

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL PANEL ON WELFARE SERVICES**

**Update on Measures to Support Young People**

**PURPOSE**

This paper updates Members on the progress of the various measures put in place to support young people in recent years.

**BACKGROUND**

2. At the meeting on 10 December 2001, we reported to Members details of a number of new initiatives announced in the 2001 Policy Address, to sustain efforts in promoting the healthy development of young people through early identification, timely intervention, and effective rehabilitation to help youth-at-risk. In addition to implementing the new measures, the Social Welfare Department (SWD) has also put in place further enhancements in existing services as part of the continuous strategy of addressing the changing, multi-farious needs of young people in a holistic and integrated manner.

**PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTING MEASURES PLEDGED IN THE 2001 POLICY ADDRESS**

**Extending the Understanding the Adolescent Project (UAP)**

3. In the 2001/02 school year, we implemented the UAP in 150 secondary schools. The Project has been further extended to another 105 schools, making a total of 255 schools in the 2002/03 school year. To continue our efforts in identifying the developmental needs of young people at an early stage and in building up their resilience through primary preventive programmes under UAP, we have planned to cover all secondary schools in the 2003/04 school year with an annual cost of \$51.4 million.

4. SWD has commissioned the Centre for Clinical Trials and Epidemiological Research (CCTER) of the Chinese University of Hong Kong to conduct an evaluation study on the effectiveness of the primary preventive programme (PPP) of the UAP. The study was completed in April 2003. Research findings indicated that the PPP has achieved some effectiveness in improving the students' ability on various dimensions including anger management, conflict resolution, problem solving, communication and relationship with others, classroom behaviour, belongingness to family and school, as well as optimism, sense of responsibility and willingness to help others. Likewise, most teacher, parent and social worker respondents indicated that the PPP has, in particular, enhanced their ability to understand the students. Among all the dimensions, the effectiveness with respect to belongingness to both school and family is relatively lower compared with others. The report has thus recommended more efforts to be made to strengthen the PPP in this area. SWD will share the findings and recommendations of the report with the Committee on Services for Youth at Risk and then among the relevant non-governmental organisations (NGOs), secondary schools and other relevant stakeholders, with a view to raising their awareness on ways to enhance the effectiveness of the Project. Besides, good practices from NGOs and schools on programmes / activities targeting at enhancing students' sense of belongingness to family and school would be collected and disseminated for reference purpose.

5. To further enhance the support service to our youth with preventive measures implemented at their younger age, the UAP has been extended to primary schools on a pilot basis, with 18 primary schools in Tai Po and North District participated in the three-year pilot study by the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) starting from the 2001/02 school year. Apart from conducting primary preventive programme for all Primary Four to Primary Six pupils progressively from 2001/02 to 2003/04 school years, two counselling teams have been set up in Tai Po and North District to provide follow-up services for pupils and families assessed to be in need of counselling. Upon completion of the pilot project in 2003/04, it is scheduled to roll out the UAP by phases to a total of 400 primary schools by 2005/06 school year. By that time, we will revisit the existing UAP programme targeting at Secondary One students.

### **Continuous Formation of Integrated Children and Youth Services Centres**

6. To take forward the initiative of expediting the formation of Integrated Children and Youth Services Centres (ICYSCs, formerly known as Integrated Teams) over a three-year period, with new recurrent resources of \$70 million earmarked in the 2001 Budget, consultation with the welfare sector was conducted and invitations to NGOs operating young people services to apply for the formation of ICYSCs were

made in December 2001. A total of 73 proposals had been received from 38 NGOs. Upon detailed assessment by the Department along criteria of service demand, location of the centres as well as the amount of resources sought and successful local consultations, a total of 64 additional ICYSCs have been formed by phases, bringing the total number of ICYSCs up to 129 as at May 2003. On the other hand, upon consultation with NGOs, the Hong Kong Council of Social Service, the Hong Kong Social Workers' General Union and the Committee on Services for Youth at Risk, it is recognised that while serving the changing needs of young people through ICYSCs is in the right direction, outreaching social work service should be retained and has to be restructured to address the needs of high-risk youth and to handle issues of juvenile gang. The 24 Outreaching Social Work Teams (OSWTs) have thus been restructured into 16 District Youth Outreaching Social Work Teams (YOTs) since 1 September 2002 with a view to achieving a full spectrum of services to meet the needs of general youth as well as youth-at-risk.

