

**For discussion
on 20 December 2017**

**Legislative Council Panel on Health Services
Panel on Education and Panel on Welfare Services
(Joint Meeting)**

Mental Health of Adolescents

PURPOSE

This paper briefs Members on the mental health services for adolescents provided by the Government.

BACKGROUND

Current Situation in Hong Kong

2. Mental health of adolescents is an essential part of overall health of the society. Having good mental state will help adolescents fulfil their potential, develop lifelong resilience to adversity and improve future life chances. Therefore, the Government attaches great importance to the mental health of adolescents, and provides cross-sectoral and multi-disciplinary support and care through collaboration and cooperation among different bureaux/departments, including the Food and Health Bureau (“FHB”), the Labour and Welfare Bureau (“LWB”), the Education Bureau (“EDB”), the Hospital Authority (“HA”), the Social Welfare Department (“SWD”) and the Department of Health (“DH”).

3. In 2016-17, the Child and Adolescent (“C&A”) Psychiatric Service of HA provided mental health services to over 32 000 children and adolescents, among which about 12 000 were adolescents between the age of 12 and 17. Some disorders have a higher frequency of occurrence than others in specific age range. For example, among the cases being followed up by the C&A Psychiatric Service of HA, there is a higher incidence and prevalence of Autism Spectrum Disorders (“ASD”) and

Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (“AD/HD”) in early and middle childhood, while psychosis tends to become apparent in late adolescence and early adulthood.

Existing Services

4. Currently, different bureau and departments have been providing adolescent mental health services covering various aspects including healthcare, education, social services, promotion, and cross-sectoral cooperation.

(A) Healthcare Services

Student Health Service under DH

5. DH’s Student Health Service provides health promotion and disease prevention services to primary and secondary school students. Eligible students enrolled in the service will receive annual health assessment designed to cater for their health needs at various stages of development, including screening for mental health problem(s). Students found to have mental health problem(s) will be referred to Special Assessment Centres under DH or specialist clinics of HA for further assessment and management.

C&A Psychiatric Service under HA

6. C&A Psychiatric Service of HA comprising healthcare practitioners in various disciplines provide early identification, assessment and treatment services for children and adolescents in need. The professional team of HA, involving doctors, clinical psychologists, nurses, speech therapists, occupational therapists and medical social workers, provides a spectrum of appropriate treatment and training including in-patient, specialist outpatient, day rehabilitation training and community support services, etc., according to the severity of the children and adolescents’ clinical conditions with a view to enhancing their speech and communication, sociability, emotion management, problem solving, learning and life skills, etc.

7. The multi-disciplinary professional team also provides the parents and carers of needy children and adolescents with knowledge about the respective diseases, in order to enhance their understanding of the symptoms and treatment needs. In addition, the professional team maintains close communication with related organisations (for example, early training centres and schools) to provide support according to the developmental needs of the children and adolescents as appropriate.

Early Assessment Service for Young People with Early Psychosis

8. HA launched the Early Assessment Service for Young People with Early Psychosis (“EASY”) Programme in 2001 for people aged between 15 and 25 who suffered from early psychosis. The multi-disciplinary intervention team of the programme provides continuous, one-stop and stage-specific support for the target patients during the first three years after their first episode of illness. Evidence has showed that the programme could identify people suffering from early psychosis in an early stage and offer them prompt treatment, so as to prevent their conditions from deteriorating and avoid unnecessary psychiatric in-patient admission. In addition to the case assessment and therapeutic solutions provided by the professional intervention team for patients, the EASY service team also implements educational programmes on mental health and conducts seminars and workshops for social workers, teachers, doctors, parents and members of the public, with a view to enhancing their awareness of early psychosis and the programme.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Community Support Project

9. In addition, HA has established the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Community Support Project (“CAMCom”) with an aim for early identification of children and adolescents with anxiety and mood problems so that appropriate support would be provided to help them overcome their mood problems, prevent the problem from escalating and resume their normal learning, social and family life. The project targets at children and adolescents aged 6 to 18 with anxiety and mood problems, and provides early identification and intervention, as well as a range of community support services. The scope of services under CAMCom includes conducting mental health promotion activities; providing advice and support services to youth workers and parents, and providing

counselling services to individual cases as needed, etc. In 2016-17, over 26 000 students, parents and staff from the education sector from 431 schools were supported or participated in CAMCom.

