ms TSUI Yuk-king	Social Work Officer / Integrated Family Service (Central Western, Southern and Islands)1
Ms Loletta LO	Senior Social Work Officer (Family)2
Ms LEE Chi-kiu	Social Work Officer (Family)1
YAU Shu-fung	Assistant Social Work Officer (Family)2 (Recorder)

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs)

Ms Angie LAI	Head of Family Service Caritas – Hong Kong
Ms Sira NG	Social Work Supervisor Caritas – Hong Kong
Otto LAU	Head of Family Service Hong Kong Family Welfare Society
Benny CHAN	Senior Manager (Enhancement & Facilitation) Hong Kong Family Welfare Society
Ms Daphne LO	Senior Manager (Family Service) Hong Kong Family Welfare Society
Daniel CHU	Division Head (Family Service Division) Yang Memorial Methodist Social Service
Ms LAW Siu-ching	Social Worker Yang Memorial Methodist Social Service
KWOK Wai-keung	General Manager (Family and Community Core Business) Hong Kong Christian Service
Ms Cross LI	Principal Coordinator Hong Kong Christian Service

Ms Agnes NG	Senior Programme Director Christian Family Service Centre
Ms Wendy WONG	Senior Manager St James' Settlement
Mrs NGAN LAI Mee-yuk	Social Work Supervisor Hong Kong Children and Youth Services
Mrs Angela CHIU	Supervisor Hong Kong Catholic Marriage Advisory Council
Ms Iris LIU	Director of Programme International Social Service Hong Kong Branch
Kerin CHAM	Director of Programme International Social Service Hong Kong Branch
Ms Fion CHOW	District Director Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui
Ms Sonia PANG	District Service Director The Neighbourhood Advice-Action Council
Ms Elsa CHIU	Chief Officer Service Development (Family and Community) Hong Kong Council of Social Service

In attendance

Mrs MAK CHOW Suk-har, Anna	Assistant Director (Family and Child Welfare)	For Agenda Item 3 & 4 only
Mrs LEE CHUNG Tim-ying, Betty	Senior Social Work Officer (Subventions) ³	For Agenda Item 3 only

Opening remarks

Miss Maria LAU welcomed those who were attending the meeting for the first time, including Ms LEE Kam-yung, Ms LAU Yee-shan, Miss HAU Suk-kwan, Mr LEE Kai-yan, Albert, Miss KO Hay-man, Hermione, Ms TSUI Yuk-king from SWD, and Mr Benny CHAN, Ms Daphne LO, Ms LAW Siu-ching, Mrs NGAN LAI Mee-yuk from NGO.

Confirmation of notes of last meeting

2. Notes of the last meeting were confirmed without amendment.

[Post-meeting notes: The confirmed notes of the 24th meeting were uploaded to SWD Homepage on 14 March 2008.]

Matters arising

Revised draft of the “Guidelines on Division of Work and Case Transfer between FCPSUs and IFSCs / ISCs” (para 6, p.5)

3. Ms Loletta LO reported that the finalized version of the revised “Guidelines on Division of Work and Case Transfer between FCPSUs and IFSCs / ISCs” (the Guidelines) would soon be issued to all service units concerned. A member inquired if the revised Guidelines would address NGOs’ concerns on the different practices adopted by IFSCs of SWD and NGOs in taking up new battered spouse cases. Ms Loletta LO reiterated that the Guidelines mainly focused on operational issues on the existing division of work and case transfer among different service units. The issue raised by the member would be left to the Task Group on Review of Procedural Guidelines for Handling Battered Spouse Cases for consideration.

[Post-meeting notes: The Guidelines were issued to members, IFSCs and FCPSUs vide email on 26 March 2008.]

Training courses (para 7, p.6)

4. Ms LEE Chi-kiu reported on the enrolment for training courses conducted from December 2007 to March 2008. She also highlighted training courses to be conducted from April to June 2008 tentatively as listed below and encouraged members to nominate suitable colleagues to attend –

- (i) Workshop on understanding the upbringing of new arrivals from the Mainland (late April 2008);
- (ii) Induction for social workers newly posted to IFSCs (Class 1) (May 2008); and
- (iii) Training course on working with people with drinking problem (June 2008).

Review on the IFSC service mode (para 8, p.6)

5. Miss Maria LAU informed members that the draft tender documents for the re-tendering of the review on IFSC service mode had been forwarded to the Department of Justice for comments. The re-tendering was expected to be conducted in mid 2008.

