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Panel on Welfare Services

**Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat
for the meeting on 12 December 2011**

Implementation of the Integrated Family Service Centre service mode

Purpose

This paper gives a brief account of the discussions by the Panel on Welfare Services ("the Panel") on the implementation of the service mode of the Integrated Family Service Centres ("IFSCs").

Background

2. In August 2000, the Social Welfare Department ("SWD") commissioned the University of Hong Kong ("HKU") to conduct an eight-month consultancy study on the review of family welfare services. The review covered major family services, viz. family services centre, family life education service, family aide service, Family Activity and Resource Centre, Family Care Demonstration and Resource Centre cum Carers' Support Centre, family education and support services for single parent families and new arrivals under the Promoting Self-reliance Strategy package.

3. The findings and recommendations of the study are contained in the Report entitled "Meeting the Challenge : Strengthening Families" submitted by HKU in May 2001. One of the recommendations of the Report was the adoption of a new service delivery model of IFSC. An IFSC would comprise a Family Resource Unit, a Family Support Unit and a Family Counselling Unit which together would provide a continuum of preventive, supportive and remedial services.

4. To take forward the IFSC service model, 15 pilot projects were then launched for two years from April 2002 to March 2004 to test out the effectiveness of the IFSC service mode. HKU was commissioned to conduct the two-year evaluative study of the pilot projects. In the light of the positive findings of the evaluative study of the pilot projects on IFSC, SWD re-engineered the then family service resources to form a total of 61 IFSCs over the territory (of which 40 are run by SWD and 21 by nine non-governmental organisations ("NGOs")) in phases in 2004-2005.

5. In October 2008, the Administration commissioned HKU to conduct a review of the implementation of IFSC service mode. A Steering Committee comprising representatives from the Labour and Welfare Bureau, SWD, NGOs (including the Hong Kong Council of Social Service) and an independent member was set up by SWD in October 2008 to advise on the direction of the Review, monitor its progress and examine the Review report submitted by the HKU Consultant Team. The Review report entitled "Building Effective Family Services: Review on the Implementation of the Integrated Family Service Centre Service Mode", as accepted by the Steering Committee, was released in May 2010. An executive summary of the Review report is in **Appendix I**.

Deliberations of the Panel

Implementation of IFSC pilot projects

6. At its meetings on 7 July and 10 November 2003, the Panel was briefed on the findings and recommendations of the Interim Report on the Implementation of the Review of Family Services submitted by the Consultant Team in May 2003. According to the Administration, the findings of the evaluative study on the 15 IFSC pilot projects revealed high user satisfaction. The most noticeable aspect was that users no longer felt inhibited to come forward to seek assistance for fear of being viewed as weak and useless.

7. Members were supportive of the new IFSC service model and did not object to the pooling of resources from family service centres ("FSCs")/counselling units to form IFSCs, but they were of the view that funding for five Single Parent Centres ("SPCs") should continue until there were findings to support that IFSCs could meet the needs of single parents. A letter conveying members' view was sent to the Director of Social

Welfare by the Chairman of the Panel on behalf of members, and copied to the Financial Secretary.

8. The Administration advised that IFSCs could meet the needs of single parents, as evidenced by the findings of the 15 IFSC pilot projects. Given the varied and comprehensive family services provided by IFSCs, single parents were able to receive more services than they could receive at SPCs. Moreover, SWD had made clear with the agencies concerned from the outset that funding to SPCs was limited to three years from 1 February 2001 to 31 January 2004. It was the Administration's aim for support services for single parent families to be integrated with mainstream family services in the long run.

9. In response to members' concern about staff implications, the Administration advised that the re-engineering exercise would not give rise to staff redundancy in SWD, as family service remained the core business of SWD. As regards the concern that staff working in smaller NGOs providing family services would be made redundant as a result of larger NGOs taking up all the formation of IFSCs, the Administration advised that in order to help those smaller NGOs not having sufficient FSCs/counselling units resources to form an IFSC, it had proposed to allow them to pool other family service resources and/or resources beyond family services on request. The Administration also advised that the re-engineering exercise would not reduce allocation of resources to the welfare sector.

