

For discussion on
2 December 2008

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
PANEL ON SECURITY**

Report of the Task Force on Youth Drug Abuse

PURPOSE

This paper presents the Report of the Task Force on Youth Drug Abuse published on 11 November 2008.

BACKGROUND

2. At the meeting on 30 October 2007, Members were briefed on the youth drug abuse situation and the setting up of the Task Force on Youth Drug Abuse under the chairmanship of the Secretary for Justice to tackle the problem (*vide* LC Paper No. CB(2)167/07-08(01)). At the meeting on 10 April 2008, Members were updated on the situation and a package of initial measures recommended by the Task Force to be implemented in the short to medium term (*vide* LC Paper No. CB(2)1495/07-08(04)).

REPORT

3. Over the past year, the Task Force has spearheaded cross bureaux and inter-departmental efforts, and engaged Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), stakeholders and the community in earnest to tackle the problem. It has concluded its work and published a Report and an Executive Summary on 11 November 2008. They have been sent to Members under a covering letter by the Secretary for Justice on the same day.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE REPORT

4. The Report sets out a host of Recommendations from short to long term spanning over the five prongs of the anti-drug policy and promoting a community culture of care for the young people.

Preventive Education and Publicity

5. On preventive education and publicity, the aim is to reduce the demand for illicit drugs by imparting knowledge on drugs to different stakeholders, dispelling any misconceptions, strengthening young people's life skills and resistance to adversity and temptations, and mobilising the whole community to join the anti-drug cause. We have adopted a new Chinese nomenclature for drug abuse “吸食危害精神毒品”, or “K仔毒品” and “丸仔毒品” for colloquial use. The reference to “濫用藥物” or “濫藥” is to be avoided as far as possible. We have launched a two-year territory wide campaign under the theme “不可一、不可再。向毒品說不、向遺憾說不” and “No Drugs, No Regrets. Not Now, Not Ever”. We will also step up engagement with parents, make better use of the Internet and upgrade the Drug InfoCentre.

The School Sector

6. The school sector is an important platform for preventive efforts. All schools should devise a healthy school policy with an anti-drug element. We are providing more support for schools through enhanced drug education for students, new resource kits for schools, structured training for teachers and school personnel and strengthened Police School Liaison Programme.

Treatment and Rehabilitation

7. On treatment and rehabilitation, we are enhancing our social and medical services in order to trawl drug abusers, and help them kick the habit and be reintegrated into society. We have strengthened our outreaching, medical social work and residential treatment services. We have opened two additional Substance Abuse Clinics; two more

Counselling Centres for Psychotropic Substance Abusers (CCPSAs) will start service by year end. We are inviting proposals for providing anti-drug training for medical practitioners. We also plan to provide medical support services in all the CCPSAs.

Drug Testing

8. To help identify young drug abusers early, innovative methods are needed. We will commission a research project to devise possible school-based drug testing schemes for voluntary adoption by schools. The Task Force also considers that, as a matter of principle, we should consider empowering law enforcement officers to require a person reasonably suspected of having consumed dangerous drugs to be subjected to a drug test. This will facilitate the effective identification of young drug abusers for early alert, treatment and other interventions. We will set out our proposal for a compulsory drug testing scheme in a detailed consultation paper to invite public views before the proposal is taken forward.

Enhanced Probation System

9. To help those young drug abusers caught by the criminal justice system and break the drug-crime cycle, we plan to launch a two-year pilot scheme to try out an intensified rehabilitation system with closer co-operation between Probation Officers and the Judiciary, borrowing some key features of the drug courts overseas.

Law Enforcement

10. On law enforcement, we are taking steps to strengthen the Juvenile Protection Service under the Police Superintendent Discretion Scheme, enhance intelligence gathering capability on the Internet, and further collaboration with NGOs and industry stakeholders. We welcome the Court of Appeal judgement which substantially raised the sentencing tariffs for trafficking ketamine and ecstasy. We will update Judges and Judicial Officers on the latest drug scene and continue to

utilise section 56A of the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance¹ and the aggravating factor of drug importation for enhanced sentencing in appropriate cases.

Cross-Boundary Drug Abuse

11. On cross-boundary drug abuse, we have had constructive discussions with the Shenzhen authorities to step up collaboration. With information on youngsters caught abusing drugs in the Mainland, the Hong Kong Police will inform their parents and advise them of suitable rehabilitative services. At the boundary control points, the Customs and Excise Department has enhanced its detector dog services and plans to strengthen its plainclothes operations over time.

External Co-operation

12. On external co-operation, we will work closely with our counterparts especially in Guangdong/Shenzhen and overseas generally to combat this global problem, and contribute to international efforts to put ketamine under the control of international anti-drug conventions.

Research

13. On research, to ensure that our anti-drug policy is evidence-based and to respond to new challenges brought by the changing drug scene locally and overseas, we will study more effective methods for estimating the drug abuse population in Hong Kong and the drug abuse situation among the non-engaged youth, and conduct further research on the harmful effect of psychotropic substances. A student drug use survey is underway with extended coverage to include those from primary four to post secondary, with future rounds to be conducted more frequently at three-year intervals.

¹ A special provision empowering the court, where it is satisfied with evidence that an adult has involved a minor in the commission of a drug-related offence and if it thinks fit, to pass a sentence on the convicted adult offender that is more severe than the sentence it would, in the absence of such evidence, have passed.

Beat Drugs Fund and Institutional Support

14. To enhance support for community participation, we have improved the operation of the Beat Drugs Fund. To ensure full implementation of the over 70 Task Force recommendations and better carry out the policy coordination work, we have to strengthen the directorate resources support in the Narcotics Division (ND) in the Security Bureau. The detailed proposal will be set out in a separate Paper to follow shortly.

Community Care, Support and Participation

15. In order to more comprehensively and effectively avail vulnerable youth to protective factors, we need to foster a caring culture for our youth in the community, strengthen complementary support among various sectors and stakeholders, and promote participation in the anti-drug cause by all. This is an additional and yet fundamentally important dimension in the overall strategy. We have launched the *Path Builders* initiative and are working in collaboration with other policy areas such as family matters, youth development, youth employment and adolescent health.

IMPLEMENTATION

16. The Administration will pursue the implementation of the Recommendations in a vigorous manner and continue engagement with various stakeholders on a sustained basis. For this purpose, an inter-departmental Working Group will be set up under the chairmanship of the Commissioner for Narcotics to steer, co-ordinate and monitor the implementation of the Recommendations of the Task Force. It will report to both the Action Committee Against Narcotics and the Fight Crime Committee.

17. In the implementation stage, ND will continue to play a critical coordination role among bureaux, departments, NGOs and many stakeholders in the community.

ADVICE SOUGHT

18. Members are invited to note the content of the Report and comment on the Recommendations in the Report.

Narcotics Division
Security Bureau
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