

**Motion debate of 31 January 2007 on
“A comprehensive review on mental health policy”**

Progress report

The Government is committed to promoting mental health. We have in place comprehensive measures, starting from preventive public education to advocate to the general public the importance of mental health and methods of early identification and intervention. We also provide channels for seeking help and appropriate support, counselling and treatment. In addition, we provide persons recovering from mental illness a series of rehabilitation services to encourage them to regain life skills, communication skills and work abilities with a view to reintegrating into society. In parallel, the Disability Discrimination Ordinance also ensures equal opportunities to be enjoyed by ex-mentally ill patients.

2. The Bureau formed a Working Group on Mental Health Services in the middle of last year. The Working Group commenced its work in last August. The objective is to comprehensively review the existing mental health policy and services, and to formulate the direction for future development of the services. The Working Group is chaired by the Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food. Members include professionals in the provision of psychiatric treatment and rehabilitation services, as well as academics. For the time being, Members of the Working Group are formulating its working framework and drawing up future discussion agenda. We expect that it would cover many worth-noting issues, including stigmatisation issue, collaboration between primary and specialised health care, etc.

3. With regard to the further development of mental health services, we will continue to enhance the services toward the following goals:

- (1) enhancing public education to remind the public to pay attention to mental health;
- (2) providing appropriate services to facilitate early identification and intervention for people with mental problems;
- (3) enhancing professional support, with particularly focus on training for primary health care and community services; and
- (4) promoting early recovery of people with mental illness and facilitating their integration into society.

4. In 2007/08, the Government plans to allocate \$20 million for implementing a new Community Mental Health Intervention Project. It will seek to achieve early identification of persons with mental health issues in the community, while in parallel providing intensive and outreaching intervention to those in need.

5. As for the concrete plan in the long run, it will be subject to any concrete suggestions to be proposed by the Working Group on Mental Health Services recently set up, after reviewing existing services and discussions. Due to the wide scope of “mental health”, the large number of parties concerned and the far-reaching effect of the issues discussed, we need to work with relevant experts to study in detail and plan carefully for the way forward. The task is challenging and will take time, and its result will have a far-reaching impact. We will consult relevant parties for views at appropriate time.

Health, Welfare and Food Bureau
March 2007