

立法會

Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)2637/08-09
(The minutes have been seen by
the Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/ED

Panel on Education

**Minutes of special meeting
held on Tuesday, 8 September 2009, at 10:45 am
in Conference Room A of the Legislative Council Building**

- Members present** : Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan (Chairman)
Dr Hon Priscilla LEUNG Mei-fun (Deputy Chairman)
Hon CHEUNG Man-kwong
Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung
Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP
Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, SBS, JP
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, SBS, JP
Hon Andrew LEUNG Kwan-yuen, SBS, JP
Prof Hon Patrick LAU Sau-shing, SBS, JP
Hon Starry LEE Wai-king
Hon Tanya CHAN
Hon WONG Sing-chi
- Members attending** : Hon WONG Kwok-hing, MH
Hon CHAN Hak-kan
Hon CHEUNG Kwok-che
Hon WONG Kwok-kin, BBS
- Members absent** : Hon LEE Cheuk-yan
Hon Audrey EU Yuet-mee, SC, JP
Hon WONG Yuk-man
Hon Mrs Regina IP LAU Suk-ye, GBS, JP
Dr Hon Samson TAM Wai-ho, JP
- Public Officers attending** : Mr Michael SUEN, GBS, JP
Secretary for Education

Mr Kenneth CHEN, JP
Under Secretary for Education

Mrs Betty IP
Deputy Secretary for Education (3)

Ms Sally WONG, JP
Commissioner for Narcotics, Security Bureau

Mr Peter George Else
Chief Superintendent (Narcotics Bureau), Hong Kong
Police Force

Mr FUNG Man-lok
Assistant Director (Youth and Corrections), Social
Welfare Department

Dr Heston KWONG Kwok-wai
Assistant Director (Special Health Services),
Department of Health

Clerk in attendance : Miss Odelia LEUNG
Chief Council Secretary (2)6

Staff in attendance : Ms Judy TING
Senior Council Secretary (2)8 (Acting)

Miss Jenny LEE
Legislative Assistant (2)6 (Acting)

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I. Trial scheme on school drug testing
[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)2424/08-09(01) and (02)]

Members noted the background brief entitled "Drug abuse in schools" prepared by the Legislative Council (LegCo) Secretariat.

Briefing by the Administration

2. At the invitation of the Chairman, Secretary for Education (SED) briefed members on the progress of the preparation of the trial scheme on school drug testing in Tai Po District (the Scheme), its objectives and guiding principles as detailed in the Administration's paper. SED highlighted that the

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Administration was assessing the additional resources required for implementing the Scheme and would increase the resources where necessary in the light of the operational experience.

Voluntary participation and confidentiality

3. Dr Priscilla LEUNG welcomed the implementation of the Scheme and its guiding principles including, among others, voluntary participation and protection of personal data as confidential information. She acknowledged that it was imperative to obtain prior written consent from students in addition to the consent from parents. However, the Administration should confine the relevant students' consent to participation in the Scheme only so as to safeguard parents' right to know. Stressing the importance of providing additional resources, she suggested that the Administration should look into ways to address the emotional needs of parents when their children did not agree to the drug testing.

4. In response, SED said that resources would be increased for implementing the Scheme. The Administration was estimating the number of cases of identified students generated by the Scheme, and would ensure the provision of sufficient resources to meet the increased demands for downstream support services. The Administration would consolidate the experience gained from the Scheme and consider how school-based drug testing could be extended to other districts. SED stressed that the non-disclosure of the relevant personal information of students was only confined to those obtained under the Scheme; and other drug-related incidents in schools, such as drug trafficking, should be reported to the Police in accordance with the prevailing practices.

5. Responding to Dr LEUNG's concern about parents' emotional needs, SED said that he would expect communication between parents and students on the purposes and benefits of the Scheme in deciding whether or not to participate in it. To enhance their communication, the Administration would conduct a series of school-based briefings for all secondary school students and their parents of Tai Po starting from late September 2009, and would consolidate the views obtained from the briefings to improve the Scheme.

