

For information  
on 3 October 2013

**Legislative Council Panel on Education  
Subcommittee on Integrated Education**

**Services for Students with  
Intellectual Disability and Mental Derangement**

**Purpose**

This paper briefs Members on the identification and support services provided by the Government for students with intellectual disability (ID) and mental derangement (MD).

**Background**

2. ID is a developmental disorder which is manifested before the age of 18. Most children with ID are diagnosed at pre-school stage. Their intellectual development is significantly delayed in comparison with students of the same age. They have notable difficulties in thinking, memory, attention, language abilities, sensory motor skills, temporal and spatial organisation as well as adaptive skills in daily life. On intellectual functioning, they are usually assessed to have an intelligence quotient (IQ) of at least two standard deviations below the mean of 100 (i.e. with an IQ about 70 or below). On adaptive functioning, they are found to have significant difficulties in learning conceptual, social and practical skills. At present, assessments are generally conducted by professionally trained educational psychologists (EP), clinical psychologists or the Child Assessment Service (CAS) of the Department of Health (DH)/Hospital Authority (HA).

3. According to the records of the Education Bureau (EDB), the numbers of students with ID attending public sector ordinary or special schools in the 2012/13 school year are as follows:

Ordinary Schools		Special Schools
Primary Level	Secondary Level	5 637
760	930	

4. MD covers a range of conditions (such as depression, anxiety and psychosis), each with different symptoms. Its presenting problems can have different manifestations and cover various aspects such as mental state, thinking, social interaction, emotion and behaviour.

Students with MD are mainly attended by psychiatrists and followed up by healthcare professionals such as clinical psychologists and medical social workers.

5. Records of the HA show that the numbers of students aged 18 or below receiving psychiatric service from the HA (including those with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD) and MD) in the past three years (2010-11 to 2012-13) are as follows:

Year	Numbers of Students Receiving HA Psychiatric Service (aged 18 or below)
2010-11	13 300
2011-12	15 200
2012-13	17 000

**Identification and Assessment Mechanism**

6. The Government has been making efforts, through various channels, for the early identification and assessment of children suspected of suffering from developmental disorders, including those with ID. Apart from the Developmental Surveillance Scheme implemented at the Maternal and Child Health Centres (MCHCs) of the DH for children aged 0 - 5, the DH, HA, EDB, Social Welfare Department (SWD) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have jointly launched the Comprehensive Child Development Service (CCDS) by phases since 2005 to step up early identification of pre-primary children with developmental disorders. The CCDS, through MCHCs of the DH and other service units as its platform, is designed to identify children with developmental disorders. Children identified to have developmental disorders will be referred to the CAS of DH for further actions. Families in need of enhanced support will be referred to the medical social services of the SWD or Integrated Family Service Centres operated by the SWD or subvented NGOs for follow-up. Under the CCDS, pre-primary institution teachers can also refer children in need to MCHCs of their respective districts for preliminary assessment and treatment. A referral and reply system has been developed and implemented in all pre-primary institutions since 2008. In addition, a Pre-primary Children Development and Behaviour Management - Teacher Resource Kit has also been developed by the DH in collaboration with the EDB and SWD to enable kindergarten teachers to have a better understanding about the CCDS operation and referral system, and increase their knowledge about common pre-school developmental problems in order to facilitate early identification and referral of children in need of assessment and treatment.

7. At primary school stage, the EDB provides schools with relevant tools and training through the Early Identification and Intervention of Learning Difficulties Programme for Primary One Pupils (the Programme). Under the Programme, teachers make use of the

Observation Checklist for Teachers for early identification of primary one (P1) students with learning difficulties, including those who may have ID, and arrange for them prompt professional assessment by EPs and follow-up services.

8. The CAS of DH provides comprehensive multi-disciplinary assessment and appropriate rehabilitation services for children with special educational needs (SEN) aged below 12, including children with ID and emotional and behavioural difficulties. The multi-disciplinary assessment team comprises paediatricians, clinical psychologists, medical social workers, audiologists, speech therapists, optometrists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, public health nurses and other auxiliary personnel. They collaborate to provide children suspected of having the above difficulties with necessary assessment and professional diagnosis.

