

Hong Kong Social Workers Association
Submission for LegCo Panel on Welfare Services on 14 March 2012

Implementation of the IFSC Service Mode

Affect Service Quality due to drainage of professional manpower

We share grave concern about the serious drainage of IFSC professional manpower by handling the ever-growing number of “alternative housing assistance cases/enquires”, which may account up to 20% or 30% of the caseload of most IFSCs. It will certainly affect service quality of the social workers in terms of time and attention allocated to support families in the community with complex problems like mental disorders, marital discord, child care cases, parental divorce, emotional stress, and so on.

Inefficient practice which require streamlining

Besides, from a management point of view, we opine that the existing practice of requiring frontline social workers of all 61 IFSCs to handle these alternative housing assistance cases involving multiple and complicated housing policies and guidelines are highly inefficient. The need for endorsement from SWD IFSCs on housing requests made by NGO IFSCs adds extra cumbersomeness to existing practice.

Delay in processing when involving different departments

According to the existing procedures, housing assistance (including CR/CT application) will probably involve different departments/units, including IFSC, SWD, Housing Department and Hospital Authority. Cross-departmental co-ordination will badly cause delay in case handling. For the benefit of users, One-stop service at the Housing Department is highly essential, it can minimize delay and the proper arrangement and processes.

Recommendations

Hong Kong Social Workers Association strongly recommended that Housing Department should directly handle all cases with need for housing assistance. The Housing Department should have a specialized pool of staff, be they social workers or specially-trained housing staff, under the management of the Department to take care of all the cases on housing assistance and related issues, for the sake of efficiency, effectiveness, and consistency in the handling process to ensure fairness and user-friendliness in the allocation of scarce housing resources to our needy families.

In respect to users needs, we believe that IFSC social workers are well-prepared to take up cases with family and relevant social needs referred from Housing Department when the said housing requests have been properly managed.