6. Mr WONG Kwok-kin said that he was not a member of the Panel and attended the meeting to show his support for the Scheme and to relay the views of some parents in the North District. He pointed out that while agreeing to the objectives of school-based drug testing, parents were concerned about the modification of the Scheme to require the prior written consent of the students for drug testing. Parents held the view that students' refusal to participate in drug testing would create family conflict and diminish the effectiveness of the Scheme. Some parents were also concerned that their right of guardianship would be violated if they could not represent their children to give consent to the drug test. Mr WONG asked how the Administration would handle a situation where a student, having been selected for drug testing, revealed the names of

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other students whom he believed had taken drugs. He also stressed the importance of tackling drug abuse in schools at root by curbing the inflow of drugs in schools and Hong Kong.

7. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung was also concerned that the Scheme would create conflict between students and parents, and mistrust between students and teachers where a student refused to participate in it.

8. SED explained that the Scheme was only one of the measures in the comprehensive strategy in tackling drug abuse in schools. Students could seek treatment and rehabilitation services without going through the Scheme. The requirement of seeking students' written consent for drug testing was to facilitate the smooth implementation of the Scheme. The Police had stepped up its efforts to deter the inflow of drugs into Hong Kong.

9. Dr Priscilla LEUNG said that many students were concerned about being singled out by schoolmates for agreeing to participate in the drug testing. In this connection, the Administration should aim to promote the general acceptance of the Scheme by students.

10. Miss Tanya CHAN also raised the concern of possible stigmatization of students who did not give consent to participate in the Scheme, and called on the Administration to take precautionary measures to avoid such stigmatization, such as by not disclosing the names of students who had agreed and had not agreed to participate in the Scheme. While acknowledging the need of apprising the relevant parties, for example school principal, of the personal information of a student obtained under the Scheme, she asked whether the student concerned had the right to choose whom the relevant information should be released to.

11. While acknowledging the concern about possible stigmatization of students, SED stressed the severity of drug abuse in schools which warranted the launch of the Scheme as soon as practicable. He pointed out that the Scheme was the result of hard work of many stakeholders. Any project would have its pros and cons. He considered it important to address but not over-play the negative aspects associated with the Scheme. The positive approach was to promote the objectives of the Scheme, which were to provide an opportunity for students to recognize the harm of drug abuse and to render assistance to students abusing drugs. He remarked that the Administration as well as the Panel had a role to play in this regard.

Education and legislation

12. Mr WONG Kwok-hing said that he was not a member of the Panel and attended the meeting to show his support for the Scheme. He was concerned about the manpower of student drug testing (SDT) team and enquired whether the five-member team would be sufficient to carry out the drug testing. He noted

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that one of the five-prongs of the anti-drug policy was law enforcement and legislation. He asked for information on the legislative timetable in this regard.

13. SED explained that the manpower of SDT team had been designed on the basis of the estimated demand for services from the 23 secondary schools in the Tai Po District, and should be adequate for the purpose. SED pointed out that law enforcement and legislation were relevant to the recommendation of compulsory drug testing, one of the some 70 recommendations contained in the Report of the Task Force on Youth Drug Abuse (Report), released by the Task Force on Youth Drug Abuse (Task Force). The Task Force acknowledged that there was currently no legal basis for compulsory drug testing and hence recommended the introduction of new legislation for the purpose.

14. Ms Starry LEE said that the Scheme should be effective to a certain extent in curbing youth drug abuse. However, she was doubtful whether it would be effective in identifying the relevant students as the SDT team only visited each school twice a month and randomly selected about 5% of the participating students for drug testing. She enquired about the rationale for fixing the rate at 5%, and whether the experiences of other jurisdictions had been made reference to. Ms LEE also asked whether the drug test could indicate the severity of the drug abuse problem of a student as mild, moderate or severe, and whether appropriate professional support services would be rendered in accordance with the severity of the problem.