Implementation of the IFSC service mode

10. At its meeting on 9 May 2005, the Panel noted that the re-engineering of IFSCs was completed in 2005. Members were advised that subsequent to the re-engineering exercise, there were a total of 61 IFSCs (40 operated by SWD and 21 by NGOs) serving the whole territory and two integrated services projects operated by two NGOs in Tung Chung. An IFSC, comprising three major components, viz a family resource unit, a family support unit and a family counselling unit, provided a continuum of preventive, supportive and remedial services to meet the changing needs of families residing in the locality in a holistic manner. Deputations attending the meeting, however, pointed out that IFSCs could not totally replace the services provided by SPCs which were closed in April 2004. They urged the Administration to re-commission NGOs to operate SPCs as they considered that IFSCs could not meet their specific needs.

11. The Administration advised that although it was well aware that

users of SPCs had a sense of belonging there, this should not prevent the Administration from working towards more effective and efficient use of resources through re-engineering of family resources into IFSCs. As compared with a traditional FSC/counselling unit, each IFSC had a stronger staffing support (at least 12 social workers apart from a supervisor), and served a smaller designated geographical boundary with a population of 100 000 to 150 000.

12. In response to the request for providing funding to SPCs for continuous operation, the Administration advised that the re-engineering of IFSCs had just been completed and it was monitoring the operation of IFSCs, including their collaboration with other organisations. Improvements would be made where appropriate to ensure the needs of various target groups, including single parents, were catered for. It was the Administration's intention to review the effectiveness of the operation of IFSCs one year after the completion of the re-engineering of IFSCs.

13. Members reiterated that they raised no objection to the pooling of family resources units to form IFSCs, but considered it regrettable that the Administration had ignored the request made by the Panel at the meeting on 10 November 2003 for providing funding to SPCs continuously until there were findings to support that IFSCs could meet the needs of single parents. The Panel looked forward to the Administration's response to the issue of the re-opening of SPCs after the completion of the review on IFSCs in one year's time.

14. The Administration subsequently advised in early 2008 that since the invitation for proposal for the review of IFSCs conducted between August and October 2007 had to be re-tendered, the earliest time to report progress to the Panel would be in the fourth quarter of 2008.

Review of the IFSC service mode

15. At the Panel meeting on 9 March 2009, members noted that the Administration had commissioned HKU to conduct a review on the implementation of IFSC service delivery mode. The review covered all 61 IFSCs operated by SWD and NGOs which sought to assess the improvements that could be made to further refine the model. The review was expected to be completed by the end of 2009, and the Administration planned to revert to the Panel on the review findings in the first quarter of 2010.

16. Members also noted that the Hong Kong Polytechnic University ("PolyU") had separately conducted a study on frontline staff's views and made a number of recommendations on the IFSC service mode. The Panel received views from deputations including PolyU on the implementation of IFSC service mode from the perspective of service providers. Deputations expressed grave concern about the tremendous workload faced by frontline social workers in IFSCs due to insufficient manpower to cope with the increasing service demands, taking into account that each IFSC was serving a population of 100 000 to 150 000.

17. The Panel held a further meeting on 11 May 2009 to receive views from deputations on the implementation of IFSC service mode from the perspective of service users. Deputations expressed concern about the capability of IFSCs in providing support and preventive services to the high-risk families and domestic violence cases.

18. The Administration advised that it was aware of the concerns raised by frontline social workers and staff unions about the operation mode. The Administration pointed out that the adoption of the IFSC service mode was a landmark in the development of family services in Hong Kong. Understandably, both management and frontline staff of IFSCs needed time to adjust to the substantial changes under the new mode. The Administration considered that the IFSC service mode was effective in service delivery. It would continue with the IFSC service mode, but would make improvements to further refine the mode.

