

For discussion on
18 March 2010

Legislative Council Panel on Education
Provision of Education Services for Young Drug Abusers and
Relocation of the Centres of the Christian Zheng Sheng Association

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on anti-drug preventive education in schools and the education services for school-age drug abusers receiving treatment and after rehabilitation. It also updates Members on the latest development of the relocation of the centres of the Christian Zheng Sheng Association.

Anti-drug Preventive Education

Strategy

2. The increased number of youth drug abusers poses serious challenges to schools. According to the 2008/09 Survey of Drug Use among Students published recently, drug abuse is increasingly prevalent both in schools and in the community, and the age of drug abusers is lowering. These findings confirm the trend detected by our ongoing monitoring systems. In his Policy Address delivered in October 2007, the Chief Executive announced that he would appoint the Secretary for Justice to lead a high-level inter-departmental task force to tackle juvenile drug abuse. The task force published a report in November 2008, which contains over 70 recommendations spanning the five prongs of our anti-drug strategy. In July 2009, the Chief Executive led a territory-wide campaign against youth drug abuse, taking our anti-drug battle to a higher level. Following the recommendations of the task force, the Education Bureau (EDB) and the departments/organisations concerned have been working together in the following four areas to strengthen our preventive efforts:

- Requesting schools to formulate a school-based Healthy School Policy (HSP);
- Strengthening drug preventive education programmes and measures for students, including reviewing and updating the school curriculum, encouraging students to engage in other learning experiences, organising anti-drug talks for students, helping students cultivate a healthy lifestyle

and a positive attitude towards life, and enhancing their capability to handle adversities;

- Offering assistance to schools in identifying high-risk students and reviewing the current mechanism for rendering appropriate assistance, arranging timely referral and taking follow-up actions; encouraging schools to adopt a whole-school approach to student guidance and discipline services so as to foster students' whole-person development; and
- Strengthening support for schools, including providing resource kits for school personnel and parents, enhancing the professional development of teachers and principals, reinforcing school social work services, increasing the number of Police School Liaison Officers, and strengthening home-school co-operation.

Healthy School Policy

3. The objective of the HSP is to help students reach a state of physical, mental and social well-being. The main focus is to help students develop a healthy lifestyle, positive attitude and values, as well as acquire practical life skills and refusal skills to resist temptation. There are four elements in the HSP: (1) developing a management and organisation system for coordinating health matters; (2) fostering a healthy school environment; (3) helping students develop a healthy lifestyle; and (4) identifying needy students and putting in place a referral system. Schools may formulate a school-based HSP in the light of their own situation and students' needs to foster a healthy school environment conducive to the healthy development of students.

Strengthening support for schools

4. The Narcotics Division (ND) of the Security Bureau (SB) and EDB have been working with relevant departments/organisations to enhance the anti-drug education programmes for primary and secondary schools and extend the coverage to junior primary students. To facilitate the implementation of anti-drug education, the EDB also reviews and updates the school curriculum on a regular basis to provide a holistic curriculum framework which comprises knowledge, generic skills, values and attitude and is conducive to the whole-person development of students. In the existing primary and secondary curricula, elements of anti-drug education are incorporated in different Key Learning Areas/subjects such as General Studies in primary schools, and Social Studies, Integrated Humanities, Biology, Home

Economics and Liberal Studies in secondary schools. Anti-drug education is further strengthened in the revised Moral and Civic Education curriculum launched in 2008 and the New Senior Secondary curriculum implemented in September 2009. The ND and EDB also provide a half-day on-site anti-drug training programme for primary and secondary school teachers and a two-day intensive training programme for school management and guidance and discipline teachers. In addition, the ND provides a hotline enquiry service (186186) manned by social workers to answer enquires from teachers about drug-related matters.

5. To further promote an anti-drug school culture for the implementation of the HSP, the EDB issued a circular (Circular No. 2/2010) on 26 February 2010, requesting all schools to formulate a school-based HSP with an anti-drug element and to regularize the anti-drug work in schools. To help schools to do so, the ND and EDB have commissioned a social service organisation to produce an Anti-drug Resource Kit for Schools. The Resource Kit provides school management, guidance and discipline teachers, school social workers, and class and subject teachers with practical reference materials and identification tools, including guidance on the formulation of the HSP, information on anti-drug curriculum as well as learning and teaching materials, drug knowledge, examples of handling drug abuse cases, referral mechanism and information on community support etc. The Resource Kit will be distributed to schools in mid-March this year and seminars will also be arranged to familiarise schools with its use.

