

Establishment Subcommittee

Follow-up to meeting on 5 December 2002

**Proposed retention of one supernumerary post
Administrative Officer Staff Grade C (D2) post in the Narcotics
Division of Security Bureau of Government Secretariat for two
years from 17 February 2013 to 16 February 2015 to continue
with the work on combating drug abuse problem
(EC(2012-13)11)**

**Assessment on the effectiveness of the Trial Scheme of School Drug
Testing in Tai Po in the 2009-10 and 2010-11 school years, and the
Healthy School Programme with a drug testing component launched in
the 2011-12 school year**

The Government adopts a five-pronged strategy in combating drug abuse, namely (i) preventive education and publicity, (ii) treatment and rehabilitation, (iii) legislation and law enforcement, (iv) external cooperation and (v) research. Efforts over the past few years have brought improvements in the drug scene, with a decline in the number of reported drug abusers as well as newly reported abusers. The decline in the number of those aged under 21 is more pronounced, recording a significant drop by over 40% in 2011, as compared to the peak in 2008.

2. The Trial Scheme of School Drug Testing in Tai Po District (the Trial Scheme) in the 2009/10 and 2010/11 school years, and the subsequent Healthy School Programme with a Drug Testing Component (HSP(DT)) introduced as an on-going initiative, are important initiatives on the front of preventive education and publicity. The purpose is to foster an anti-drug culture in schools by enhancing students' understanding of the evils of drugs, hence strengthening their resolve to stay away from drugs. Experience so far indicates that the initiatives are effective as a primary preventive measure in schools.

Trial Scheme on School Drug Testing in Tai Po District

3. The Narcotics Division (ND) of Security Bureau commissioned an Evaluation Research (the Research) on the Trial Scheme in the 2009/10 and 2010/11 school years. The Research was based on findings obtained from two surveys conducted at all 23 secondary schools which participated in the Trial Scheme and a random sample of secondary schools outside Tai Po.

4. The Research confirmed that the Trial Scheme was effective as a preventive measure to enhance students' resolve to stay away from drugs. At the end of the Trial Scheme, among the participating schools, all 100% of the principals, around 80% of the teachers and students and 90% of the parents/guardians agreed that the Scheme was effective in establishing a drug-free campus. The Research also confirmed that the Trial Scheme had no adverse implications on parent-child relationship, teacher-student relationship and students' trust in their schools.

5. In respect of school principals, most of them considered that the running of drug testing was able to integrate with the schools' daily operation, resulting in minimal disruption to school work and unease among students. When compared to students outside Tai Po, the Research found that drug-taking behaviour of students in Tai Po was slightly better than those outside the district. The Research further recommended that drug testing should not be seen as a panacea on its own, but could be a key preventive element of a comprehensive healthy school policy.

6. On top of that, a total of 113 students who had taken drugs voluntarily came out to seek help from social workers. Social workers had devised a personalised treatment and counselling programme for each of these students according to their personal circumstances, e.g. level of drug dependence. They had also worked closely with schools and parents to support the students.

7. This formed the basis upon which the Government decided to launch the HSP(DT), with funding support by the Beat Drugs Fund (BDF), starting from the 2011/12 school year as part of government's sustaining efforts in promoting a drug free culture at schools.

HSP(DT)

8. HSP(DT) represents a holistic approach to tackling the youth drug abuse problem. It is a school-based preventive education programme, comprising diversified personal growth programmes designed to promote knowledge and awareness of the drug problem among students in general, and a voluntary drug testing component. Programmes may also be tailored to meet the needs of different target groups, including high-risk students, parents, and teachers. The voluntary drug testing component, as a key element of this preventive education initiative, is intended to provide an appropriate context for commitment education for students. As a sustaining preventive education initiative at schools, HSP(DT) is not an one-off measure. Its effectiveness in building drug resistant attitude among students could only be observed over time.

9. In the 2011/12 school year, 44 secondary schools, partnering with 12 NGOs, implemented HSP(DT). Implementation of HSP(DT) in the first year was smooth. Throughout the year, we had liaised closely with the participating schools and NGOs to monitor the administration of the planned programmes and the drug tests, and to gauge feedback on different aspects of the programme. In addition, we invited schools and NGOs to provide final reports primarily to facilitate evaluation of the various operational aspects.

10. Questionnaires returned by school principals indicated that students, parents and teachers in general had been positive about HSP(DT). Principals agreed that HSP(DT) has achieved the following –

- (a) enhanced students' resolve to stay away from drugs (94%);
- (b) helped building a drug-free culture on campus (97%); and
- (c) triggered motivation of those who had abused drugs to quit drugs (91%).

11. Participating schools and NGOs indicated that they were willing to continue to implement HSP(DT) in the future. Among them, 95% are running the HSP(DT) in the 2012/13 school year. Together with the newly joined schools, a total of 53 schools covering 17 districts are implementing HSP(DT) in the 2012/13 school year.