Collaboration with primary schools (para 15, p.8)

6. Miss Maria LAU encouraged members, according to the service needs in their districts, to explore strategy of achieving effective collaboration with primary schools in the locality. A member shared her experience that some social workers of Integrated Children and Youth Services Centres newly taking up the duties of school social workers were not aware of the work procedures stipulated in “A Guide on Multi-disciplinary Collaboration in School Social Work Service” (the Guide). She suggested uploading the Guide to SWD Homepage to facilitate easy access by social workers. Miss Maria LAU agreed to relay the suggestion to the Youth and Corrections Branch for their consideration.

[Post-meeting notes: The Guide was uploaded to SWD Homepage on 15 May 2008.]

Handling of complaints

7. Mrs LEE CHUNG Tim-ying, Betty briefed members on the handling of complaints by the Subventions Section (SS) of SWD. The gist of sharing was as follows -

- (i) The principles in handling complaints including corporate governance, public accountability, risk management, fairness, confidentiality and continuous improvement were shared.
- (ii) The number of complaints handled by SS which involved NGO IFSCs was relatively low when compared with complaints relating to other services.
- (iii) When SS received complaints against NGOs relating to issues of service performance, SS would refer them to the CEO or Board / Management Committee of NGOs concerned for investigation, handling and reply to the complainants if the complaints had not been handled by the CEO before. NGOs were required to copy the reply to the complainants to SS for

monitoring and consideration of improvement / rectification. SS would consider conducting direct investigation if it was not satisfied with the investigation result by NGOs or under exceptional or special circumstances. Likewise, SS would refer anonymous complaints to NGOs concerned for direct handling.

- (iv) SS would also conduct direct investigation on (a) complaints against NGOs Board / Management Committee regarding problems in governance, (b) complaints already handled by the CEO or Board / Management Committee but the complainants were not satisfied with the investigation results, (c) complaints for which SS was not satisfied with the investigation of the NGOs, (d) complaints relating to misuse of subventions money, (e) complaints relating to subventions policy, and (f) complaints that had great impacts on the welfare sector and might draw huge public attention. SS would request NGOs concerned to investigate and submit an Investigation Report together with supporting documents and records for examination. On-site assessment might also be conducted as appropriate. SS would also write to relevant offices / service branches / government departments for comments if the issue was related to policy or within the ambit of other offices / departments. On the whole, SS's replies to complainants must be evidenced-based and objective. SS would also handle anonymous complaints on (d), (e) and (f) as well as abused cases with identified areas or information identified / provided by the complainants.

8. Mrs LEE further stated that NGOs should take prompt action in handling complaints and complete the investigation within the time frame specified in their respective policy and procedures relating to lodging and handling of complaints under Service Quality Standard (SQS) 15. Attention should also be paid to the complainants' concern and emotion. Delay or defensive attitude in handling complaints might induce further dissatisfaction from the complainants and escalation of the problem. Besides, according to SQS 15, NGOs should have policy and procedures in relation to handling complaints that were accessible to service users, staff or other interested parties. Miss Maria LAU agreed that complaints should be taken as opportunities for service improvement.

9. Responding to a member's concern on handling of complaints made on behalf of service users, like those made by pressure groups or District Board members, Mrs LEE shared that NGOs might consider giving only brief replies if the complainants had not obtained consent from the service users concerned. NGOs should observe

stipulations in the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance when preparing their replies.

[Mrs LEE CHUNG Tim-ying, Betty left the meeting at this juncture.]

Any other business

Preparedness plan for outbreaks of influenza

10. In view of the outbreaks of influenza-like illness in schools in early March 2008, Miss Maria LAU informed members that the “Alert Response Level” had been activated in accordance with the “Framework of Government’s Preparedness Plan for Influenza Pandemic”. She highlighted that relevant guidelines on preventing and handling influenza / avian influenza could be downloaded from the homepage of the Centre for Health Protection and reminded members to adopt appropriate precautionary measures in relation to the operation of IFSCs / ISCs.