9. Beyond that, the Student Health Service of DH provides P1 to secondary six (S6) students who have enrolled in its programme with a series of health services during their annual appointments, including physical examination and individual health counselling. Medical and nursing staff will also screen the conditions and needs of the students through interviews with them and their parents and by means of mental health and behaviour surveys. Students with suspected intellectual, mental health, social, emotional or behavioural problems will be referred to the relevant HA specialist departments, designated staff of their school or Integrated Family Service Centres where appropriate.

10. Comprising child psychiatrists, paediatricians, clinical psychologists, nurses, speech therapists and occupational therapists, the HA's multi-disciplinary team of healthcare professionals provides early identification and assessment for children with ID and MD, as well as treatment for children with MD.

## **Support Services**

### ***Medical Services***

11. The CAS of DH provides interim support services for parents, such as talks, workshops and training courses, to help them understand their children so that they can give their children better care and seek early intervention. For diagnosed cases, doctors will refer children concerned to the relevant specialist outpatient clinics of HA for further assessment and treatment as necessary according to their individual needs and family circumstances. For pre-school children, subject to the consent of their parents, they will be referred by the CAS to the pre-school rehabilitation services under the SWD's subvention. For school-aged children, assessment reports of the CAS will be sent to EPs of the EDB to inform them of the assessment findings and needs of the children concerned. The CAS will also provide an

assessment summary to parents for onward submission to schools to draw their attention to the educational needs of the children and hence provide them with timely support.

12. Medical social workers have been deployed by the SWD to the CAS and psychiatric wards and clinics of HA with a view to working in collaboration with the team of medical professionals to jointly formulate children's rehabilitation plans and assist in the provision of the above-mentioned support and services.

13. The multi-disciplinary team of the psychiatric department under HA offers students with MD a series of relevant services, including inpatient, specialist outpatient, day training and community outreaching services. The team also provides parents and carers of the students concerned with suitable support and training to raise their understanding of the symptoms and treatment needs of the students. In addition, the professional team maintains close liaison with related organisations, such as schools or early training centres providing pre-school rehabilitation services, to make referral and provide support as appropriate according to the developmental needs of the students.

### ***Rehabilitation Services***

14. The SWD provides children with disabilities from birth to six years old, including those with ID, ASD and AD/HD, with early intervention through pre-school rehabilitation services, with a view to enhancing their physical, psychological and social developments, thus improving their opportunities for participating in ordinary schools and daily life activities, and helping their families meet their special needs. For details, please visit the website of SWD at [http://www.swd.gov.hk/en/index/site\\_pubsvc/page\\_rehab/sub\\_listofserv/id\\_serpresch/](http://www.swd.gov.hk/en/index/site_pubsvc/page_rehab/sub_listofserv/id_serpresch/).

15. The Government has been increasing the provision of pre-school rehabilitation places steadily. Over the past six years, the Government has allocated funding to provide about 1 500 additional places, representing an increase of nearly 30%. There are currently a total of 6 230 pre-school rehabilitation places. The SWD anticipates that about 607 additional places will come on stream in 2013-14. Moreover, the Community Care Fund launched an assistance programme on Training Subsidy for Children who are on the Waiting List of Subvented Pre-school Rehabilitation Services in December 2011, for the purpose of providing training subsidy at a maximum of \$2,615<sup>1</sup> a month for pre-school children from low-income families who are in need of such services, thereby enabling them to receive self-financing services operated by NGOs and facilitating their learning and development. Furthermore, the SWD, through its District Support Centres for Persons with Disabilities,

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<sup>1</sup> Starting from 1 May 2013, the maximum monthly subsidy has been increased from \$2,500 to \$2,615.

provides one-stop support and training services for persons with disabilities (including children with disabilities) living in their respective geographical districts to facilitate their integration into the community, and provides training/educational programmes, talks, workshops, etc. for their carers so as to enhance their caring ability. In addition, the Parents/Relatives Resource Centre also organises social and recreational activities for parents/carers of children with disabilities to facilitate experience sharing and mutual support.