### **Formation of New ICYSCs in Newly Developed / Redeveloped Areas**

7. There are six additional ICYSCs to be set up in new premises in newly developed / redeveloped areas namely Sham Tseng, Tseung Kwan O, Mong Kok, Ma On Shan, Quarry Bay and Tuen Mun, so as to provide comprehensive youth services to meet the growing demand in these areas. The new ICYSC in Sham Tseng was formed in September 2002 while the ones in Tseung Kwan O and Mong Kok are scheduled to be set up in June 2003 and February 2004 respectively. Progress of the remaining three ICYSCs will be subject to the completion of construction works. To promote efficient use of resources, the principle of zero budgeting would be applied such that pooling of existing resources would be encouraged while injection of new recurrent resources would be considered if required.

### **Modernisation Programme of ICYSCs**

8 With service integration achieved through ICYSCs, it is considered equally important and timely to upgrade and modernise the hardware of the centres, with a view to providing up-to-date facilities to attract and meet the changing needs of contemporary youth. In turn, the modernisation programme will enhance the cost effectiveness of the huge recurrent resources invested in youth. The Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust and the Lotteries Fund have on a dollar-to-dollar basis earmarked total funds amounting to \$400 million for modernising up to 80 ICYSCs over a period of five years starting from 2002-2003. The earmarked provision includes renovation as well as purchase of upgraded and trendy furniture and equipment, capped at a provision of \$4.84 million for each centre.

9. A total of 63 applications from 26 NGOs were received in response to

the Department's invitation for the first batch of the Modernisation Programme. These applications were carefully assessed by the Vetting Committee against the basic vetting criteria such as previous renovation record and size of the premises and having regard to their district priority in order to ensure young people from all districts would benefit from the improved services. As a result, a total of 34 ICYSCs from 17 NGOs had been endorsed by the Lotteries Fund Advisory Committee for the funding support. The respective modernisation work is expected to be completed by the end of 2004-05. The Department is now considering the timeframe to invite applications for the second batch of the ICYSC Modernisation Programme.

### **Review of the Funding & Services Agreement (FSA) of ICYSCs**

10. As a further step to enhance the quality of service and to bring in more up-to-date measurement of service effectiveness, the Department is undertaking a review of the FSA of ICYSCs in consultation with the NGOs. The exercise will target at transforming the service requirements from output-oriented indicators to outcome-oriented ones, thus focusing the monitoring of service on effectiveness and actual benefits to customers. The review is expected to be conducted and completed in 2003-04.

### **Peer Counsellors**

11. SWD has implemented the initiative of engaging 150 peer counsellors to provide support and guidance to Secondary 3 school leavers with \$15.4 million starting from January 2002. The programme is funded on a time-limited basis for 27 months from January 2002 to March 2004 and is experimental in nature. It is well-supported with training and sharing sessions to equip all peer counsellors with necessary skills in performing the task.

12. To ascertain the effectiveness of the programme, SWD has engaged the Policy 21 Ltd of the University of Hong Kong to conduct an evaluation study since June 2002. The study, which was completed in May 2003, has indicated a positive result according to the responses from different stakeholders, including the peer counsellors, NGOs and schools. The adolescents who received the service reported to have better understanding and less anxiety on employment / further education and improved life skills through the support and assistance from the peer counsellors. It was also encouraging that the peer counsellors considered they had benefited from the programme in aspects such as enhancement in confidence and interpersonal communication skills, gaining job satisfaction and drive for continuing education.

13. Based on the feedback obtained from different stakeholders on the peer counselling programme, the Consultant has recommended, among other things,

further training for peer counsellors with more in-depth skills such as running groups and counselling techniques, to further enhance their capacity in helping the adolescents. In response, SWD would conduct three more training courses in May and June 2003. Other recommendations such as more publicity and earlier engagement with the schools and Secondary 3 students as well as resources for schools with greater needs would also be addressed as appropriate. The programme will last until 31 March 2004 and its continuation would be subject to various factors, including the evaluation outcome and the availability of resources.