15. Commissioner for Narcotics (C for N) acknowledged the need of categorizing identified students according to the extent of their drug abuse problem with a view to providing appropriate support services. She said that additional resources would be made available to the counselling centre for psychotropic substance abusers (CCPSA) serving the Tai Po District to provide support service for identified students. A registered social worker of the CCPSA specialized in drug counselling would be assigned as the case manager, and he/she would convene a multi-disciplinary case conference to formulate a support programme for the student. The case manager would evaluate the needs of the student concerned, provide counselling, co-ordinate treatment and rehabilitation services, and monitor the progress of the student. An assessment on the case would be conducted once every three months. The support programme would normally last for six months, but further support service could be provided as necessary having regard to the needs of the student.

16. C for N further said that in randomly selecting an average of 5% of participating students for drug testing each month, the Administration had considered that on one hand the number should be visible and should not be too small, but on the other hand, disruption to class or school activities should be minimized. It was estimated that one screening test would last for about 15 minutes, and four screening tests would be carried out in one hour. The SDT team would be able to carry out 20 screening tests in the morning of the visit.

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She noted that some local international schools selected two students each day for drug testing. The total number of students selected for screening test in a month would be roughly the same as that selected for drug testing in the Scheme. C for N added that from December 2009 to June 2010, about 30% of the participating students would be selected for drug testing.

17. Mr Andrew LEUNG expressed support for the modifications of the Scheme, and said that the Scheme could be quoted by students as the reason for staying away from drug when being tempted by peers. He considered that the Administration should strengthen this message in publicity. He called on the Administration to expeditiously extend the Scheme to other districts and introduce new legislation for compulsory drug testing as and when necessary.

18. SED thanked Mr Andrew LEUNG for his support for the Scheme and noted his view. C for N said that the Police had stepped up enforcement against drug abuse. During a recent meeting of the Chief Executive with the Acting Shenzhen Mayor and a meeting of the Secretary for Security with the Director of Shenzhen Municipal Public Security Bureau, both jurisdictions agreed to step up intelligence exchange and other measures to combat cross-boundary drug abuse and trafficking. She added that a recent case of administrative detention for 15 days of Hong Kong people caught taking drugs in Shenzhen should send a clear message to drug abusers that they would face heavy penalties for abusing drugs in the Mainland. In terms of preventive education and publicity, C for N said that a number of training programmes had been carried out in the summer vacation for teachers to reinforce their competence and knowledge in anti-drug matters. A resources kit would be made available to schools in October 2009 to help teachers identify and handle drug abuse cases in school. Also, the resource kit for parents had been produced to equip parents with anti-drug knowledge.

19. Deputy Secretary for Education (3) (DS(Ed)3) supplemented that schools were encouraged to institutionalize a "Healthy School Policy" whereby schools would arrange a series of activities with anti-drug elements to help students to reach a state of well-being in various aspects of physical, mental and social development. Active participation in the activities would help build the confidence of students and inspire them to stay away from drugs. Schools would also arrange anti-drug talks inviting ex-drug abusers to share their personal experiences with students. The Administration would continue to reach out to parents via Parent-Teacher Associations.

20. Miss Tanya CHAN called on the Administration to improve the content of the online test contained in the resource kit for parents. She said that her assistants in the early 20 had taken the test and all were categorized as having drug abuse tendency. She was concerned about the reliability of the test which might arouse parents' anxiety.

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Schooling for rehabilitated students

21. Miss Tanya CHAN stressed the importance of addressing the issue of rehabilitated students resuming mainstream schooling. She quoted a newspaper report which said that only 5% of the rehabilitated students resumed mainstream schooling.

22. Mr Andrew LEUNG also urged the Administration to strengthen support for students for resuming mainstream schooling or undertaking vocational training.

23. DS(Ed)3 explained that drug treatment and rehabilitation centres (DTRCs) had all along been provided with resources to organise education programmes to school-age young drug abusers. Upon the completion of the education programmes, the respective DTRCs would, having regard to the interest and ability of the students, plan the future exit paths of the students. Some students might choose to resume mainstream schooling while others might prefer to undertake vocational training or start an employment.

24. DS(Ed)3 further said that as of June 2009, 140 young drug abusers were receiving education programmes, including Chinese, English, Mathematics, as well as vocational training at various DTRCs. Of these, more than 90% were over the age of 15. For those who opted for mainstream schooling, the respective non-governmental organizations (NGOs) would contact the schools and arrange for the students to return to normal school life. The Administration would offer assistance as and when necessary. She added that the low percentage of rehabilitated young drug abusers returning to school might arise from a large number of the rehabilitated students opting for vocational training.