### ***Education Services***

16. For children with ID, most of them should have been assessed before P1 since their difficulties usually become apparent at pre-school stage. As mentioned in paragraphs 14 and 15, the SWD provides early intervention through the pre-school rehabilitation services to boost their cognitive, communication and learning capacities.

17. The EDB will, subject to the assessment and recommendations of specialists and the consent of the parents, refer school-aged children with mild, moderate, severe ID or multiple disabilities-cum-ID to special schools where intensive support services are available. As for some students with mild ID who are relatively more capable, their parents may choose to send them to ordinary schools so that they can benefit from an adapted ordinary curriculum. In this connection, the EDB has been providing schools with additional resources, professional support and teacher training to help them cater for students with SEN, including those with ID.

### **Additional Resources**

18. Individual students with ID who have greater learning difficulties may still be admitted to ordinary schools if their parents insist. However, they usually encounter persistent adaptive difficulties and their presence puts additional pressure on the schools and teachers. EPs and inspectors from the EDB will follow up on individual students, assist teachers and parents in formulating suitable education plans and review regularly the progress of the students in various aspects. Where necessary, with the consent of the parents, we will refer students to the short-term attachment programmes run by Special Schools cum Resources Centres (SSRC) for intensive support so as to help them establish daily routines. If circumstances warrant, the EDB and the schools will continue to explain to the parents whether a special school or an ordinary school can best meet the actual needs of their children and help them transfer their children to special schools as necessary.

19. Additional resources for ordinary schools by the EDB include the Learning Support Grant (LSG), provision of additional teachers under the Integrated Education (IE) Programme/Intensive Remedial Teaching Programme, Enhanced Speech Therapy Grant, Top-up Fund for procuring special furniture and equipment or carrying out minor conversion

works for students with disabilities and provision of additional teachers to cater for the needs of low academic achievers in secondary schools, etc. For students with significant adjustment difficulties, including those having severe emotional and behavioural problems induced by their ID or MD, the EDB will consider providing schools with a time-limited grant where appropriate for employing teaching assistants to help the students concerned follow classroom routines and learn effectively. With effect from the 2013/14 school year, the EDB will raise the ceiling of the LSG from \$1 million to \$1.5 million per school per year to strengthen support for schools having admitted a larger number of students with SEN. Schools may pool and flexibly deploy such resources to employ additional teaching staff or assistants and procure professional services to improve the learning effectiveness of students with SEN.

### Professional Support

20. When informed of the admission of P1 students with ID, the student support teams, as a general practice, will meet with the students and their parents to make preliminary assessment of the children's situation and needs and obtain the education plans and progress reports prepared by child care centres/kindergartens before the commencement of the school year. Students with ID are encouraged to join the induction programmes for pre-P1 students provided by schools/NGOs during summer break. To facilitate their early integration into school, some schools will assist these students in familiarising with the general school rules and routines, as well as getting to know the channels to seek necessary assistance before the start of the school year. The EDB encourages schools to adopt the 3-Tier Intervention Model<sup>2</sup>, and provide additional support for the students based on individual needs to enhance their learning.

21. The level of support for different students will be adjusted according to the progress and needs as shown by the results of their formative and summative assessments. Generally speaking, students with ID have significant difficulties in acquiring academic skills, communication and social skills, as well as adaptive life skills. To address their needs, tier-3 support is normally required. The school will invite parents and professionals to work out for students with ID the Individual Education Plans (IEP), including appropriate learning targets (e.g. in respect of academic studies, classroom behaviour, social communication, behaviour and emotion management, and self-esteem), tailor-made teaching strategies and

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<sup>2</sup> Tier-1 support – quality teaching in the regular classroom to help students with mild or transient learning/behaviour adjustment difficulties.