19. While members did not object to the service concept of IFSCs in providing a continuum of services to individuals and families in the community, they took the view that the review underway should address the following issues –

- (a) whether the existing resources and staff establishment of IFSCs were sufficient to provide a continuum of preventive, supportive and remedial services to the community;
- (b) the effectiveness of IFSC services in establishing community network and preventing family problems and whether specific services provided by SPCs and Post-migration Centres could be completely replaced by services provided by IFSCs; and
- (c) whether the geographical boundary of an IFSC should be reduced.

20. Pointing out that frontline staff had repeatedly raised the concern about insufficient manpower, members urged the Administration to take concrete actions to address the concern, such as providing additional resources to IFSCs pending the completion of the review underway.

Major findings and recommendations of the Review report

21. The HKU Consultant Team completed the review and released the report entitled "Building Effective Family Services : Review on the Implementation of the Integrated Family Service Centre Mode" on 24 May 2010. The Consultant Team made a number of observations and a total of 26 recommendations in the Review report (Chapters 7 and 8). In gist, the IFSC service mode had received general support from the IFSC management, frontline workers, stakeholders and service users. The IFSC service mode should continue to be adopted for publicly-funded family service in Hong Kong.

22. At the Panel meeting on 14 June 2010, members were advised that the Administration accepted in principle all the 26 recommendations in the Review report. The Panel held another meeting on 26 June 2010 to gauge views from deputations on the findings and recommendations of the Review report. According to the Administration, SWD would take forward all the recommendations in collaboration with administrators, supervisors and frontline staff of IFSCs and other relevant parties. Where necessary, it would seek additional resources for the implementation of the recommendations. Members were further advised that SWD had/would set up working groups or liaison groups to follow up the implementation of the recommendations. SWD would regularly report the progress of its follow up of the recommendations to the Task Group on the Implementation of IFSCs ("Task Group"), which comprised members from 11 District Social Welfare Offices and the nine NGOs operating IFSCs.

Expectation on the aim and scope of IFSC services

23. Members noted with concern that IFSC social workers had expressed concerns about managing the high and sometimes unrealistic expectations of service users and community stakeholders. Deputations attending the Panel meeting sounded out similar concerns. Specifically, SWD IFSC social workers spent a substantial proportion of working hours on handling housing assistance cases. Deputations called on the adoption of a clear delineation of responsibilities between IFSCs and the Housing Department

("HD") in handling housing assistance cases. IFSC social workers should be dedicated to the core family services.

24. The Administration advised that apart from housing needs, housing problems were often related to family problems, and it would therefore be appropriate for social workers to handle such cases. In response to the concerns about handling of housing assistance cases by IFSCs, SWD had set up a liaison mechanism with HD at both the headquarters and district levels. The liaison group at the headquarters level would review and streamline the existing work procedures in respect of the referral system, with a view to achieving clearer delineation of roles of social workers and HD staff and ensuring the implementation of agreed procedures in actual operation. Specifically, HD would process applications for public rental housing flats and refer those cases which did not meet eligibility criteria but warranted consideration for compassionate rehousing to IFSCs for follow-up actions.

25. Members took the view that the Administration should step up publicity efforts on the function and role of IFSCs and enhance the public understanding of the difficulties and sentiments of IFSC social workers in service delivery.

IFSC priority target groups

26. Pointing out that the aims of the IFSC service mode were to provide family services under the direction of "child-centred, family-focused and community-based" and in accordance with the four guiding principles of accessibility, early identification, integration and partnership, some members considered that IFSCs should focus on early identification of child abuse cases and make necessary referrals to the Family and Child Protective Services Units of SWD for appropriate follow-up services.

27. In view of the increasing complexity of family problems and the population size currently served by an IFSC, a concern was raised about the capability of IFSC social workers to provide assistance to all families in need of supportive and preventive services. The Administration should model on the experience of the former SPCs and foster the concept of self-help and mutual help of the disadvantaged groups so as to provide target assistance to meet their specific needs.