25. In response to the Chairman's concern that many deputations had expressed the difficulties of rehabilitated students resuming mainstream schooling, DS(Ed)3 explained that the respective NGOs would seek assistance from the Administration where the rehabilitated students encountered difficulties in resuming mainstream schooling. NGOs were encouraged to better communicate with the respective schools to help students re-integrate into school life, and the Administration would strengthen its assistance to the NGOs. The Administration was also promoting the formation of a network of schools which shared the same belief in helping rehabilitated students. The Chairman requested the Administration to provide written information on the numbers of rehabilitated students who had been successful and unsuccessful in resuming mainstream schooling.

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Voluntary drug treatment

26. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong was supportive of the two modifications of

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the Scheme in that personal information of the students obtained under the Scheme would not be forwarded to the Police for follow-up action, unless drug-related offences were involved, and students' written consent would be sought for participation. Mr CHEUNG held the view that school-based drug testing would not effectively solve the problem of drug abuse in schools, and that voluntary drug treatment would better serve the purpose. He elaborated that 5% of the participating students would be randomly selected for drug testing. Assuming 1 000 be the base number of the participating students, 50 students would be selected for drug testing. Should 4% of the 50 students be identified to have used drugs, only two students would receive drug treatment services. On the other hand, the efficacy of voluntary drug treatment would be much higher. Social workers and medical staff should visit schools to promote the benefits of voluntary drug treatment as well as the protection of personal information. If 4% of the 1 000 participating students, i.e. 40 students, had drug abuse problems and half of them were willing to receive drug treatment, this would mean 20 students, 10 times more than the number identified under the Scheme. Given its efficacy, Mr CHEUNG called on the Administration to promote and implement voluntary drug treatment concurrently with or before the Scheme.

27. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong further said that he had been told by the representatives of The Association of Secondary School Heads Tai Po District that during the summer vacation, some parents in the district had urged their children to receive drug treatment before the implementation of the Scheme in order to avoid being identified to have used drugs. As paragraph 14 of the Administration's paper only touched on voluntary drug treatment services provided by the CCPSAs without elaboration on its relationship with the Scheme, he asked for the Administration's stance on voluntary drug treatment. Mr WONG Sing-chi echoed the view that voluntary drug treatment would be more effective.

28. C for N shared the view that voluntary drug treatment would complement the Scheme and both measures should be implemented in parallel. She pointed out that additional resources had been accorded to the CCPSAs in various districts to meet the increase in demand for support services. The message of voluntary drug treatment would be included in the school-based briefings to be carried out in October and November 2009. Students and their parents in Tai Po could seek support services from the local support network which included doctors and social workers serving in the district.

29. The Chairman echoed the view that the Scheme and voluntary drug treatment should be implemented in parallel. She urged the Administration to increase resources to all CCPSAs in the light of future implementation of school-based drug testing in other districts. C for N replied that the respective measures would be carried out in parallel, and publicity work would be enhanced to promote voluntary drug treatment.

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30. Professor Patrick LAU said that he was supportive of the five pronged anti-drug policy and the Scheme. As students with or without drug abuse problem could participate in the Scheme, he stressed the importance of helping those students identified to have the problem, and urged the Administration to provide clear guidelines to facilitate these students to receive treatment and rehabilitation services. Professor LAU enquired whether the information would be kept confidential should a student voluntarily seek treatment and rehabilitation services.

31. Under Secretary for Education (US(Ed)) explained that the Scheme would help those students without drug problem to stay away from drugs, thus preventing the spread of drugs in schools. To sustain the notion of drug-free campus, it was imperative to promote the wide participation of students in the Scheme. While there was no legislation for compulsory drug treatment, students were encouraged to voluntarily seek help from CCPSAs for support services. The CCPSA serving the Tai Po District would continue to provide counselling service for both students and parents as under the existing practice.