Mental Health Direct Hotline

10. HA has also established a mental health advisory hotline, namely Mental Health Direct hotline (“the hotline”) (Tel: 2466 7350), to provide support for ex-mentally ill persons and their carers (including adolescents with mental health needs and their parents). The hotline is manned by professional psychiatric nurses and provides professional advice on mental health issues to patients with mental illness, their carers, relevant stakeholders and members of the public. The hotline operates around-the-clock so that persons in need may call and seek assistance at their convenience. In 2016-17, the hotline received over 23 000 calls.

(B) Education Service

11. EDB attaches great importance to students’ mental health and mental health education, as well as actively provides diversified support to schools to take care of students with mental health needs. We continuously enhance the school curriculum and promote life education so as to facilitate students’ learning and development. EDB will continue to work in collaboration with different stakeholders, including the relevant bureaux/departments, parents and tertiary education institutions (“TEIs”), to render care and support to students with mental health needs at different levels.

Professional Support

12. EDB has been encouraging schools to adopt the Three-tier Intervention Model through the Whole School Approach and to identify and support students with mental health needs. Tier 1 mainly targets at students who are vulnerable and requiring additional support through teaching, guidance and support activities from teachers. Tier 2 targets at a smaller group of at-risk students referred to school guidance teachers/personnel for risk assessment and “add-on” support services, such as consultation or casework services for individual students, families and groups, programmes on healthy personal growth, as well as programmes to

support their adjustment to school life by strengthening the linkage among students, families, schools and the community. Tier 3 focuses on the high-risk cases requiring in-depth assessment and intensive individualised support from specialised helping professionals, including psychiatrists, clinical psychologists, social workers, etc.

13. For primary schools, apart from the teachers responsible for discipline and guidance, there are Student Guidance Officers, Student Guidance Teachers or student guidance personnel including registered social workers employed under Student Guidance Service Grant, providing counselling services at schools to students. To further enhance student guidance service, a top-up Student Guidance Service Grant has been provided to all public sector primary schools starting from the 2012/13 school year. For secondary schools, SWD has, since the 2000/01 school year, implemented the policy of “one school social worker for each secondary school” by subventing non-governmental organisations to provide school social work service for secondary schools with the focus on supporting adolescents at school age. School social workers collaborate closely with schools as well as guidance and discipline teachers to understand the academic, social or emotional needs of students, and to help them resolve problems in these respects through various activities and counselling services. Besides, school social workers are in contact with relevant welfare service units at district level, including Integrated Children and Youth Services Centres and Integrated Family Service Centres, to make good use of community resources and conduct timely referrals to support students in need.

14. EDB has also actively promoting diversified development programmes, such as the “Understanding Adolescent Project” for primary schools, the “Enhanced Smart Teen Project” in collaboration with disciplinary forces and uniform groups for secondary schools, and the “Pupil Ambassador Scheme on Positive Living”, to enhance students’ resilience and cultivate their sense of dignity, self-discipline, responsibility and courage to make changes and take on challenges through adventure-based, team-building and problem-solving training. In recent years, EDB has also introduced student guidance projects based on positive psychology concepts to help students develop a positive self-image and learn how to respect and cherish life.

15. School-based Educational Psychology Service has covered all public sector primary and secondary schools in the 2016/17 school year. Through regular school visits, educational psychologists (“EP”) provide comprehensive and integrated service at the school system, teacher support and student support levels, in order to enhance schools’ capacity to cater for students’ diverse educational needs. EDB also enhances the service by progressively improving the EP to school ratio to 1:4 at public sector primary and secondary schools with a large number of students with special educational needs (“SEN”), in order to strengthen the support to schools in providing more comprehensive intervention and follow-up to cases, as well as strengthening preventive and developmental work.

Additional Resources

16. Moreover, starting from the 2017/18 school year, the Learning Support Grant that EDB provides for public sector ordinary primary and secondary schools to support students with SEN will cover students with mental illness so that schools will have additional resources to enhance their support to cater for these students’ learning, social, emotional and behavioural needs.