28. According to the Administration, the implementation of the IFSC service mode aimed to provide a family-focused and community-based

integrated service mode i.e. providing a continuum of preventive, supportive and remedial services. The provision of resources and manpower for IFSCs was therefore premised on the assumption that the service need for remedial service would be diminishing if adequate preventive and supportive services had been provided by IFSCs. The Administration pointed out that most IFSCs had developed special services to meet the service needs of specific target groups in their own communities, including single-parent families. As compared with the then five SPCs, the IFSCs located over the territory could provide single-parent families with more easily accessible services in a one-stop manner without labelling effect. Such services included intensive counselling, assessment on application for compassionate rehousing, etc. In 2009, IFSCs organised a total of 144 support/developmental groups for single parents with around 2 400 participants. While acknowledging the remedial services provided by IFSCs, the delivery of preventive and supportive services were other important roles of IFSCs.

Provision of IFSC services for population-based service boundaries

29. Noting that the Consultant Team considered it reasonable and appropriate for an IFSC to deliver family services in a community with 100 000 to 150 000 residents, members enquired if the Consultant Team had examined the adequacy of the resources and manpower for IFSCs to deliver the service mode of providing a continuum of preventive, supportive and remedial services to the community, and whether the caseload of IFSC social workers should be set at a lower level. Some deputations suggested that specific indicators to reflect the changing needs in the community should be drawn up to facilitate service planning and manpower requirement.

30. The Consultant Team and the Administration advised that the provision of manpower resources for IFSCs were premised on the service boundaries i.e. each IFSC would serve a population of 100 000 to 150 000, as well as the characteristics and the specific service needs of the community. Since the implementation of IFSC service mode, additional resources had been allocated to meet the increasing service demand. Over the years, additional resources had been allocated to IFSCs according to the characteristics and needs of individual districts. Reference was made to a number of indicators, for example, the number of Comprehensive Social Security Assistance households, cases of child abuse, spouse abuse, and juvenile crime. Instead of allocating resources to IFSCs across the board, more resources had been allocated to the high-risk districts such as Sham

Shui Po and Yuen Long. Moreover, the number of social workers and supervisory posts in IFSCs had been increased from 896 and 62 in 2004-2005 to 1 017 and 91 respectively in 2009-2010, representing an increase of 16%. In 2009-2010, each social worker of IFSCs on average handled 46.2 active cases monthly, and 42 new/reactivated cases in a year. It was noteworthy that although additional resources were allocated to IFSCs in past years, a higher output standard had not been set. The Administration assured members that it would seek additional resources for the implementation of the recommendations of the Review Report, where necessary.

Output standards of IFSCs

31. In respect of the findings of the Review report that two IFSCs had not met the required level of outcome standards for service users' satisfaction and about 30% of IFSCs had not met the output standards indicator in respect of handling new/reactivated cases in 2008-2009, members were concerned about the mechanism in place to monitor the performance standards of IFSCs. Some deputations also expressed grave concern about the need of IFSCs to perform duties which were not counted.

32. The Administration advised that under the existing arrangement, IFSCs were required to submit quarterly statistical reports to SWD. Should any IFSCs fail to meet the performance standards stipulated in the relevant funding and service agreements ("FSAs") with SWD, they were required to submit reports on the substandard performance. As reported by the IFSCs concerned, they were on some occasions unable to meet the performance standards because some duties performed were not counted under FSAs, and some duties were discontinued because of staff movement or the responsible officers had to handle urgent duties. In the light of the explanation, the overall performance of IFSCs was considered satisfactory. Having regard to the recommendations of the Review report, the Administration would set up a working group to review FSA for IFSCs with a view to updating and adjusting the performance indicators and encouraging IFSCs to develop service initiatives beyond the FSA requirements.