Tier-2 support – “add-on” intervention for students with persistent learning/behaviour adjustment difficulties.

Tier-3 support – intensive individualised support, e.g. Individual Education Plan, for students with severe learning/behaviour adjustment difficulties.

support measures, as well as success criteria. Students' progress and the effectiveness of these Plans will be reviewed regularly.

22. To help schools support students with MD, the EDB has laid down in its School Administration Guide a guideline entitled "How Schools can Help Students with Mental Health Problems" for schools' reference. Specifically, as stated in the guideline, if teachers suspect their students to have MD and in need for professional assessment or consultation services, they may approach professionals in their schools such as school social workers who will communicate with the students and their parents, and if necessary, refer the students to psychiatrists for diagnosis or medication. Schools should play a role by helping these students re-enter school and adapt to school life after treatment, in tandem with the medical treatment and rehabilitation requirements. In addition, schools will arrange multi-disciplinary case conferences when necessary for psychiatrists, medical social workers, EPs and school personnel (including school social workers and guidance personnel) to identify appropriate support measures for the students. Relevant support measures include creating a caring learning environment, making accommodations on teaching and learning, adjusting class arrangements, and providing emotional counselling and peer support, etc. We also encourage parents to discuss with the school the particular needs of their children so that appropriate support will be offered in accordance with the student's conditions and needs.

23. The EDB has been working closely with the HA to review and discuss ways to strengthen the existing notification and support mechanism to ensure effective cross-disciplinary collaboration and communication. We have already reached a consensus with the seven district centres of the Early Assessment Service for Young People (E.A.S.Y.) under HA, in which schools may call the respective district service centres direct for expert advice and support, including assessment, thematic seminars/workshops and ongoing treatment services. To bring this to the attention of heads of primary, secondary as well as special schools, the EDB issued in 2012 a circular memorandum on this subject, which has been uploaded onto the EDB website.

24. The EDB launched the School Partnership Scheme in 2003/04, under which a school support network has been established. Through the network, ordinary schools with rich experience in IE are encouraged to serve as resource schools and share with other ordinary schools their knowledge and practices in supporting students with SEN. In the 2013/14 school year, we have made arrangements for six secondary schools and eight primary schools to serve as resource schools. These resource schools work closely with some other ordinary schools as partners and share their experience and strategies in addressing the diverse needs of individual students through case conference, on-site support, school network meetings and district sharing sessions, etc. In addition, 10 special schools have been invited to serve as SSRCs. Where necessary, SSRCs for students with ID will offer three to six

months attachment programmes to ordinary school students with ID who have experienced significant adjustment difficulties. Teachers of SSRC will also provide training and consultation service for ordinary school teachers to enhance their professional capacity, which will help put them in a better position to support students upon return from the short-term attachment programmes.

25. Furthermore, the EDB also provides schools with School-based Educational Psychology Service to support students with SEN at three different levels, namely student, teacher and school system levels. At the student level, if teachers suspect students of having ID, schools may approach EPs direct for arrangement of professional assessment. Upon completion of assessment, EPs will explain to teachers and parents the students' SEN at case conferences and discuss with them follow-up actions. Having regard to the needs of individual students, EPs will attend meetings of student support teams and IEP Committee to discuss teaching strategies and support measures to cater for their needs. At the teacher level, EPs help enhance teachers' awareness to identification of students with ID and their abilities to employ various support strategies through school-based or district-based teacher training. At the school system level, EPs give professional advice on school policies, measures, teaching strategies, resource deployment as well as home-school co-operation, etc. to facilitate early identification and intervention of students with SEN. The EDB is taking steps to extend the School-based Educational Psychology Service progressively to cover all public sector primary and secondary schools by the 2016/17 school year.