Teachers’ Training

17. To enhance the professional capacity of teachers in catering for students with diverse needs, from the 2007/08 school year onwards, EDB has been providing teachers with relevant and structured training courses on supporting students with SEN pitched at Basic, Advanced and Thematic levels (“BAT Courses”). Starting from the 2012/13 school year, EDB has offered a new round of BAT Courses in which the Thematic course covers knowledge and skills to support students with mental health problems. From the 2017/18 school year onwards, EDB conducts the “Professional Development Programme for Mental Health” which includes Elementary Course for teachers at large and In-depth Course for designated teachers. The content for the Elementary Course (18 hours) includes fundamental knowledge and skills in promoting mental health on campus, and identifying and supporting students with mental health needs; while the content for the In-depth Course (30 hours) includes advanced knowledge and skills in identifying and supporting students with mental health needs including students with suicidal risk, implementing

preventive measures of student suicide, and coordinating the deployment of manpower and resources in school.

School Curriculum

18. EDB attaches great importance to quality school education. The major aim of education is to foster students' balanced and whole-person development in the moral, intellectual, physical, social and aesthetic domains, thereby allowing them to realise their potential and promote their healthy development in both physical and psychological aspects. In this connection, helping students develop a healthy lifestyle is instigated as one of the seven learning goals of the school curriculum. Through various channels such as updated curriculum documents, circulars, professional development programmes, school visits, etc., the EDB reiterated that schools should give prominence to the whole-person development of their students. Schools should ensure that their students have sufficient time for rests and leisure time to participate in other beneficial social or extra-curricular activities, such as reading, doing physical exercises or playing, pursuing their interests and establishing good relationship with family members, peers and friends, and developing a healthy lifestyle.

19. EDB has always attached great importance to enhancing students' competency to cope with adversity, and is committed to nurturing students' positive attitude towards life. Since 2001, moral and civic education ("MCE") has been promoted as one of the Four Key Tasks for the curriculum reform in schools. In consideration of schools' vision and students' learning needs, schools could implement MCE through various measures, such as school assemblies, life education periods, class teacher periods and life-wide learning activities to foster students' positive values and attitudes. Moreover, the content of life education, such as "understand life", "cherish life", "respect life" and "explore life", has already been incorporated into different learning themes under the school curriculum. For example, topic on "respect and value life" has been included in General Studies at the primary level while themes on "respect life" and "sanctity of life" have been included in the Life and Society Curriculum at the junior secondary level. The meaning of "life and death" is explored and reflected on in Ethics and Religious Studies at the senior secondary level. To facilitate the implementation of life education at schools, EDB has provided schools with diversified and practical learning

materials, including “Life Event Exemplars” based on students’ daily life experiences. EDB has also been organising related professional development programmes for teachers such as “Programme on Planning Life Education for Secondary Schools” and “Programme on Planning Life Education for Primary Schools” commissioned to the universities to share with schools on the direction and strategies of implementation, as well as the good practices. Moreover, life education and recent related social issues are discussed and shared in the teacher network and Learning Circle so as to enhance teachers’ knowledge of life education and their pedagogical skills.

20. Along with the implementation of “The Free Quality Kindergarten Education Scheme” in the 2017/18 school year and updated curriculum guides for different key stages, the 15-year school curriculum provides students with opportunities for nurturing their whole-person development and lifelong learning capabilities. Students only have to sit for one public examination under the New Academic Structure (“NAS”) implemented since 2009, which create space for them to develop diverse interests. EDB, the Curriculum Development Council, and the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority conducted the NAS review from 2012 to 2015, with recommendations that include the streamlining, fine-tuning and updating of curriculum contents, streamlining of School-based Assessment (“SBA”) and not implementing SBA in 10 subjects. All these aim to reduce the workload of teachers and students in order to create space for improving learning and teaching. The Chief Executive (“CE”) had further announced in her Policy Address in October this year that in-depth reviews will be conducted on eight key areas of education, one of which is curriculum arrangement. A task force has formed to review the primary and secondary curriculum to further release space for students for their whole-person development.