Implementation of recommendations of the Review report

33. On the concern about the implementation of the 26 recommendations of the Review report, the Administration advised that some of the recommendations, such as the identification of appropriate premises for the

relocation of inconveniently-located IFSCs had commenced. A working group would be set up to follow up on the recommendations relating to FSA for IFSCs. The Task Group would be informed of the progress on the implementation of the recommendations. The Administration would keep the Panel informed of the progress of the implementation of the recommendations in due course.

Latest development

34. As announced in the 2011-2012 Policy Address, the Administration will allocate additional resources to set up four new IFSCs in districts with greater service demand to provide services for needy families, including specific target groups such as single parents, new arrivals, ethnic minorities and cross-boundary families, so as to prevent and address family problems, prevent family problems from deteriorating and lessen the workload of social workers at IFSCs.

35. The Administration will brief the Panel on 12 December 2011 on the implementation of the recommendations of the Review report.

Relevant papers

36. A list of the relevant papers on the Legislative Council website is in **Appendix II**.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
6 December 2011

Review on the Implementation of the Integrated Family Service Centre Service Mode

Executive Summary

Review background and objectives

1. Concerted efforts have been made to bring Hong Kong family service from strength to strength, starting with the Review of Family Services in 2000. It was followed by the testing of pilot projects on the proposed service mode of Integrated Family Service Centres (IFSCs), and the subsequent establishment of 61 IFSCs (40 run by Social Welfare Department [SWD], and 21 operated by nine Non-governmental Organisations [NGOs]) since 2004/05 to provide publicly-funded family services in Hong Kong.
2. With the ongoing spirit to advance the effectiveness and efficiency of family services, SWD commissioned a Consultant Team from The University of Hong Kong (HKU) in October 2008 to conduct a Review on the Implementation of the IFSC Service Mode. The followings are the review objectives:
 - a) To find out how effective IFSCs are in implementing the four guiding principles of accessibility, early identification, integration and partnership under the direction of ‘child-centred, family-focused and community-based’ in strengthening families and meeting the changing needs of the community;
 - b) To examine the effectiveness of IFSC services in serving specific targets such as single parents, new arrivals, ethnic minorities, etc. and reaching out to the hard-to-reach at-risk families;
 - c) To identify factors facilitating / hindering the effective delivery of IFSC services, illustrations of practice wisdom on the implementation of the IFSC service mode, as well as ways to develop service specialisation within an integrated service mode and to enhance strategic partnership, collaboration and interfacing with other services;
 - d) To examine the performance standards, including output and outcome indicators and level of attainment, as set out in the Funding and Service Agreement (FSA); and
 - e) To make suggestions for continuous service improvement.

Review methodology

3. In view of the variety of stakeholders connected with the services, the Study adopted a multi-method approach involving both quantitative and qualitative methodologies to collect data from different sources covering the period from April 2005 to October 2009. The report findings were based on the information aggregated from centre reports from all the IFSCs, statistics on service output and outcome, content analysis of transcriptions of district focus group discussions with key stakeholders from selected IFSCs in the 11 SWD districts, case studies on selected centres, user survey with 1,502 respondents, illustrations of practice wisdom on the implementation of the IFSC service mode (reported separately in the Practice Wisdom Reference), views on the implementation of the IFSC service mode received through letters and electronic messages via the website set up to collect comments, as well as review of relevant literature, reports and submissions from stakeholders to the Consultant Team.

Key findings

Effectiveness of the IFSC service mode

IFSC service mode

4. Review findings indicate that the IFSC service mode under the direction of ‘child-centred, family-focused and community-based’ and the four guiding principles of ‘accessibility’, ‘early identification’, ‘integration’ and ‘partnership’ has received general support from IFSC management and frontline workers, stakeholders and service users as meaningful and appropriate in directing and delivering family services in contemporary Hong Kong.

IFSC service focus

5. There is a general consensus that the main objectives of an IFSC is to serve as a ‘community-based integrated service centre focusing on supporting and strengthening families’. IFSC is unique in that it calls for professional expertise in dealing with the social and emotional needs of families in the community. There should be a balanced provision of preventive, supportive and remedial services. Necessary professional manpower must be available and deployed to ensure a balanced delivery of all three services. Enhancement of community partnership for better collaboration and interfacing should also be in place.