### **Setting up of Additional Counselling Centres for Psychotropic Substance Abusers**

14. In addition to the existing three Counselling Centres for Psychotropic Substance Abusers (CCPSAs) covering West Kowloon, New Territories East and New Territories West Regions, two more CCPSAs were set up in October 2002 in Hong Kong Island and East Kowloon for a territory-wide coverage of services, to meet rising trends of psychotropic substance abuse especially among young people.

15. To further strengthen services for young drug abusers, SWD has hived off its Against Substance Abuse Scheme (ASAS) and transferred the service to NGOs operating CCPSAs since August 2002. Through collaborating with concerned stakeholders such as schools and substance abuse clinics at district level, CCPSAs provide one-stop preventive and treatment services to help secondary students, youth-at-risk and occasional/habitual young psychotropic substance abusers abstain from drug abuse and develop a healthy lifestyle.

### **Support Services for Young Night Drifters**

16. Members were briefed on the setting up of a pilot all-night drop-in centre for youth-at-risk with a grant from the Lotteries Fund in another Panel Paper discussed on 10 December 2001. The drop-in centre, namely the Hang Out in Kwun Tong managed by the Youth Outreach, has operated since July 2002. The Hang Out, which is now operated round-the-clock, provides a safe and comfortable place where young people can talk, eat and drink, have fun together and obtain professional support. Facilities include counselling rooms, cyber café, karaoke and band rooms, function rooms for recreational and cultural activities, crisis residential unit as well as open space for basketball game and rock climbing.

17. The services of the Hang Out were well received by young people, their families, and social workers. From July 2002 to April 2003, over 8 000 people have registered as members, among which 7 527 were young people, 404 were family members while others being social workers or volunteers. The number of times

social workers had made use of the centre to provide services for young people approaches 500. Among the facilities at the centre, recreational facilities were most frequently used, followed by using the centre for group / mass programmes, the counselling rooms and crisis residential units. Questionnaire surveys of service users reported that on average, 88.3% of young people who have used the services at the Hang Out indicated satisfaction towards the services provided, while an average of 92.4% of social workers were satisfied.

18. While the Hang Out serves young people from over the territory, the benefits of localised leisure and recreational facilities to meet the needs of youth in late hours is recognised. In this connection, SWD and the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) have started a pilot scheme to open indoor recreation centres (IRCs) at late night for NGOs to organise programmes and activities for young night drifters in July 2002. The scheme was first launched on a trial basis at the Lung Sum Avenue IRC in the North District and the Yuen Wo Road IRC in Sha Tin, with opening hours from 11:30 p.m. to 2:00 a.m. on Fridays twice a month. From July to December 2002, a total of 23 programmes were organised. These programmes were of a wide variety including drug-free rave party, ball game, adventure-based training, employment guidance activity, anti-drug programme, dancing contest, life skills training, sex education programme, and self-development workshop.

19. A total of 879 young people have participated in the programmes in the two IRCs. Feedbacks from these young people on the accessibility of the venue, facilities, opening hours and frequency as well as the programmes themselves were positive, while youth workers considered that the schemes could both provide a safe and comfortable environment to engage YNDs in leisure and developmental activities, while offering a good entry point to facilitate subsequent social work intervention. These schemes of late-night programmes in Sha Tin and Sheung Shui also received wide support from District Council members, local leaders and members of the community. They have set a very good example for other districts to model after should such needs arise. Accordingly, similar arrangements were launched in Tseung Kwan O and Kwai Tsing districts in October and November 2002 respectively. It is however necessary to strike a balance between the opening of IRCs and the possible residual effect of encouraging the young people to develop night drifting behaviour by attending night activities. Individual districts would assess according to their district needs and be very cautious on striking a balance if more night facilities are to be opened up in future.