32. DS(ED)3 added that a video on the drug test procedure and a pamphlet containing information on support services, including the telephone numbers of community organizations, would be distributed to students and parents of Tai Po along the implementation of the Scheme. Where a student decided to seek assistance from the CCPSA in the Tai Po District on his own, the respective staff of the CCPSA would protect the privacy of the student in accordance with the established procedures. DS(Ed)3 stressed the importance of parents' involvement in the rehabilitation and treatment of student drug abusers.

33. Assistant Director (Youth and Corrections), Social Welfare Department said that social workers would make professional judgement to protect the privacy of students, unless drug-related offences were involved. Depending on the development of a case, there could be a point at which social workers considered it necessary to involve the parents of the students.

Female youth drug abuse

34. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong was gravely concerned that the number of female youth drug abusers had risen significantly during the past few years. In 2003, the reported number of female youth drug abusers was 620, and in 2008 the number had increased to 1 058. He said that the number of 2009, which would be announced shortly, was even more alarming. He asked for the causes of the problem which might be attributed to free supply of drugs, peer influence or emotional needs of young females, and how the Administration would tackle it. He also opined that since female students amounted to about half of the student population, should the problem of female youth drug abuse be curbed, the overall problem of drug abuse in school would be alleviated.

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35. C for N acknowledged the severity of the problem of youth drug abuse among females, and said that according to the front-line social workers, free supply of drugs and emotional problems were some of the causes. She pointed out that the publicity campaign had placed great emphasis on the drug abuse behaviour of young females with a view to inspiring them to stay away from drugs.

Allocation of resources for support services

36. Mr CHAN Hak-kan said that he was not a member of the Panel, and attended the meeting to show his support for the Scheme. He commended the Administration for arranging a series of meetings and focus group discussions with the key stakeholders of Tai Po. He noted that following the Administration's decision not to provide the Police with the personal information of the students obtained under the Scheme, youngsters had become more receptive to the Scheme. While respecting the protection of personal information as confidential, Mr CHAN opined that information such as age, gender and reasons for taking drug was useful which would form the basis for formulating anti-drug researches and policies. He noted that additional resources had been allocated to Tai Po for the implementation of the Scheme. He was concerned whether additional resources would be provided to other districts as well for carrying out anti-drug activities at district level, apart from the one-off provision of \$500,000 to each District Council.

37. C for N said that the information collected from the Scheme would provide empirical data to facilitate formulation of policies and allocation of resources, for example to enhance downstream services. She confirmed that not only Tai Po but other districts had also been provided with resources for conducting anti-drug activities. The Administration would continue to increase resources for implementing anti-drug activities at district level. From October 2009 onwards, the seven CCPSAs in the territory would provide medical support service. A two-year pilot scheme of enhanced probation system would be carried out at two Magistracies from October 2009 to provide comprehensive supervision and focused assistance to young drug abusers caught by the law. The establishment of Police School Liaison Officers had been increased by 50%, adding more than 20 members. Also, the Beat Drugs Funds (BDF) had all along funded the preventive education and publicity projects in different districts. Professional programmes had been provided for school teachers to deliver drug education.

38. Mr CHAN Hak-kan opined that CCPSAs provided services in a passive manner. The Administration should instead allocate more resources to NGOs and social workers to take proactive steps to help at-risk youngsters. C for N replied that, in the 2008-2009 financial year, the manpower of outreaching services had been increased by 34 members. Also, BDF had all along funded organizations at district levels including NGOs as well as schools to launch

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various anti-drug programmes in the community.

39. Miss Tanya CHAN remarked that some youngsters might prefer the rehabilitative services provided by religious organizations. She urged the Administration to provide appropriate resources to such organizations.

40. Mr WONG Sing-chi said that as there was only one NGO in the Tai Po District, i.e. Cheer Lutheran Centre, providing downstream services to identified students, he was concerned whether the support services were adequate. He called for increase of the manpower of social workers to support the Scheme. He also urged the Administration to engage parents to help them handle children with drug problems, and enquired how the competency of parents could be enhanced in this regard.