IFSC priority target groups

6. In addition to adequately serving single parents, new arrivals, ethnic minorities and deprived families receiving Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) as priority target groups identified in the earlier reviews, most IFSCs have developed special services should they identify new target groups unique to the communities they serve, such as cross-boundary families. These groups should remain the priority target groups and should continue to be served by IFSCs under the integrated service mode in their own communities. These new specialised services should be commended and supported with adequate resources.

Expectation on the aim and scope of IFSC services

7. IFSC social workers were found to be encountering difficulties managing the high and sometimes unrealistic expectations of service users and community stakeholders. At times, they were requested to provide services which fall outside the scope of IFSC services. Efforts should be made at the case, centre, district, headquarters and community levels to inform service users and stakeholders of the objectives and priorities of IFSC services to properly manage their expectations.

Provisions for IFSC services in terms of space and manpower according to population-based service boundaries

8. The current provisions for service boundaries were found to be reasonable and appropriate for IFSCs that serve a population size of 100,000 to 150,000. Adjustment to the service boundaries of IFSCs should only be considered when there is clear projection of new population intake or evidence of adverse social challenges that warrants the setting up of a new centre or injection of additional manpower into a particular IFSC.

IFSC opening hours

9. All stakeholders appreciated that IFSCs operate on a 13 or 14-session-per-week extended-hour mode, which enables some users working full-time to use the service after normal office hours.

IFSC case assessment and referral forms

10. The existing screening form used for intake was considered useful but could

be further simplified. Development of necessary assessment tools and forms can be considered to sharpen case assessment, record user information and track service interfacing with community stakeholders.

IFSC management

11. There were notable innovations at the IFSC operator, district and centre levels in improving the management systems and strategies of IFSCs. Appropriate resource provision and other suitable measures are needed to ensure adequate administrative and clinical supervision in the IFSCs.

Support services to complement IFSC services

12. Adequate support services are essential for IFSC social workers to provide effective and comprehensive assistance to services users. District Social Welfare Officers (DSWOs) had made notable contributions in achieving district-based service and resource synergy. SWD and service providers in the NGO sector should work closely in ensuring the optimal use of existing support services and in developing and expanding necessary ones.

Facilitating and hindering factors

Factors reported by stakeholders to be facilitating the delivery of IFSC services

13. The expertise and dedication of the IFSC staff force and its ownership to advance family services in Hong Kong were pivotal in facilitating the effective implementation of the IFSC service mode. The ‘child-centred, family-focused and community-based’ direction, and ‘accessibility’, ‘early identification’, ‘integration’ and ‘partnership’ were all useful guiding principles to lead the advancement of family services in Hong Kong. The delineation of specific service boundary, the provision of user-friendly premises, the provision of staff teams with a profile of expertise, the establishment of case intake, screening, management and referral systems, the provision of administrative and clinical supervision support at the centre, operator, district and central levels were all facilitating factors that should be protected for the continuous productive functioning of IFSCs. It is important to ensure that they remain facilitative to IFSC service delivery and development.

Factors reported by stakeholders to be hindering the delivery of IFSC services

14. Reported hindering factors included the unfavourable location and set-up of some IFSCs, resource issues (e.g. manpower provision in handling family cases escalating in quantity, complexity and urgency, flexibility in the FSA, manpower arrangements due to staff turnover), policy issues (e.g. aim and scope of IFSC services) as well as staff mindset issues (some IFSC social workers still identified themselves as caseworkers instead of multi-skilled, all-rounded social workers, thus hampering their generic consideration of user and community needs).

Performance standards and the FSA

15. The performance standards stipulated in the current FSA for IFSCs limit the ability of IFSCs to respond with sensitivity to the growing number and complications in family cases, crises and social problems.