Education services for School-age Drug Abusers Receiving Treatment and after Rehabilitation

6. Apart from helping students develop a healthy lifestyle, a positive attitude and refusal skills to resist temptation, the HSP also enables schools to identify needy students at an early stage and put in place a referral mechanism. We will provide suitable treatment support and education services to suit the different needs of students taking drugs.

Education services during treatment and rehabilitation

7. For some casual and occasional drug abusers who have not yet developed a drug habit, they may, in principle, continue to go to school while receiving treatment and counselling services provided by relevant departments and their schools. This arrangement will not only minimise the impact on their studies, but also cater to their needs. By adopting a whole-school approach, schools will provide early intervention for the students concerned. For example, the school social worker or student

counsellor will help a student tackle his drug problems based on his professional knowledge; the crisis management team (which may comprise the principal, vice-principal, guidance and discipline teachers, class teachers and school social worker/school counsellor) will assess the case as soon as possible to decide whether to refer it to another team within the school for follow-up over a longer period of time, or to actively seek the help of community resources. For instance, schools can strengthen collaboration with the counselling centres for psychotropic substance abusers and refer needy students to these centres so that these students and their family can receive appropriate individual/group counselling and community health and medical services with a view to helping the students stay away from drugs and putting them back on the right track.

8. As for habitual young drug abusers who require residential treatment and rehabilitation services, their most basic and urgent need is to undergo treatment, rebuild their self-confidence and find a new direction in life so as to prevent a relapse and to prepare for reintegration into the community. As such, during this transitional process of residential treatment and rehabilitation, the prime objective of the residential centres is to provide treatment and rehabilitation services. Education services provided there purely play a supportive and complementary role, aiming to maintain the basic education standard and learning momentum of young drug abusers to facilitate their early integration into the community after rehabilitation.

9. The EDB has been giving attention and support to the provision of education services for school-age drug abusers undergoing treatment and rehabilitation. Since 1995, the EDB has been providing subvention for non-profit-making voluntary bodies/agencies running drug treatment and rehabilitation centres (DTRCs) to operate educational programmes for school-age drug abusers. The programmes include the teaching of three core subjects (namely, Chinese, English and Mathematics) and other educational activities such as life skills training and vocational training. The subvention is calculated on the basis of the number of education units of 10 students each. In the 2009/10 school year, each educational unit receives a subvention of some \$300,000 per annum to hire teachers and meet daily operational expenses of the programme, etc. At present, 20 such educational programmes are operated in 11 centres run by 7 non-governmental organisations.

10. With the lowering of the age of drug abusers, the number of school-age children among drug abusers receiving treatment and rehabilitation services continues to rise. We encourage operators of DTRCs to enhance their education services for school-age drug abusers receiving residential treatment. To this end, we are actively considering enhancing our support to DTRCs for operating educational programmes,

including providing additional resources and professional support in education, so that they can strengthen the structures and designs of these programmes and broaden their scope to accommodate diversified modes of education and activities in the light of the learning and training needs of the young drug abusers receiving treatment. It is hoped that the enhanced programmes can enable school-age drug abusers to resume school education, receive vocational training or enter into employment according to their aptitudes and needs as soon as possible after rehabilitation.

11. As mentioned in paragraph 8, provision of education services for young drug abusers receiving residential treatment is a transitional arrangement. We consider that the best and most suitable arrangement is to enable rehabilitated school-age drug abusers to reintegrate into society and resume education in mainstream schools as soon as possible. In this respect, if students who have a drug problem are grouped together for education and treatment in a particular school, some students and parents may worry about the possible negative labelling effect. In fact, we welcome different modes of drug treatment and rehabilitation services. In the 2009-10 Policy Address, the Chief Executive stated clearly that the Administration would invite suggestions on new and effective modes of drug treatment and rehabilitation services. In this respect, we do not rule out the possibility that individual centres with suitable facilities may apply for registering part of their premises as schools to meet the needs of their clients, although this should not be regarded as a general practice. The Administration will continue to provide assistance to all effective treatment programmes, be they religious, educational or in any other forms, with a view to providing a wider variety of treatment programmes for young people who want to receive drug treatment and their parents to choose from.

Helping rehabilitated drug abusers reintegrating into schools

12. Social workers of DTRCs or the probation officers concerned will assess the needs of rehabilitated school-age drug abusers and then identify suitable rehabilitation programmes and make appropriate arrangements, including finding suitable schools for them, following up on their development and providing support for their schools. If there is a need, they may seek assistance from the EDB for placement service. Upon receiving a request for placement of a rehabilitated drug abuser, the Non-attendance Cases (NAC) Team of the EDB will meet with the student and his parents to find out the learning needs, past academic performance and interests of the student, and discuss with them the study and career plans of the student. The NAC Team will also assess whether the student is suitable for immediate resumption of schooling or needs to join short-term adaptation programmes before placement.