Parent Education

21. Parents have a great impact on the healthy development of their children. Parents and schools both play an important role in helping students manage their stress and emotional problems. In view of public concern about the psychological and mental well-being of students, EDB has released a one-off special Home-School Cooperation Grant of \$5,000 to all public sector primary and secondary schools and schools under the

Direct Subsidy Scheme in 2016 to subsidise their Parent-Teacher Associations (“PTAs”) to organise various parent talks and activities so as to facilitate parents to support the psychological development of children. The Committee on Home-School Cooperation (“CHSC”) takes an active role in promoting the “Happy Kids Charter” for schools and parents. In the 2016/17 school year, apart from conducting the symposium on “Happy Home-School Cooperation · Happy Kids” and organising colouring, drawing and slogan competitions on the theme “Happy Kids · Bountiful Life”, CHSC also organised a series of parent talks on “Raising Happy Kids” to provide parents with information about improving their kids’ concentration, addressing the emotional and behavioural problems of their children, enhancing children’s resilience against adversity and establishing an effective means of communication with their children. EDB also actively encourages the Federations of Parent-Teacher Associations (“FPTAs”) of different districts and schools’ PTAs to organise activities based on the content of the “Happy Kids Charter” to enhance students’ mental health and well-being. Starting from the 2015/16 school year, CHSC jointly organises parent talks with FPTAs and regional associations of school heads every year to provide parents with information on how to identify and support students with emotional and stress problems. Recently, the Education Commission has set up a task force on Home-school Cooperation and Parent Education to review the existing approach in promoting parent education and home-school cooperation, with the objective of allowing children to grow up happily and healthily and discussion on discouraging the culture of excessive competition.

Mental Health Support provided by TEIs

22. Currently, about 45% of our young people in the relevant cohort have access to degree-level education in Hong Kong. Including sub-degree education, over 70% of them have access to post-secondary education in Hong Kong currently. All TEIs concern students’ mental health, and are committed to promoting mental wellness and providing relevant counselling and support for students to cope with their studies and campus life. Some institutions adopt a positive psychology approach to enhancing students’ resilience, including training for mental health ambassadors, organising seminars and peer counselling activities to uphold students’ positive values and maintain healthy physical and mental development.

(C) Social Services

Medical Social Workers

23. Medical social workers (“MSWs”) of SWD stationed in public hospitals, some specialist out-patient clinics and service centers of the EASY Programme to provide timely psychosocial counselling and support to patients (including adolescents with mental health needs) and their families and help them cope with problems arising from illness, trauma and disabilities. MSWs being members of the clinical teams play an important role in linking up the medical and social services to facilitate patients’ rehabilitation and reintegration into the community. In addition, when medical and allied health professionals assist these patients in determining suitable discharge plans, MSWs will provide professional advice from social work perspective, and make referrals for needy patients and their families to apply for rehabilitation services and community resources.

Integrated Community Centres for Mental Wellness

24. SWD has set up 24 Integrated Community Centres for Mental Wellness (“ICCMWs”), operated by non-governmental organisations (“NGOs”), across the territory since October 2010 to provide timely one-stop and district-based mental health support services for ex-mentally ill persons, persons with suspected mental health problems with aged 15 or above, their families/carers and residents living in the serving districts. These services include casework counselling, therapeutic and supportive group, outreaching services, day training, drop-in service, public education activities, and referral of needy cases to HA for clinical assessment and psychiatric treatment, etc. The Government has allocated additional resources to ICCMWs in the previous years to strengthen manpower with a view to providing more intensive support to ex-mentally ill persons and their family members/carers. Currently, the annual recurrent provision for ICCMWs is around 314 million. In 2018-19, the Government will further provide additional resources for ICCMWs, including the creation of clinical psychologist posts and strengthening manpower of social workers with a view to providing more intensive and professional support for ex-mentally ill persons and their family members/carers, particularly their children.

(D) Promotion

“Joyful@HK” Campaign

25. To increase public engagement in promoting mental well-being, and to increase public knowledge and understanding about mental health, DH launched a three-year territory-wide mental health promotion campaign called “Joyful@HK” (“the Campaign”) in January 2016. The Campaign seeks to encourage the public to integrate three key elements, i.e. “Sharing”, “Mind” and “Enjoyment”, into their daily life. By increasing the public’s knowledge and understanding of common mental health problems of different age groups, such as anxiety disorders for adolescents, the Campaign aims to encourage people to detect the problems and seek help earlier, as well as to reduce misunderstanding and stigmatisation.