Other observations and suggestions

Staff training and continuous development

16. Centre, district, and sector-based staff orientation, supervision, training, knowledge documentation and sharing are considered important and necessary to sustain the professional expertise in the family service sector.

The Task Group on Implementation of IFSCs

17. The Task Group, which has been a useful platform to iron out some of the operational issues in IFSC services, should continue and be empowered.

IFSC service improvement

18. The sector is dedicated to uphold family service standard. SWD should provide the leadership and work jointly with the Hong Kong Council of Social Service (HKCSS), NGO IFSC operators and other stakeholders to seek continuous service advancement where appropriate.

Recommendations

IFSC service mode

Recommendation 1: The IFSC service mode should continue to be adopted for publicly-funded family services in Hong Kong. To ensure its continued success, individual IFSCs should continue their efforts in the effective deployment of resources. The Administration should also continue to ensure adequate provision of resources to support the work of IFSCs.

Recommendation 2: The existing practice of IFSCs in identifying specific target groups in the communities they serve and providing appropriate services for such groups should continue to be encouraged and supported.

Provisions for IFSC service

Recommendation 3: The current principles in making financial and human resource provisions for IFSCs, which are reasonable and appropriate for communities with 100,000 to 150,000 residents, should be maintained. The service boundaries for IFSCs have been carefully set and adjustment should only be considered when there is a clear projection of new population intake or evidence of adverse social challenges that warrants the setting up of a new centre or injection of additional manpower into a particular IFSC.

Recommendation 4: SWD should continue to make it a priority to seek appropriate premises for the relocation of IFSCs that are inconveniently located or set up at different locations. The management of individual IFSCs should maintain the centres in good conditions to make them physically and psychologically approachable for community users.

Recommendation 5: The principle that users should use IFSC services according to their residential districts should be upheld. Flexibility should only be provided for special cases, e.g. children with parents in prison, and working adults who can find easier access to IFSCs in dealing with their personal problems near their work place rather than their residence.

Operations of IFSC service

Service hours

Recommendation 6: The current practice of IFSCs' extended-hour service, which has been commended by many users and stakeholders as being very considerate towards their needs, should be maintained.

Screening and assessment

Recommendation 7: The existing enquiry / intake cum screening form should be kept and, where applicable, simplified. Development of other assessment forms or tools needed for sharpening the assessment of specific types of cases should be considered.

Recommendation 8: Forms to record necessary information for and accurately track referrals and follow-up actions, especially when cross-department / sector / service interfacing needs to be carefully monitored, should be developed.

Service priorities

Recommendation 9: IFSCs should continue to function as community-based integrated service centres focusing on supporting and strengthening families. IFSCs need to observe the specific and changing characteristics of the respective communities they serve and adjust their service priorities accordingly.

Efficiency in service operation

Recommendation 10: IFSCs should continue to optimise their efficiency in service operation. Useful strategies to be considered include streamlining and enhancing service procedures, seeking optimal management of complicated cases (involving, where appropriate, more than one social worker and / or other staff / professionals) and cases which consume a lot of manpower to complete certain logistics, and leveraging on community resources to provide preventive family services.

Recommendation 11: IFSCs should explore service enhancement through appropriate use and sharing of information technology.

Collaboration and interfacing

Recommendation 12: Collaboration and interfacing at the Centre level - Individual IFSCs should further enhance the interfacing amongst the Family Resource Unit (FRU), Family Support Unit (FSU) and Family Counselling Unit (FCU) and make it easy for users to benefit from the preventive, supportive and remedial services provided by these units.

Recommendation 13: Collaboration and interfacing at the District level - IFSCs should leverage on the services and resources within their service boundary to optimise the impact of such synergy. The effort made by DSWOs in this aspect is recognised, and they are encouraged to continue to play the important roles of coordination and facilitation of resources to address service needs and achieve service advancement.

