St. James' Settlement
Family & Counselling Services
Comments on Review on the Implementation of
The Integrated Family Service Centre Service Mode

Introduction

  After more than a year, we are delighted to receive the Consultancy Report on the Review on the Implementation of the Integrated Family Service Centre (IFSC) Service Mode. We are glad that the Consultancy Team has made a lot of efforts to gather as much as possible the relevant information through a pluralistic evaluative approach. The direction of adopting an integrated service approach in delivering family services in Hong Kong is further confirmed in the Report. Also, the Consultancy Team has compiled a list of good observations about the strengths and problems found in existing IFSC in Chapter 4. We welcome the recommendations laid in Chapter 8 with particular concern on the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1

  We agree that the Administration should continue to ensure adequate provision of resources for IFSC because of the complexities of family issues, the increasing population, the immigration policy, widening of the rich and the poor, globalization and aging factors in coming decades, etc.

Recommendation 5

  Beside casework service, flexibility should be allowed for special cases working or studying in close proximity to IFSC to facilitate convenience in joining groups/programmes.

Recommendation 14

  Presently, IFSC is overloaded by too many housing cases that family social workers cannot spare adequate time to offer intensive counseling services to those families with potential risk factors and to provide preventive services to the general public with an aim of preventing development of family problems.

  It is an urgent matter to determine the role of IFSC whether family social workers should support the Housing Department on handling its own tenancy matters or those service users with family problems. With the increasing family problems in Hong Kong, family social workers should focus their time and efforts on helping those families with genuine family problems instead of purely housing problems.

Recommendation 15

As service provider, an IFSC has to face the reality that due to ever-rising expectations of users, scarcity of resources and the need for continuous improvement, expectations are hard to be lowered with a single centre. Thus the Government is in a better position to educate the general public the roles and functions of IFSC through the mass media or propaganda.

Recommendation 19

We strongly agree to this recommendation as in coming years, the local trend would be similar to the global trend which is characterized by speed, complexity and change. New service demand on rising mental health problems will be emerged. Supervisory and professional social workers are essential on handling these new demands.

Besides, when the original Family Service Centre is restructured into the Integrated Family Service Centre, there is much workload on managing a drop-in centre for the public. An attractive drop-in centre can reduce the stigmatization effects on seeking help from IFSC. However, there is no provision of manpower resources on managing the drop-in services.

Recommendations 22-24

Apparently, the current FSA is not flexible enough to tailor the local needs of a particular district. It is highly recommended that flexibility in setting the Output Standards should be considered as needs in each districts are varied. To better serve the specific needs in a particular district, an IFSC should have the flexibility to design the servicing approaches of casework, group work or programmes.

Also, there should be rooms for an IFSC to develop new service initiatives with adequate manpower resources. Presently, IFSC is overwhelmed by the heavy workload laid in the FSA.

Conclusion

Last, but not the least, we are very concerned about the schedule of implementing those recommendations and how to realize the recommendations so that families in Hong Kong can be benefited from the improvement of implementation of integrated family service.

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