26. A series of mass media advertising (including electronic, printed and social media) and publicity activities for various target groups, including adolescents, have been carried out. Moreover, community partnership programmes targeting adolescents were launched under the Campaign early this year with a view to developing evidence-based interventions and training materials that could be further adopted by community partners.

27. Moreover, to target adolescents and enhance the mental well-being of students specifically, DH and EDB have joined forces in launching a mental health promotion and destigmatisation campaign called “Joyful@School” under the Campaign in the 2016/17 and 2017/18 school years to enhance students’ awareness and understanding of mental health, raise their awareness of help-seeking, reduce the stigma associated with the help-seeking behaviour and strengthen their ability to cope with adversity. The “Joyful@School” Campaign, which targets upper primary and secondary school students, aims to:

- increase students’ engagement in promoting mental well-being through sharing, positive thinking and enjoyment of life;

- cultivate a positive culture and attitude towards acceptance of help-seeking and mental health services among students, teachers and parents; and
- raise students' knowledge and understanding of mental health and promote the effective ways to handle challenging situations.

28. Under the two Campaigns, various initiatives targeting students have been rolled out, including 4-panel comics, “Joyful@HK” Run, “Your Joyful Record” Video Competition and “Your Joyful Photo” Competition.

29. Moreover, the Quality Education Fund (“QEF”) encourages schools, NGOs and TEIs, etc. to submit mini applications through a simplified application procedure for additional resources to conduct related activities under the “Joyful@School” Campaign. The Government encourages schools to continue organising activities in relation to the “Joyful@School” Campaign for the promotion of mental health. They may submit their proposals to the QEF for additional resources if needed.

Mental Health Month

30. LWB provides funding annually to support the organisation of Mental Health Month. Mental Health Month is a public education event organised by NGOs currently providing rehabilitation services for ex-mentally ill persons in Hong Kong, jointly with various public organisations (including HA, Hong Kong College of Psychiatrists, Equal Opportunities Commission, Occupational Safety and Health Council) and government departments (LWB, EDB, Labour Department, DH, Home Affairs Department, SWD, Radio Television Hong Kong and Information Services Department). The event aims to promote to the public the messages on mental wellness and the acceptance of ex-mentally ill persons. The 2017 Mental Health Month was launched under the theme of “Healthy living, healthy mind!”. From June to November 2017, the organiser held various public education activities to enhance public understanding and awareness of emotional health and encourage the public to lead a healthy life by maintaining a pleasant state of mind.

Adolescent Health Programme

31. The Adolescent Health Programme (“AHP”) under DH’s Student Health Service is an outreaching service to provide Basic Life Skills Training & Topical Programmes, with an aim to empower our adolescents to face the challenges of growing up. It targets secondary school students, teachers and parents. Programmes for students focus on promoting their psychosocial health such as self-understanding and acceptance, emotion and stress management as well as harmonious interpersonal and problem-solving skills. Also, programmes for parents and teachers aim at enhancing their knowledge on adolescents’ psychosocial health and equipping them with the appropriate skills to assist adolescents throughout their development.

32. To increase adolescents’ understanding of mental health, depression and anxiety disorder, AHP incorporates three elements of Sharing, Mind, Enjoyment into regular interactive classroom programme. It also designs new talks and interactive programmes to strengthen their capacity to handle anxiety and examination pressure, to improve the resilience of senior secondary school students, and to prevent bullying and Internet addiction.

33. DH, via AHP, cooperates with different NGOs in promoting practical tips of mental health to the community and schools. Since 2016, DH has worked with Hok Yau Club in providing relaxation skills to empower the target groups to meet the challenges of the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (“DSE”) in the Prospect Guide for DSE Students under AHP. Medical officers and clinical psychologists of DH deliver talks in workshops targeting parents, teachers and school social workers organised by EDB from time to time to publicise the importance of mental well-being among students. To maintain close communication with various stakeholders on child and adolescent mental health issues, DH, under AHP, continues to disseminate updated health information to primary schools, secondary schools, Integrated Children and Youth Services Centres, Integrated Family Service Centres and other relevant organisations by e-mail, post or through school visits.

34. “YouthCan.hk”, launched by DH in August this year, provides “Infotainment”, that is, information presented in entertaining ways, on what teenagers need and care about, including health knowledge, basic life skills as well as community resources with monthly updates.