41. In reply, C for N said that additional resources would be provided for Cheer Lutheran Centre to deal with the anticipated demands for downstream services generated by the Scheme. She highlighted that there were some social workers who were experienced in handling drug abuse. One of the 70-odd recommendations contained in the Task Force Report was to strengthen training for social workers to equip them with anti-drug skills. In terms of engaging parents, C for N said that the CCPSA serving in the Tai Po District, apart from providing support services for students, would also offer counselling service for parents to help them handle the drug abuse problems of their children. She added that the Administration would finalize the additional resources required for downstream services in about one month, and would announce the relevant information as soon as practicable.

42. C for N also highlighted the mentorship scheme, one of the five anti-drug directions announced by the Chief Executive in his Question and Answer Session on 7 July 2009. She explained that to promote and sustain a culture of community care, the mentorship scheme would be launched to mobilize greater community participation and appeal to all sectors of the society to contribute to the anti-drug cause in different ways. Professionals and individuals with different backgrounds and religions were encouraged to share their life experiences with the younger generation. The mentorship scheme in the Tai Po District was being planned by the Home Affairs Department with the assistance of the Narcotics Division.

43. The Chairman said that since the number of cases of identified students remained unknown, the Administration should not set any limit on resources so as to guarantee sufficient manpower of social workers to deal with the increased demands generated by the Scheme.

44. Mr Tommy CHEUNG said that he did not object to the Scheme. However, he was concerned about its effectiveness as it was highly likely that only students who had not taken drugs would participate in the Scheme. He also

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asked how and when the Administration would assess the outcome of the Scheme, and whether the outcome of the Scheme would determine the implementation or otherwise of other measures in the Report such as compulsory drug testing. Mr CHEUNG also sought information on the other measures of the comprehensive strategy.

45. In reply, C for N said that the details of the other measures had been set out in the Administration's papers for the earlier meetings of the Panel and the Panel on Security. She explained that the Report contained some 70 recommendations spanning the five prongs of the anti-drug policy, which included preventive education and publicity; treatment and rehabilitation; law enforcement and legislation; external cooperation; and research. The Healthy School Policy was one of the recommendations relevant to the school sector. Resource kit had been made available to parents to equip them with the knowledge of youth drug abuse. Cooperation with the authorities of Shenzhen had been strengthened to combat cross-boundary drug abuse. C for N added that a consultant would be engaged to conduct an evaluation of the Scheme.

46. C for N further pointed out the three-level drug testing strategy contained in the Report, including the provision of voluntary drug testing service, school-based drug testing schemes for voluntary adoption by schools, and compulsory drug testing. She said that the provision of voluntary drug testing services as part of the medical support in CCPSAs would enhance school-based drug testing schemes. As regards compulsory drug testing, it would take a long time to obtain public consensus for legislation as many complex issues such as privacy had to be addressed. If the necessary legislation was passed, law enforcement officers could require a person reasonably suspected of having consumed dangerous drugs to undertake a drug test. The Administration would issue a consultation paper on the proposal of compulsory drug testing, and public views would be invited before the proposal was taken forward. The Chairman said that the issues of compulsory drug testing should be followed up by the Panel on Security.

47. Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che said that he was not a member of the Panel. In his view, the manpower of social workers in the Tai Po District would be sufficient to meet the anticipated demands for downstream services generated by the Scheme, and that the social workers were equipped with proven experiences in dealing with drug abuse cases. However, the Administration should expedite the provision of in-service training for social workers before the extension of the Scheme to other districts. He would expect that the Scheme would heighten the awareness of drug abuse and more voluntary drug treatment would be sought under the persuasion of teachers or social workers. He called on the Administration to provide adequate resources for social workers to deal with the new cases, and considered that there should not be any limit on resources allocated for the purpose.

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48. SED welcomed Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che's assurance of the adequacy of social workers in the Tai Po District to cope with the cases generated by the Scheme. He said that the Administration would expedite the estimation of the additional resources required, and would report to the Panel when the information was available including whether resources would be capped at a certain level. SED added that in-service training would be strengthened for social workers to deal with drug abuse.

49. Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che remarked that one social worker specialized in drug counselling would be able to manage 40 cases.

