

**Legislative Council Panel on Welfare Services**  
**Review on the Implementation of**  
**the Integrated Family Service Centre Service Mode**

**Purpose**

This paper informs Members of the details and progress of the review on the implementation of the Integrated Family Service Centre (IFSC) service mode commissioned by the Administration.

**Background**

2. In August 2000, the Social Welfare Department (SWD) commissioned the University of Hong Kong (HKU) to carry out a 'Review of Family Services in Hong Kong'. One of the recommendations in the review report was that the IFSC service mode should be adopted to provide a continuum of preventive, supportive and remedial services so as to meet the changing needs of families in a holistic manner.

3. In introducing the IFSC service mode, SWD adopted a bottom-up and gradual approach. Pilot projects were launched before across-the-board implementation. Besides, SWD also commissioned HKU to conduct another 'Evaluative Study of the Pilot Projects on IFSCs' which concluded that IFSCs were effective in addressing the changing social needs of families, as they provided more open, user-friendly, proactive, responsive, flexible, accessible and integrated services to users. In view of the positive findings, and having consulted the Social Welfare Advisory Committee, this Panel and the welfare sector, SWD re-engineered available family service resources to form IFSCs in phases in 2004-05.

4. There are currently a total of 61 IFSCs covering the whole territory, of which 40 are run by SWD and 21 by nine non-governmental organisations (NGOs). To strengthen families and meet the multifarious needs of individuals and families in the community, IFSCs services follow the broad direction of 'child-centred, family-focused and community-based' and adopt the principles of accessibility, early identification,

integration and partnership. A continuum of services with preventive, developmental, educational, supportive, empowerment and remedial functions is provided through the three major components of an IFSC, namely Family Resource Unit, Family Support Unit and Family Counselling Unit.

### **Details of the Review**

5. Adoption of the IFSC service mode was a landmark in the development of family services in Hong Kong. Upon the introduction of the new mode, understandably both management and frontline staff of IFSCs needed time to adjust to the substantial changes and to acquire the new knowledge and skills required for providing quality services under the new mode. We will continue with the IFSC service mode. However, as the re-engineering has been completed for more than three years, we agree that it is now an appropriate time to review the implementation of the IFSC to see what improvements can be made to further refine the mode.

6. Through open tendering, SWD commissioned HKU to conduct review on the implementation of the IFSC service mode in October 2008. This review, which is the subject of this paper, covers all 61 IFSCs operated by SWD and NGOs and has the following objectives -

- (a) to find out how effective IFSCs are in implementing the four guiding principles of accessibility, early identification, integration and partnership under the broad direction of ‘child-centred, family-focused and community-based’ in strengthening families and meeting the changing needs of the community;
- (b) to examine the effectiveness of IFSC services in serving specific targets such as single parents, new arrivals, ethnic minorities, etc. and reaching out to hard-to-reach at-risk families;
- (c) to identify factors facilitating / hindering the effective delivery of IFSC services, illustrations of practice wisdom on the implementation of the IFSC service mode, as well as ways to develop service specialisation within an integrated service mode and to enhance strategic partnership, collaboration and interfacing with other services;
- (d) to examine the performance standards, including output and

outcome indicators and level of attainment, as set out in the Funding and Service Agreement; and

- (e) to make suggestions for continuous service improvement.

7. In October 2008, a Steering Committee was set up by SWD to advise on the direction of the review, monitor its progress and examine and accept the review report to be submitted by the HKU Consultant Team. It comprises representatives from the Labour and Welfare Bureau, SWD, NGOs (including those operating IFSCs and other welfare services as well as the Hong Kong Council of Social Service) and an independent member of the community. A Working Group comprising representatives from SWD and NGOs was also formed to facilitate the work of the Consultant Team, provide information on the existing practice of, and services provided by, IFSCs, and ensure that concerns and objectives to be addressed by the review are duly covered.

8. The evaluation technique employed by the HKU Consultant Team has a practical and problem-solving orientation. The review will make use of a mix of quantitative and qualitative data derived from a variety of sources and stakeholders, including -

- (a) reports from all 61 IFSCs (known as “centre reports”);
- (b) service statistics on user profiles and service output and outcome;
- (c) district focus groups with policy makers/administrators, supervisors and frontline social workers as well as community stakeholders;
- (d) case studies on the implementation of guiding principles and service directions in selected IFSCs;
- (e) user survey; and
- (f) illustrations of practice wisdom on the implementation of the IFSC service mode.

## **Progress of the Review**

9. Over the past few months, SWD has, in collaboration with the HKU Consultant Team, conducted various meetings and briefings to consult stakeholders, including administrators, supervisors and frontline colleagues of IFSCs, HKCSS, staff unions, other government departments, school personnel, etc. on data collection and the evaluation methodology of the review. The HKU Consultant Team has also conducted familiarisation visits to six IFSCs to learn more about the operation of IFSCs such as service needs, their organisation structures, work approaches, staff concerns, etc. Based on the feedback of stakeholders, the evaluation methodology has been fine-tuned. With the full participation of IFSC colleagues, the Consultant Team has commenced work on data collection, including conducting a user survey, collection of centre reports and identification of IFSCs for case study.

10. To facilitate communication with stakeholders, the HKU Consultant Team has set up a webpage for the review. Besides obtaining information about the review, stakeholders can also send their views to the Consultant Team through the webpage. SWD has also set up a dedicated site on its Departmental Homepage to share with interested parties the progress of, and information relating to, the review, such as issues discussed at the Steering Committee and the Working Group overseeing this review.

### **Way Forward**

11. The review is expected to be completed by the end of 2009. Members will be informed of the findings and recommendations in due course.

### **The Study of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University on the Views of IFSCs frontline staff**

12. The Administration notes that the Hong Kong Polytechnic University has recently conducted a study on frontline staff's views on the IFSC service mode. The study has collected the views of frontline social workers – one of the key stakeholder groups of IFSCs - and made a number of recommendations on the IFSC service mode. The Administration values the views of frontline social workers. SWD and the Consultant Team will make reference to the study report in conducting this review.

**Advice Sought**

13. Members are invited to note the content of this paper.

**Social Welfare Department  
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