### Teacher Training

26. Enhancing the professional capacity of teachers in catering for students with SEN (including students with ID) is pivotal to the successful implementation of IE. From the 2007/08 school year onwards, the EDB has been providing serving teachers with structured training courses on supporting students with SEN pitched at Basic, Advanced and Thematic levels (BAT Courses). It is expected that a critical mass of teachers having completed the relevant training would be found in each ordinary school. As at July 2013, over 41% of teachers in public sector ordinary primary schools and about 17% of teachers in public sector ordinary secondary schools have received 30 hours or more of structured training on special education (including BAT or equivalent courses). In terms of schools, as at July 2013, the respective percentages of public sector ordinary primary and secondary schools with 10% or more of their teachers who had received special education training were over 99% and 84%. Nearly 84% of primary schools have 30% or more of their teachers who have received special education training. To increase the professional capacity of teachers in developing and implementing IEP for students with SEN (including students with ID), the EDB has been organising relevant workshops for teachers on a regular basis.



27. To support students with MD, the EDB has commissioned annually a tertiary institution to run a 120-hour thematic course on Psychological Approach to Effective Strategies in Handling Students' Challenging Behaviour. The main objective and contents of the course are to enhance teachers' understanding of students' developmental needs, including students' deviant and unruly behaviour, low self-esteem and some common emotional and psychiatric problems. Through theoretical discussions and case analysis, the course helps teachers develop positive attitudes and effective strategies for supporting students in handling potential crises in different stages of development. Also, in the 2011/12 and 2012/13 school years, the EDB and HA jointly organised a number of regional thematic seminars on early psychosis for school guidance teachers/personnel, at which psychiatrists, EPs and social workers were invited to share how to support students with MD.

### Special Examination Arrangements

28. On top of daily learning support, appropriate special examination arrangements (examination accommodations) for students with SEN are required to ensure that they can enjoy equal opportunities in assessments to show the subject knowledge they have acquired and skills commanded. To that end, the EDB officers organise talks/workshops for schools on a regular basis to assist schools in further fine-tuning their school-based policy and measures on special examination arrangements. The EDB also published and uploaded onto its website the information leaflet on Whole School Approach (WSA) – Principles and Strategies for Assessment in 2004 and the Guidelines on Special Arrangements for Internal Examinations for Students with SEN in 2009, which set out the general principles and strategies on special internal assessment arrangements, including details about arrangements for students with ID. For students with MD, schools may make special examination arrangements for them according to their needs, such as setting aside a quiet place for them to take a break or take the examination.

29. As regards public examinations, schools may apply to the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority for special examination arrangements for their students (usually when they are at S5) before they sit the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination. All applications have to be vetted by the Committee on Special Needs Candidates, which comprises representatives from the EDB, special schools, secondary schools, tertiary institutions, Committee on Home-School Co-operation and professional sectors. In general, special examination arrangements for students with ID and MD take the form of making special arrangements on examination centres, time allowance (normally no more than 25% extra examination time ) and supervised breaks, etc.

## Home-School Co-operation

30. Communication and co-operation between parents and schools are essential when it comes to providing support for students with SEN. To enhance parents' understanding of their roles, the EDB issued and uploaded onto its website the Parent Guide on WSA to IE in the 2008/09 school year, providing parents with information on the procedures for identifying and assessing different types of SEN, and on various support strategies. We also remind schools about the need to establish a systematic and regular communication mechanism for enhanced communication and co-operation with parents. Schools should also encourage parents to take part in the planning, implementation and evaluation of intervention programmes for their children, for example, by inviting parents to case conferences and reporting to them regularly the learning progress of their children, etc.

31. Currently, all primary schools have student guidance teacher/personnel, and each secondary school also has a school social worker (provided by the SWD through NGOs). They have maintained close communication with parents and provided students in need and their parents with individual or group counselling service.