## **ENHANCING SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN / JUVENILES WHO HAVE INFRINGED THE LAW**

20. The LegCo Bills Committee on Juvenile Offenders (Amendment) Bill 2001 has met since mid July 2002 to examine issues of raising the minimum age of criminal responsibility (minimum age). On 12 March 2003, the Bill was passed to raise the minimum age to ten and the Juvenile Offenders (Amendment) Ordinance 2003 will come into operation on 1 July 2003. With a view to enhancing support services for children both below and above the minimum age, the Administration has pledged to strengthen the existing measures for referring children and young people who come to the attention of the Police, due to their non-law abiding behaviours but have yet to reach the minimum age, and to introduce a formalised system in the form of Family Conference to decide on the appropriate actions to deal with young offenders.

21. To strengthen existing measures for referring children and young people who come to the attention of the Police due to their non-law abiding behaviours, including those yet to reach the minimum age, an information leaflet will be given to the parents upon the arrest of the juvenile. The leaflet will list the circumstances under which a juvenile requires follow-up services and detail on the available support services provided by relevant Government departments and NGOs. The objectives are to bring to the parents' attention the problems of their children, enable them to better assess the seriousness of their children's problems, and encourage them to seek professional assistance. If the juveniles and their families are in need of social services, upon the parents' consent, the Police will refer them to appropriate departments or NGOs for follow-up.

22. To facilitate the Police to consult, at an early stage, SWD, EMB, the parents and other relevant parties on appropriate intervention strategies for individual juvenile who have infringed the law, Family Conference may be conducted for juveniles cautioned under the Police Superintendent's Discretion Scheme (PSDS). The Family Conference brings together family members of cautioned juveniles and professionals from relevant Government departments / agencies to assess the needs of the juveniles and to draw up action plan to address the needs identified through joint efforts of related professionals.

23. The Conference would be applicable to juveniles cautioned under the PSDS who meet the criteria set out below –

- (a) the Superintendent exercising the caution considers that the juvenile is in need of the services of three or more parties, e.g., the Police (Juvenile Protection Section), SWD, EMB, NGOs, Department of

Health, Hospital Authority, and so on; or

- (b) the juvenile is given the second or further caution.

24. The Family Conference would be held within 10 working days after Police's caution and would be chaired by a designated Social Work Officer of SWD. Needs of the family would be identified and relevant resources and welfare services to address their needs would be introduced through the Conference. A key worker would be appointed in the Family Conference to follow up on relevant referrals and maintain liaison with relevant parties involved in taking the follow-up actions. For cases which Family Conference is not applied, SWD could also be engaged to assess the needs of the juvenile and make referral for appropriate follow-up services.

#### **CONTINUOUS ENHANCEMENT OF CROSS-SECTOR COLLABORATION**

25. The need for concerted efforts among related professionals, policy bureaux, government departments and NGOs to address the changing needs of our young people has been well recognised. With a view to promoting and maintaining cross-sector collaboration in supporting the healthy development of young people, SWD and EMB have put in place a number of new initiatives to strengthen support for youth and their families. For example, the bureau and department have jointly organised briefings, exhibitions and other promotional programmes / activities at district level. Other stakeholders including Hong Kong Police Force, the Department of Health, the Customs and Excise Department and the LCSD were also involved in introducing their respective services or initiatives targeting at addressing the multi-farious needs of youth. In this regard, five regional promotional programmes were conducted in October 2002 under the central theme of 'Together We Care – Introducing Young People Services'.

26. A total of 2 742 participants attended the five promotional programmes and the majority being social workers, followed by school personnel, members of Parent-Teacher Association, young people, representatives of various government departments, local personnel and members of District Councils. In general, the promotional programmes organised at the different regions have succeeded in enhancing the awareness of stakeholders of existing support services for young people. Notably, most of the participants reported that they would be interested in taking part in programmes and activities related to young people services in future. Further and continuous cross-sector collaboration can thus be developed upon the foundation laid by this joint endeavour.

**ADVICE SOUGHT**

27. Members are invited to note and comment on the measures implemented to strengthen support for young people.

Social Welfare Department  
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