(E) Cross-sectoral Cooperation

Student Mental Health Support Scheme

35. FHB, in collaboration with EDB, HA and SWD, launched the two-year “Student Mental Health Support Pilot Scheme” (“the Pilot Scheme”) in the 2016/17 school year to provide appropriate support services to students with mental health needs at schools.

36. Under the Pilot Scheme, a multi-disciplinary team comprising teachers, EPs, school social workers and psychiatric nurses would be formed in each participating primary/secondary school to provide support services for students in need. The multi-disciplinary team would convene regular meetings to discuss the latest development of each case and provide support to students according to their needs. If necessary, welfare units would also send social workers to join the platform to provide professional advice and interventions on the students’ family issues for known cases. We hope that through the Pilot Scheme, the communication and collaboration among professionals from the healthcare, educational and social service sectors can be further enhanced, and the capability of staff from various sectors to early identify and handle students with mental health needs would be strengthened, so as to provide better support services for students with mental health needs.

37. As at October this year, a total of nearly 100 students from 17 schools have been supported under the Pilot Scheme. The Government will consider ways to provide appropriate support services for students with mental health needs with reference to the evaluation results of the Pilot Scheme.

Collaboration between HA and EDB

38. HA has been working very closely with EDB to support students with mental health needs. HA and EDB also jointly introduced a referral system in 2013. Schools or EPs can refer students to receive services from the C&A Psychiatric Service of HA if necessary. Prior to making a referral to the C&A Psychiatric Service of HA for assessment, a school or EP, apart from obtaining parent consent for making the referral and psychiatric evaluation, also obtains parent consent for HA to send the psychiatric report to the school or EP for follow-up to ensure that the student concerned can receive timely and appropriate treatment and support services.

WAY FORWARD

Advisory Committee on Mental Health

39. Based on the recommendations of the Mental Health Review Report (“the Review Report”) published in April this year, the Government announced the establishment of a standing advisory committee, namely the Advisory Committee on Mental Health (“the Advisory Committee”), on 28 November this year. The Advisory Committee will advise the Government on mental health policies, including the establishment of more integral and comprehensive approaches to tackle multi-faceted mental health issues in Hong Kong. It will assist the Government in developing policies, strategies and measures to enhance mental health services in Hong Kong. It will also follow up on and monitor the implementation of the recommendations of the Review Report. The scope of work of the Advisory Committee is not limited to the mental health of adolescents.

Task Force on Prevention of Youth Suicides

40. In March 2016, the EDB set up the Committee on Prevention of Student Suicides (“the Committee”), which was tasked to, amongst others, make recommendations on strengthening the existing services and measures related to student suicides prevention. The Committee submitted the Final Report (“the Final Report”) in November 2016, making various recommendations on the “Universal”, “Selective” and “Indicated”

levels to cater for the needs of different population and risk groups. The CE decided to set up a Task Force on Prevention of Youth Suicides (“the Task Force”), with LWB coordinating EDB and relevant bureaux / departments¹ to look at the issue of youth suicides, in particular, to take stock of the progress of implementation of recommendations set out in the Report², and to consider if further policy measures and action should be taken to strengthen the efforts to prevent youth suicides. The Task Force aims to submit its report and recommendations to the CE by end 2018.

Strengthening Education and Destigmatisation

41. CE has announced in the Policy Agenda in October this year that an on-going mental health educational and destigmatisation campaign will be launched in 2018-19 when the “Joyful@HK” Campaign is completed in March 2018. The new campaign aims to reduce stigma towards persons with mental health needs, so as to build a mental-health friendly society and facilitates their re-integration into the community.

ADVICE SOUGHT

42. Members are invited to note the content of the paper.

**Food and Health Bureau
Labour and Welfare Bureau
Education Bureau
Hospital Authority
Social Welfare Department
Department of Health
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¹ Members of the Task Force include LWB, EDB, FHB, the Home Affairs Bureau, HA, DH and SWD.

² Since the publication of the Report in November 2016, relevant bureaux and departments have formulated a number of practicable measures and follow-up actions. Details are set out in the Government’s reply to the Hon Michael Tien’s written question on 15 November 2017.