Additional resources on support services for families in the 2008-09 estimates

11. Mrs MAK CHOW Suk-har, Anna shared with members the allocation of additional resources in the 2008-09 estimates, subject to approval by the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council, for enhancing family and child welfare services as follows -

- (i) recurrent resources of about \$4 million would be allocated to IFSCs / ISCs in the seven administrative districts operating the Comprehensive Child Development Service for strengthening social service support;
- (ii) annual funding of about \$40 million for strengthening direct support for victims of domestic violence and families in-need would be provided to increase the places of refuge centres for women, strengthen SWD’s hotline service, sustain efforts in publicity campaigns and public education, and enhance the training of front-line professionals; and
- (iii) recurrent resources of \$45 million would be provided over the next three years to strengthen day foster care services and to promote various types of child care services that offer greater flexibility to meet the needs of parents.

12. Mrs MAK went on to share with members on other initiatives and services that

might affect / facilitate the work of IFSCs / ISCs including the amendment of the Domestic Violence Ordinance and the enhancement of manpower in District Elderly Community Centres. Mrs MAK encouraged colleagues of IFSCs / ISCs to fully utilize the resources available for family and child welfare services on delivering their core services, while at the same time strengthen collaboration with local partners and other services / professionals for better interfacing and synergy.

Review of “Procedural Guidelines for Handling Battered Spouse Cases (2004)”

13. Ms Loletta LO briefly reported on the progress of the review on the “Procedural Guidelines for Handling Battered Spouse Cases (2004)”. A task group, convened by Chief Social Work Officer (Domestic Violence), was set up in November 2007 with representatives from the Labour and Welfare Bureau, SWD, Hospital Authority, Hong Kong Police Force, Hong Kong Council of Social Service and NGOs to conduct an overall review of the existing guidelines and procedures. The review was tentatively scheduled to be completed in July 2009. Miss Maria LAU reiterated the importance of multi-disciplinary collaboration and acknowledged members’ concern on enhancing communication with the police to facilitate better coordination in handling cases of battered spouse. Ms Loletta LO shared that the Domestic Violence Team had been maintaining regular contacts with the police to channel the views of our frontline social workers.

[Mrs MAK CHOW Suk-har, Anna left the meeting at this juncture.]

Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) applications concerning children born in Hong Kong whose parents are non-Hong Kong residents

14. Ms Loletta LO shared that under the existing arrangement, for CSSA applicants living with family members, the application must be made on a household basis. The same arrangement should apply to families which have taken children of relatives or friends into their care and have financial difficulty to support the children. In the interest of children, children born in Hong Kong to parents who were non-Hong Kong residents should not be allowed to apply for CSSA on their own. Under such arrangement, staff of Social Security Field Unit (SSFU) should not exercise discretion to allow those children to apply for CSSA on their own and there would be no need for them to refer such cases to IFSCs for recommendation on the CSSA application.

15. A member raised concern over whether the arrangement would raise difficulties in assisting children involved. Ms Loletta LO reiterated that the interest of children

was of paramount importance and parents should work out suitable caring arrangements to cater for the physical, psychological and emotional needs of their children. She further pointed out that there was a “grandfathering” arrangement for existing cases where children were currently receiving CSSA on their own to avoid possible disruption to the children’s livelihood and schooling. It was also explained that the present reminder of strict enforcement of household requirement applied to children born in Hong Kong with both parents being non-Hong Kong residents. Miss Maria LAU added that SWD would closely monitor the situation and keep-in-view of any concerns arising from the above arrangement.

Handling of case referrals

16. Miss Maria LAU requested members to remind frontline colleagues to adhere to the “Procedures for Handling Case Referrals” (處理轉介個案程序) (tabled for members’ reference), distributed to members by email on 20 October 2006 following the discussion at the 18th meeting of the Task Group, which set out the common principles / practice in handling referrals to IFSCs / ISCs. She highlighted the need to contact service users within 10 working days after receipt of referrals and to render immediate services for urgent cases.

Programme Workers and Programme Assistants

17. Arising from the Government’s initiative to create 3,000 Programme Worker (PW) posts for subvented NGOs, a member inquired if PWs would be allocated to IFSCs/ ISCs. Miss Maria LAU agreed to further explore the issue. Two members shared on the contribution of Programme Assistants (PAs) in IFSCs and inquired if NGOs would be allowed the flexibility to increase the salary of PAs to improve retention of incumbents. Miss Maria LAU acknowledged their concern and agreed to channel their views to Subventions Section.

Date of next meeting

18. There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

19. The next meeting was scheduled to be held on 18 June 2008 (Wednesday) at 2:30 p.m. at Conference Room 1, 9/F, Wu Chung House.