50. Mr TAM Yiu-chung said that the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong supported the Scheme. He called on the Administration to implement the Scheme as soon as practicable, and stressed the importance of consolidating the experience gained from the Scheme. Mr TAM opined that as drug testing with hair specimen was found to be more accurate, he asked whether the Administration would consider procuring the relevant technology notwithstanding its high cost.

51. C for N said that the technology of using hair specimen for drug testing was currently not available in Hong Kong, and the cost of hair drug testing was much higher than that of urine drug testing. She was given to understand that some international schools in Hong Kong adopted hair drug testing by sending the relevant specimen to the laboratories in other jurisdictions for testing. C for N added that the Administration would further consider the feasibility of introducing hair drug testing in Hong Kong.

52. Responding to Mr WONG Kwok-hing's enquiry about the timetable for extending school-based drug testing to other districts, US(Ed) said that the Administration would focus its efforts on the Scheme for the time being, and would consider extending school-based drug testing to other districts at a later stage. Also, a research project aiming to devise similar schemes for voluntary adoption by other schools in Hong Kong would be carried out in the 2009-2010 school year in parallel with the Scheme. He further explained that the original recommendation of the Report was to commission the research project before the implementation of the Scheme. Nevertheless, in view of the worsening situation of drug abuse in schools, a decision had been made to implement the Scheme as well as the research project concurrently.

53. Mr WONG Kwok-hing considered it necessary to set a timetable for extending the Scheme to other districts. Ms Starr LEE asked for information on the timetable for reviewing the Scheme. US(Ed) responded that consent forms would be issued for signing up in November 2009 and the actual drug testing would commence in December 2009. The Scheme would last for about six months until the end of the 2009-2010 school year. The Administration would then consolidate the experience gained from the Scheme and decide on the way

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forward.

54. The Chairman was in support of fighting youth drug abuse. However, she was concerned that drug testing would create mistrust between parents and students. She pointed out that little efforts had been spent on consulting youngsters on the Scheme. It could be expected that students might boycott the Scheme and become rebellious and hostile to the society. The Chairman was given to understand that many non-engaged youngsters resorted to drugs to kill time while young females turned to drugs to avoid facing personal problems. She considered it important to address the problem of youth drug abuse at root, by helping the youngsters positively deal with the problems of family, career, etc. The Chairman was also concerned about bullying of the selected students for drug testing. She urged the Administration to protect the information of the selected students to avoid bullying in campus.

55. Dr Priscilla LEUNG was gravely concerned about the harm caused by drugs on the health of youngsters, and called on the Administration to implement the Scheme in a determined manner. She also urged the Administration to deliver a clear message to students that while the Police would not be provided with the personal information of the students obtained under the Scheme, the Police would continue with its law enforcement duties to deal with drug-related offences.

56. While supporting the objectives of the Scheme, Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung doubted whether these could be achieved. He criticized the Administration for not having consulted youngsters on the Scheme before its hasty implementation. It was expected that only students who did not have drug abuse problem would take part in the Scheme while those having the problem would not. He considered that the Administration had not made efforts to identify the causes for drug abuse and to resolve the problem at root. Mr LEUNG further said that many students were confused that on the one hand, they were educated to report criminal activities to the Police but on the other hand, the Administration had undertaken to protect the personal information of students obtained under the Scheme. Students were therefore in doubt as to whether they should report to the Police or their schools should they found their school mates dealing with drugs.

57. SED reiterated that while the Police would not be provided with the personal information of the students obtained under the Scheme, any information concerning drug-related offences such as drug trafficking in schools should be and would be reported to the Police and the Police would continue with its law enforcement duties. There should be no misunderstanding of any exoneration for criminal activities committed by students.

Follow-up

58. In response to the Chairman, SED undertook to provide interim

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progress report on the Scheme to the Panel including the estimated additional resources required for downstream services. SED said that as the subject of drug abuse straddled various policy areas, the relevant information might be provided to other relevant Panels such as the Panel on Security. The Chairman agreed that in addition to the Panel on Education, the Panel on Welfare Services and the Panel on Security were also concerned about youth drug abuse. She remarked that joint meetings of the Panels might be convened where necessary.

59. The meeting ended at 12:55 pm.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
13 October 2009