

For discussion  
on 18 November 2019

## **Legislative Council Panel on Welfare Services Special Meeting**

### **Welfare and Community Support for People Affected by Recent Social Incidents**

#### **Purpose**

This paper briefs Members on the welfare and community support provided by the Social Welfare Department (SWD) for people affected by the recent social incidents.

2. The SWD has been in communication with the social welfare sector to meet the welfare service needs arising from the recent social incidents, and provided a series of welfare services and various ad hoc measures particularly for young people and families that are psychologically and mentally disturbed.

#### **Child and Family Services**

##### Integrated Family Service Centres

3. Integrated Family Service Centres (IFSCs) operated by the SWD or subvented non-governmental organisations (NGOs) provide enquiry service, and individual or group counselling service for people who directly approach or are referred to IFSCs for assistance. IFSCs also provide individuals and families with various programmes to meet their different needs. In response to the recent situation, some IFSCs have designed specific programmes to help those in need to relieve their stress and emotions. Social workers will also refer those in need to clinical psychological service after assessment.

##### Emotional Support Hotlines

4. The SWD has set up 24-hour emotional support hotlines through NGOs to render support for those who are emotionally distressed, including the provision of instant counselling, emotional support and assistance, and arrangement for appropriate follow-up services to cater for individual needs. In view of the recent social incidents, some NGOs have set up additional designated hotlines to provide support for those affected.

##### Suicide Crisis Intervention Centre

5. The Samaritan Befrienders Hong Kong (SBHK) - Suicide Crisis

Intervention Centre (SCIC) provides round-the-clock crisis intervention and intensive counselling service for people with high/moderate suicidal risk. Targeting at the emotional issues and self-destructive behaviours resulting from the recent social incidents, the SWD has commissioned the SBHK to provide further support through a 24-hour online platform service and enhance intensive case counselling service. Moreover, the SBHK also provides training and consultation services for professionals (including social workers, pastoral care staff and teachers) who need to handle suicidal cases, and for family members and persons in close contact with those beset with suicidal problems.

## **Youth Services**

6. In respect of services for young people, services subvented by the SWD, including Integrated Children and Youth Services Centres, school social work service, youth outreaching service, Community Support Service Scheme, hotline service for youth at risk and Cyber Youth Support Teams, etc., provide appropriate services and make service referrals for young people in need. To meet the welfare needs of young people during this period of time, the SWD has strengthened the following services.

### School Social Work Service in Secondary Schools

7. Starting from September of the 2019/20 school year, the SWD has implemented the “two social workers for each secondary school” measure in more than 460 secondary schools throughout the territory. The number of school social workers for each secondary school has been increased from the past provision of 1.2 to 2, with supervisory manpower strengthened correspondingly, so as to enhance supervision and support for school social workers to deal with complicated cases. Having regard to the special circumstances arising from social incidents, the SWD has specially advanced the implementation of the said measure during the summer holiday, so as to provide counselling services for emotionally disturbed secondary school students.

### Youth Outreach Service

8. NGOs are funded by the SWD to run 19 youth outreaching social work teams and 18 teams of overnight outreaching service for young night drifters throughout the territory. To enhance night-time contact with young people who are in need of emotional support as a result of the recent social incidents, the SWD has introduced cross-district overnight outreach services operated by an NGO to provide cross-district overnight outreaching, support and counselling services, online platform supportive services and clinical psychological services for needy students and young people. The cross-district overnight outreach services will also provide such persons with 24-hour centre services and temporary accommodation when necessary.

## **Clinical Psychological Service**

9. Since 1 August 2019, SWD Clinical Psychology Units have implemented ad hoc measures to provide clinical psychological services for needy users of youth service units in NGOs that do not have such services in place.

10. A clinical psychologist of the SWD attended a radio programme of Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK) in August and September to talk about emotion regulation, inter-generational communication, and psychological management of and methods to cope with bullying in schools. Short messages on mental health were also broadcast repeatedly on RTHK in October, with a view to helping the audience understand how to communicate with family members and reduce chances of conflicts, as well as the strategies and techniques in handling high-risk discussion topics.

11. The clinical psychologists of the SWD will accord priority to urgent cases (e.g. self-harm, attempted suicide, etc.). In the event of any critical incident in the community that warrants early psychological interventions, such as interventions for individuals/families in crisis, stress management for critical incidents, small group early psychological interventions, psychological first-aid or seminars on stress management, etc., the clinical psychologists will provide relevant services in a timely manner.

## **District Co-ordination and Service Schemes**

12. The District Social Welfare Officers of the SWD will, through the existing mechanism (such as, District Welfare Strategy and Development Committees and District Coordinating Committees) or designated district communication platforms, assess the service needs of the respective districts, and co-ordinate and support the efforts of various services. NGOs have also been invited to share with the SWD any service initiative or programme proposal that might meet the specific needs of young people and/or their families during this critical time. The SWD would favourably consider allocating resources to implement the initiatives where appropriate.

## **Support Rendered to Organisations and Affected Services**

13. The SWD has been in contact with service units operated by social welfare organisations and has conducted concern visits with a view to gaining understanding of the needs of service users and staff, and these organisations' operations and facilities. If any member of the public (including residents of residential care homes for the elderly (RCHes) or residential care homes for persons with disabilities (RCHDs)) has welfare needs, such as emotional support and professional counselling, the SWD and relevant welfare units will provide

appropriate assistance.

14. Before the commencement of foreseeable major public events (including demonstrations), if such events will take place in the proximity of RCHEs or RCHDs, the SWD will contact the relevant residential care homes proactively and remind the persons-in-charge to pay particular attention to the health conditions and emotional needs of the elderly and persons with disabilities residing in the premises and adopt appropriate contingency measures. Furthermore, the District Social Welfare Offices of the SWD keep in contact with police stations of their respective districts to bring their attention to the locations of social welfare units, especially RCHEs and RCHDs, within the district.

15. Besides, to allow flexibility for NGOs to deploy manpower for the provision of appropriate services to affected young people and families, the SWD issued a letter to NGOs operating youth and family services on 4 July 2019, indicating that in order to facilitate the service units concerned to focus their energy on meeting the service needs evolving during this critical period, the SWD will flexibly handle cases where individual service units are unable to attain the output standards set out in the Funding and Service Agreements during this period.

### **Other Support**

16. To enhance the capacity of social workers and stakeholders in handling social incidents and related issues, apart from training and enquiry services provided by the SCIC of the SBHK, the SWD has organised a range of training courses for school social workers of secondary schools at the start of the 2019/20 school year, with special emphasis on mental health, bullying in schools and crisis management, etc., so as to assist school social workers in providing appropriate and effective professional counselling and support services.

17. Furthermore, clinical psychologists of the SWD have organised psychological seminars in districts, speaking on how principals, teachers, guidance personnel and school social workers can support the emotional needs of young people and children, and deal with the tense relationship among students. In addition, clinical psychologists have organised seminars, discussion groups and workshops for social workers of NGOs in October, explaining the characteristics of young persons' brain development and crucial elements of adolescent growth. Full body relaxation exercise is also illustrated through demonstration and practice, so that fellow workers can learn to take care of their own emotional needs and mental well-being.

### **Positive Thinking and Mutual Tolerance**

18. We understand that the relationships within many families and

between friends have been affected by the impact of the recent social incidents. The service units operated by the SWD and NGOs have made efforts to encourage families and people in need to seek help and participate in spiritual support or emotional relief activities with a view to fostering positive thinking. We hope that people holding different views can respect and be tolerant of each other, calm down and listen to different voices, narrow differences and mend relationships.

### **Advice Sought**

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

Social Welfare Department  
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