## Cross-sector Collaboration

32. To enhance the effectiveness of the support for students with SEN, the EDB has been working with different sectors to promote professional exchanges with a view to bringing about synergy. Apart from collaborating with tertiary institutions in developing screening/assessment tools and diversified teaching materials, the EDB has also attached great importance to communication and co-operation with the education sector, other government departments, NGOs and parents. We have been promoting public awareness of IE and the concept of inclusion through various promotional activities. In the 2008/09 school year, the EDB co-organised with the DH and the Subsidised Primary Schools Councils an IE publicity drive, "An Inclusive School – It All Begins with Our Hearts" (including video production and broadcasting contests) for enhancing understanding and acceptance of students with SEN (including those with ID) among teachers, students and parents. In recent years, the EDB has collaborated with the Radio Television Hong Kong in a variety of projects, including the television programmes "Parenting", "Featuring of Special Schools" as well as ETV programmes. We have also organized the "Special Schools Variety Show" at the Hong Kong Coliseum in Hung Hom to enhance public understanding and appreciation of the capabilities and talents of students with SEN. Last year, we held a major public event – "Learning and Teaching Expo 2012" to highlight the development and achievements of IE. Apart from inviting local and overseas academics to give thematic talks and seminars, relevant government departments and statutory bodies, NGOs, tertiary institutions, parent groups and schools also set up booths to showcase their services, teaching materials and

ancillary equipment for supporting students with SEN so as to keep the sector, schools, teachers and parents informed of the latest development in IE. The EDB will continue to enhance public awareness of IE and promote IE principles and measures for creating a caring and inclusive community through different media and promotional activities including television announcements.

### **Service Effectiveness**

33. The CAS of DH provides various educational activities for parents of children with SEN, organises or participates in educational seminars for the public in a bid to enhance public awareness of children with SEN. As shown by the post-workshop questionnaires returned by parents, these activities have achieved pleasing results.

34. Currently, the Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Services of the HA provide early identification, assessment and treatment for students with MD. The HA will continue to review and evaluate the effectiveness of and demand for such services in order to ensure that service needs in various aspects are met.

35. The Disability Discrimination Ordinance came into force in 1996. The Code of Practice on Education (the Code) issued by the Equal Opportunities Commission also took effect in 2001. The Code provides schools and educators with practical guidelines and assists educational establishments in developing policies that prevent and eliminate disability discrimination. The Code stipulates that educational establishments should not discriminate against students with disabilities and have the obligation to provide reasonable accommodation for students with SEN, including adaptations to teaching, communication and assessment methods. Hence, the rights of students with SEN have been protected under the existing laws in Hong Kong. The adoption of the WSA to IE in Hong Kong is in line with the global trend in the development of IE.

36. Regarding education services for students with ID and MD, schools have set up follow-up and support mechanisms to regularly monitor, evaluate and review students' situation and effectiveness of the support offered, and adjust support strategies where necessary, through student support teams and/or multi-disciplinary case/review conferences.

37. Under the School Development and Accountability Framework, schools are held accountable to their stakeholders through annual self-evaluation on the effectiveness of their support for students with SEN. To further enhance transparency, schools have also been required since the 2009/10 school year to set out clearly in their school reports the deployment of resources for supporting students with SEN. Moreover, the EDB requires schools to submit a self-evaluation report on the implementation of the WSA to IE at the end

of each school year. In parallel, the EDB arranges for its professional staff to conduct regular school visits to ensure the effective deployment of resources for supporting students with SEN. After years of practice, we have seen in schools successful cases in respect of culture building, policy formulation and implementation.

38. The Government has kept various IE measures under ongoing review. In 2005, the EDB set up the Task Force on Integrated Education in Mainstream Schools (IE Task Force), which comprises representatives from the education sector (including representatives from various school councils), tertiary institutions, other government departments, NGOs and parent groups. Through regular meetings of the IE Task Force, the EDB discusses with stakeholders the development of IE and possible improvement measures. The EDB also, from time to time, meets with representatives from NGOs, parent groups and school councils, etc. to directly gauge their views on the implementation of IE.

### **Advice Sought**

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

Education Bureau  
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