Recommendation 14: Collaboration and interfacing at the Headquarters level – To address IFSC workers' priority concern in the proper handling of housing assistance cases, the senior management of SWD and Housing Department (HD) should jointly form a Working Group to enhance coordination in the referral system and to ensure the proper implementation of agreed procedures in actual operation. Likewise, there should be more initiatives to streamline administrative procedures to shorten the processing time for necessary services (e.g. The Working Group on Streamlining Procedures for Processing Referrals for Residential Placements for Children is recognised to have worked to achieve this goal). Users' needed support services (e.g. residential placement for children and adult users with long term care needs), as assessed by IFSC workers, should be backed up by service policies and resource provision where necessary and appropriate.

Recommendation 15: Efforts should be made at the case, centre, district, headquarters and community levels to inform service users and stakeholders of the objectives and priorities of IFSC services to properly manage their expectations. They should learn about and approach different appropriate social services, government departments and sectors for their needs or requests which fall under the jurisdiction of those departments and sectors.

Recommendation 16: The contributions of non-publicly-funded family services should be acknowledged and encouraged. IFSCs are encouraged to collaborate with these family services for knowledge transfer and to achieve synergy.

Management of IFSC

Recommendation 17: SWD should take the lead and work with HKCSS and NGO IFSC operators and other stakeholders to continue to enhance family services in Hong Kong where appropriate.

Recommendation 18: The efforts by many IFSCs in conducting operator-based or centre-based management innovations, including cross-service synergy within some multi-service agencies, or amongst different social services within the service districts should be recognised, encouraged and actively shared within the sector.

Human resource management / development

Recommendation 19: The Administration should continue to keep under review and, where necessary, enhance the manpower provision of IFSCs, in particular at the supervisory, frontline and support staff levels, in order to handle increasingly complicated cases, and address emerging new service demand, including serving the needs of specific target groups.

Recommendation 20: IFSC operators should continue to ensure that there is suitable orientation for new staff, as well as proper supervision and support for staff at all levels. The professional documentation of practice wisdom in preventive, supportive and remedial services to facilitate knowledge retention and transfer should be encouraged and supported.

Recommendation 21: The IFSC sector should conduct regular sharing sessions to achieve mutual stimulation and enlightenment.

Funding and Service Agreement

Recommendation 22: The FSA should be reviewed and revised.

Recommendation 23: Output Standards (OS) 2, 3 and 4 of the FSA should be merged to allow more flexibility in running groups beyond the planned ones to better respond to changing community needs.

Recommendation 24: IFSCs should continue to support and develop service initiatives. This has been a cherished demonstration of professionalism and the dedication and expertise of the sector in making such contributions should be

recognised and encouraged.

Continuous monitoring and improvement

Recommendation 25: The Task Group on the Implementation of IFSCs should be continued and empowered with a properly devised Terms of Reference to give it the necessary mandate to identify and follow-up issues of concern and to bring major issues to the attention of the SWD senior management for timely management.

Recommendation 26: SWD should provide the leadership and work with HKCSS, NGO IFSC operators and other stakeholders to seek continuous improvement of the service through examining service demand and addressing service needs.

Appendix II

Relevant papers on Implementation of the Integrated Family Service Centre service mode

Committee	Date of meeting	Paper
Panel on Welfare Services	12 June 2000 (Item V)	Agenda Minutes
Panel on Welfare Services	12 March 2001 (Item V)	Agenda Minutes
Panel on Welfare Services	9 July 2001 (Item V)	Agenda Minutes
Panel on Welfare Services	7 July 2003 (Item V)	Agenda Minutes
Panel on Welfare Services	10 November 2003 (Item III)	Agenda Minutes
Panel on Welfare Services	9 May 2005 (Item IV)	Agenda Minutes
Panel on Welfare Services	9 March 2009 (Item IV)	Agenda Minutes
Panel on Welfare Services	11 May 2009 (Item VI)	Agenda Minutes
Panel on Welfare Services	14 June 2010 (Item III)	Agenda Minutes CB(2)305/10-11(01)
Panel on Welfare Services	26 June 2010 (Item II)	Agenda Minutes