

**Information Note for the
Legislative Council Panel on Welfare Services**

Review of School Social Work Service

Purpose

This paper presents the report of the Working Group on Review of School Social Work Service.

Background

2. The Working Group on Review of School Social Work Service (the Working Group) was established in December 1996 on the advice of the Social Welfare Advisory Committee. The objective of the review is to examine the effectiveness of the school social work service in providing assistance to students and to consider how the service can be further developed as part of our integrated efforts to provide social work support to the young people.

3. Chaired by the Deputy Director of Social Welfare, the Working Group comprises representatives from Health and Welfare Bureau, Education and Manpower Bureau, Social Welfare Department, Education Department, non-governmental organisations, school principals, and an independent member.

4. The Working Group has examined a number of areas in which the school social work service can be further improved in the context of overall provision of services for young people. These cover the

mode of operation of the school social workers; their roles and functions in providing overall support services for the students, service monitoring and scope for better interface between school-based and community-based services for the youth population in Hong Kong.

5. A copy of the review report, compiled by the Working Group, is at Annex for members' reference.

Main Recommendations

6. The Working Group has recommended a package of improvement measures to enhance the provision of school social work service. Highlights of the recommendations include:-

- (a) the existing roles of school social workers should be refocused to reflect their professional functions in providing social welfare service;
- (b) school social workers should assist in mobilising community-based family and child welfare services, in particular family education service, to support students and parents through parent-teacher associations;
- (c) schools with more student problems should be provided with one school social worker for every 1,000 students; while the manning ratio for other schools should be improved from 1:2,000 to 1:1,500 subject to availability of resources;

(Some members of the Working Group have however held the position that the goal should be 1 worker to 1,000 students for all schools and the improvement of 1 worker to 1,500 students should be an interim measure.)

- (d) co-ordination and interfacing between school social work service and other community-based services for young people and facilities should be strengthened. School social workers are to be recognised as an integral part of the student guidance team;
- (e) a Steering Committee on School Social Work Service, comprising representatives from the Social Welfare Department, Education Department, and the Hong Kong Council of Social Service, non-governmental organisations operating school social work service and school principals should be set up to monitor and review the direction and development of the service and recommend measures to meet the changing needs of students;
- (f) a comprehensive multi-disciplinary guideline, setting out the division of responsibilities among school social workers, the school guidance teams and other professionals, should be developed jointly by SWD and the NGO sector; and

- (g) the Funding and Service Agreement and Service Quality Standards should be followed by the non-governmental operating agencies upon their implementation.

Way forward

7. The Report was released for public consultation on 6 July 1998. The Working Group has held a briefing session, introducing the Report for school personnel and school social workers, on 11 July 1998. The Working Group has also decided to extend the end of the consultation period, from 5 September to 19 September 1998, in response to initial feedback from the education and welfare sectors.

ADVICE SOUGHT

- 8. Members are invited to comment on the Report at Annex.

Social Welfare Department
July 1998