

**Services for street sleepers provided
by the Social Welfare Department (SWD)**

The Government has always been concerned about the needs of street sleepers. We provide a wide range of support services to address their emergency needs and enhance their work motivation and skills, so as to help them give up street sleeping and become self-reliant.

The number of street sleepers

2. To monitor service demand, SWD has set up a computerised Street Sleepers Registry (SSR) to capture street sleepers' personal data and record the services they receive. Both SWD and the service units of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) specialised in serving street sleepers (including the three Integrated Services Teams for Street Sleepers (ISTs) subvented by SWD and the Society for Community Organisation (SoCO)) register newly confirmed street sleeper cases with the SSR on a monthly basis and de-register cases when they confirm that the street sleepers have given up street sleeping. As at January 2011, the number of registered street sleepers was 409.

Services for street sleepers

3. Since April 2004, SWD has been subventing three NGOs, namely the Salvation Army, St James' Settlement and the Christian Concern for the Homeless Association (CCHA), to each operate an IST to provide one-stop integrated services to street sleepers over the territory. The services provided by the ISTs include emergency and short-term accommodation, arrangement of long-term accommodation, free meal service, emergency relief fund, personal care (e.g. bathing and hair-cutting), counselling, outreaching, employment guidance, aftercare service, referral service, etc. Integrated Family Service Centres (IFSCs) / Integrated Services Centres (ISCs) run by SWD and NGOs also provide street sleepers with various counselling and support services.

4. In addition, SWD subvents SoCO to run a Care and Support Networking Team in the West Kowloon region. Through the provision of outreaching support as well as casework and group work services, the team aims at helping street sleepers and other vulnerable groups re-integrate into the community, thus contributing to the Home Affairs Bureau's policy objective on community development.

Accommodation support

5. SWD subvents NGOs to operate five urban hostels for single persons and two temporary shelters. Together they provide 202 places of short-term accommodation for street sleepers referred by social workers of SWD or NGOs and other needy persons. The average utilisation rate of these hostels and shelters in 2010-11 (up to December 2010) was 80%.

6. Apart from the government subvented hostels and temporary shelter mentioned above, there are also eight other street sleeper or temporary shelters operated by NGOs on a self-financing basis. These shelters provide a total of 436 places of overnight or temporary accommodation for street sleepers referred by social workers of SWD or NGOs and other needy persons.

7. Besides, an allocation is included in the annual subvention for each of the three ISTs as emergency fund to cover the expenses of eligible street sleepers such as payment of rent, rental deposit and other removal expenses. SWD or NGO IFSCs / ISCs may, having regard to individual circumstances, provide short-term cash assistance to street sleepers to help them tide over financial hardship including those arising from accommodation needs. Street sleepers with genuine long-term financial hardship can apply for Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) to cover expenses for daily living and accommodation.

8. Individuals or families with genuine and pressing housing needs but are unable to solve the problems themselves may approach SWD / NGO IFSCs / ISCs for assistance. Social workers will, having regard to the circumstances in individual cases, provide appropriate assistance to them, which include short-term financial assistance to meet rental and removal expenses, arrangement for admission to urban hostels for single persons, referrals for applications for CSSA, and recommending cases eligible for compassionate rehousing to the Housing Department for consideration of allocating public rental housing units.

9. SWD will continue to monitor the number of street sleepers through the SSR and meet with organisations operating the ISTs on a regular basis to assess the demand for and operation of street sleeper services. Where necessary, SWD will introduce further measures to provide support for street sleepers.

Labour and Welfare Bureau
Social Welfare Department
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