13. If a student still has behavioural or emotional problems after treatment and rehabilitation and cannot adapt to mainstream school life for the time being, the professionals concerned, with the consent of the students' parents, will refer the student to the Central Co-ordinating Referral Mechanism jointly managed by the EDB and the Social Welfare Department (SWD) for assessment. The relevant assessment committee will determine whether the student is suitable for placement in a School for Social Development (SSD), which will provide intensive counselling for him to boost his motivation to learn and enhance his life skills. Like other SSD students, when the student shows improvement in his emotions and behaviour, he will be assisted to resume schooling in a mainstream school as soon as possible.

Relocation of the centres of the Christian Zheng Sheng Association

14. The Christian Zheng Sheng Association (the Association) operates two treatment and rehabilitation centres in Ha Keng, Lantau Island to provide drug treatment and rehabilitation services to meet the needs of drug abusers. However, the two centres fail to meet the licensing criteria under the Drug Dependent Persons Treatment and Rehabilitation Centres (Licensing) Ordinance because the existing facilities are inadequate and cannot be improved *in-situ*. The Association formally submitted its proposal to the SWD in September 2008 asking for relocating the Association's centres to the vacant premises of the ex-Heung Yee Kuk Southern District Secondary School (ex-SDSS). The SB together with relevant government departments studied thoroughly the proposal and considered that the proposal will not only facilitate early improvement in the rehabilitation and learning environment for young drug abusers, but also increase the number of places, thereby helping more young people in need. Therefore, the Government supports in principle the relocation of the centres. To take the proposal forward, the SB together with relevant government departments started to launch formal district consultations in the first half of 2009.

15. The Government has been proactively following up the Association's relocation proposal. However, during the consultation exercise in the second half of 2009, some issues have been raised, including the background and operating account of the services provided by the Association, the transparency and accountability of the operation of the centres after relocation. These issues which have attracted public concerns should be handled in the first instance. The SB has all along been keeping close contact with the Association and asking the Association to follow up with these matters to address the concerns of the public. Nonetheless, the Association indicated that they would like to continue to discuss with the Government concerning the

relocation proposal after they have settled their internal business including clarification of the operating account of various services.

16. In January 2010, the Association sent a letter to the Government again indicating that the process of clarifying the operating account is still in progress but the Association would like the Government to assist them to relocate the centres in Ha Keng as soon as possible. Upon receiving the letter, the Government replied promptly, reiterating that the Administration has been following up the relocation proposal and the Association should specifically handle those issues which attracted public attention. In this connection, the SB together with the relevant government departments continue to liaise with the Association to follow up with the various issues, for example, the requirements set by the Government for using the school premises in Mui Wo by the Association, including providing necessary facilities and obtaining relevant licenses, developing a suitable mode of operation, making proper administrative and financial management arrangements and agreeing to have its services monitored.

17. All along, the Government understands the Association's wish to improve the environment of the centres in Ha Keng as soon as possible and has been actively following up the relocation proposal. As stated in the Government's reply to the Association, it has to follow up the issues of concern to see whether it will affect the original relocation proposal, including the implementation details. The Association should also provide relevant information to the Government for consideration and assessment on whether the concerns of the public can be addressed before the Government takes forward the relocation proposal.

18. We are aware of the views and concerns of Mui Wo residents expressed in the consultation exercise about the provision of school places. At present, we consider that the student population of the Islands District has stabilised, and the existing schools already provide sufficient places to meet the demand. According to the allocation results of the EDB's Primary One Admission System in the past few years, public primary schools in South Lantau are able to provide enough primary one school places for local school-age children. As regards secondary schools, only around 50 primary six students from Mui Wo School and Bui O Public School participated in the Secondary School Places Allocation (SSPA) System annually in the past few years. As a secondary school is required to run at least three secondary one classes, the number of students is too small to meet the requirement. In fact, the EDB has made available over 30 secondary school choices at Tung Chung, Cheung Chau, Hong Kong Island, etc. to primary six students participating in the SSPA in the Island school net (including Mui Wo). Therefore, we do not consider that there is a need to operate a local school in the ex-SDSS premises. Nevertheless, the EDB will continue

to monitor the future development of the district and review the supply and demand of school places from time to time. Meanwhile, the Government will continue to communicate and discuss with the residents and other stakeholders in the district, with a view to working out an option that is in the best interest of the public.

Advice sought

19. Members are invited to advise on the provision of education services for young drug abusers and relocation of the centres of the Christian Zheng Sheng Association .

Education Bureau

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