

**For Discussion
on 14 February 2000**

Legislative Council Panel on Welfare Services

**Implementation of the Policy of
One School Social Worker for each Secondary School**

Purpose

Members were briefed on the Administration's initiative to improve manpower provision for the school social work service at the meeting of the LegCo Panel on Welfare Services on 14 June 1999 and the joint meeting of the Panel on Welfare Services and the Panel on Home Affairs on 12 July 1999. This paper reports on progress in the re-deployment of resources from children and youth centres (CYCs) and study and reading rooms (SR Rooms) for implementing the policy of one school social worker unit (SSWU) for each secondary school.

Background

2. At the meeting of the Panel on Welfare Services on 14 June 1999, Members were briefed on the Administration's response to the recommendations of the Working Group on the Review of School Social Work Service, including the Administration's proposal to provide one SSWU for each secondary school. At the joint meeting of the Panel on Welfare Services and the Panel on Home Affairs on 12 July 1999, Members further discussed the implications of the proposal in the context of the overall provision of youth services.

Proposals

3. The initiative to provide one SSWU for each existing secondary school will entail 152 additional SSWUs to be created over a two-year period commencing September 2000. The same scale of provision is

proposed for each new secondary school, to be included as part of its standard operating budget provided for as the recurrent consequences of its commissioning.

4. The creation of 152 additional SSWUs will require resources of \$97 million, to be funded from re-deployment of resources from existing youth services. Since the re-engineering exercise only involves a pooling of resources to meet the changing needs of young people and target at those services of higher priority, there will not be any reduction in the total amount of resources for the overall provision of youth services. It would involve rationalizing the current provision of some over-provided and/or under-utilized CYCs. It would also involve re-deploying staffing resources from SR Rooms, with existing staff and other means of NGO (including volunteers) to man such SR Rooms instead. The pooling of resources from SR Rooms is confined to staff costs only and NGOs will be allowed to retain their premises as well as Other Charges and Rent and Rates of SR Rooms. In this way, NGOs can continue to provide such facility to meet the needs of young people in the local community.

5. The re-engineering process would also explore the possibility of pooling resources to form more integrated teams (ITs) wherever possible. An IT is formed by pooling of resources of CYC, SSW and outreaching social work and provides a great variety of youth programmes to meet the multifarious needs of young people in a specific catchment area. It can respond more actively to the needs of young people in the community through flexible deployment of manpower and resources under more coordinated management of services. As at January 2000, there is a total of 34 ITs over the territory. 21 additional ITs would be formed under the re-deployment exercise.

Present Position

6. The Social Welfare Department (SWD) has been maintaining a close dialogue with the Hong Kong Council of Social Service and individual NGOs on the re-deployment package. With the strong support of the NGO sector over the SSW proposal, SWD has invited all

49 NGOs involved in youth welfare services to pledge the number of new SSWUs to be created in the next two years by re-deploying resources from their CYCs and SR Rooms. SWD has reached initial agreements with the NGOs to re-deploy adequate resources for creation of the 152 SSWUs, of which 96 SSWUs would be operated as independent units, while the remaining 56 SSWUs would be incorporated into ITs (33 SSWUs in 21 new ITs to be formed and 23 SSWUs in 14 existing ITs to be expanded).

7. The re-deployment exercise will take some time to complete, and SWD plans to finalize the re-deployment proposals for 2000-01, no later than May 2000, to allow adequate time for the change of operators for the SSW service. It is anticipated that the majority of the resources will be pooled in 2000-01 to form 124 SSWUs, while the remaining will be delivered in 2001-02 to form another 28 SSWUs.

Staff Concern

8. There has been some concern over the possible staff redundancy as a result of the exercise. The Administration places great emphasis on minimizing any such possibility. In the discussions with NGOs, there is a general understanding that the NGOs would try to absorb the staff being affected to fill vacancies within the agencies as far as possible. In fact, the latest statistics show that there is currently a 2% vacancy rate in the whole welfare sector. SWD will also pursue the idea of a clearing house to match staff with vacant posts in the whole welfare sector. Moreover, SWD has already secured \$380 million to provide new services in the coming 3 years. This will provide a lot of job opportunities in the welfare sector.

Way Forward

9. SWD will proceed with the consultation with various advisory bodies, including the Social Welfare Advisory Committee, the Commission on Youth, as well as local consultation, to facilitate smooth implementation of the proposals. In addition, schools which will be

affected by this exercise will be informed well in advance to make the necessary arrangement, with a view to minimizing disruption to the provision of school social work service to students.

Presentation

10. Members are invited to note the progress and comment on the proposals.

Health and Welfare Bureau/Social Welfare Department
February 2000