12. Conscious efforts have been made to ensure the due protection of personal data in accordance with the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance (Cap. 486). It should be noted that the Privacy Commission's inspection of the Trial Scheme had also confirmed no breach of the legislation, and that comments by the Commission had been taken up in the design of the protocol of the drug testing element of HSP(DT). There was no incident of personal data leakage. ND had arranged preparatory meetings and workshops to familiarise the participating schools and NGOs with operational details. A set of documents, e.g. compliance checklists, had been developed to assist their day-to-day operation. ND also conducts inspection visits to monitor NGOs' performance.

13. With the aim of progressively rolling out HSP(DT) to more secondary schools, we will continue our annual evaluation of the operations of HSP(DT) and refine details to ensure smooth operation. During discussion with school principals in early 2012 about the prospect of implementing HSP(DT) in their schools, we understand that they were receptive to the idea of HSP(DT). Certain schools were, however, concerned about the heavy workload in taking up various initiatives such as the New Academic Structure reform, rendering it difficult to properly engage stakeholders (teachers, parents, and students) in addressing issues such as potential "labelling effect" of HSP(DT) on the schools, and devising implementation plan in the 2012/13 school year. We will continue to work with the Education Bureau to promote understanding of the objectives of the programme and arrange for participating schools to share experience with prospective schools.

14. Based on the comments collected, we have already taken some improvement measures in the 2012/13 school year to streamline administrative arrangements and ease burden on schools and NGOs. In addition, we also plan to advance the project cycle to enable schools to start planning for HSP(DT) earlier in future school years to facilitate engagement of teachers, parents and students, and enable the running of HSP(DT) for two consecutive years for more continuity in activities planned. These measures are welcome by schools.

New drugs brought under legislative control

15. On the law enforcement and legislation front, ND, in collaboration with the Police, Customs and Excise Department, Department of Health and the Government Laboratory, have formed an inter-departmental working group to monitor the emergence of new drugs, including precursor chemicals, and consider if there is a case to bring such substance under legislative control. The Dangerous Drugs Ordinance (DDO) (Cap.134) is the principal legislation dealing with control of dangerous drugs. The following substances were brought under control of DDO in 2011 and 2012 –

- ❖ *With effect from 1 April 2011*
 - derivatives of piperazines;
 - synthetic cannabinoids;
 - derivatives of cathinone;

- ❖ *With effect from 14 July 2012*
 - gamma-butyrolactone (commonly known as “GBL”);
and
 - *salvia divinorum*, and salvinorin-A (the active ingredient of *Salvia divinorum*).

Work on other areas

Law enforcement

16. We attach great importance to reducing drug supply through stopping of illegal importation of dangerous drugs. In 2011, the Hong Kong Police Force (HKPF) and the Customs and Excise Department (C&ED) seized a total of 1 249 kilograms, 7.72 litres and 105 785 tablets of dangerous drugs, equivalent to about \$1.03 billion at market value. In the first three quarters of 2012, a total of 1 416.3 kilograms and 21 041 tablets of dangerous drugs, at market value of \$910 million were seized. A total of 5 639 persons and 4 336 persons were arrested for drug-related offences in 2011 and in the first three quarters of 2012 respectively.

External cooperation

17. HKPF and C&ED have reinforced their liaison and intelligence exchange with equivalent Mainland authorities and international organisations. Joint operations were undertaken as and when appropriate. For instance, with the intelligence from the United States Drug Enforcement Agency on information of cargo shipment, C&ED made a record seizure of 649 kilograms of cocaine from a shipment of laurel wood from Ecuador in July 2012, arresting three Hong Kong persons.

Public education and publicity

18. Since 2010, we have been organising various publicity and media programmes with the overarching theme “Stand Firm! Knock drugs out!” to strengthen young people’s resistance to the temptation of drugs, and empower them to help others stand firm against drugs. In June 2012, alongside our efforts to enhance the anti-drug telephone service “186 186” to become a 24-hour hotline with professional support of social workers, we launched two Announcements in the Public Interest: one of these targeting drug abusers while the other targeting parents, teachers and neighbours, inviting them to seek help from the hotline. In December 2012, a publicity project was launched through the network of “Roadshow” to promote public understanding of treatment and rehabilitation facilities and programmes, and solicit public support for the anti-drug cause.

Treatment and rehabilitation

19. Progress has also been made over the drug treatment and rehabilitation front for helping drug abusers turn over a new leaf. For example, ND has published the “Sixth Three-year Plan on Drug Treatment and Rehabilitation Services in Hong Kong”, which maps out the strategic direction of the treatment and rehabilitation services in 2012- 2014. We are also making efforts to enhance collaboration among various service modes (e.g. between community-based drug counselling services and residential drug treatment services) and across sectors (the anti-drug sector, the medical services and the education sector).

Research

20. Research studies help provide a solid foundation to facilitate the formulation of evidence-based anti-drug policies and programmes. In view of the prevalence of ketamine in Hong Kong, we have supported various research studies to examine the harmful effects of ketamine on the health of those who abuse the drug. Hong Kong is leading in this field of research and has over the past few years identified damages of ketamine to the urological system, mental health and brain functions. Such findings have helped the anti-drug sector develop various treatment methods and rehabilitative measures targeting ketamine abusers.

Narcotics Division
Security Bureau
January 2013