

**Minutes of the
Social Welfare Advisory Committee (SWAC) Meeting
held on 10 April 2025 at 10:00 a.m.
in Conference Room 3, G/F, Central Government Offices**

Present

Dr KO Wing-man	(Chairman)
Miss CHOW Tsz-ki	
Ms HSU Siu-man	
Prof Patrick IP	
Dr Sanly KAM Shau-wan	
Mr Frederick LAI Wing-hoi	
Ms Anthea LEE Shuk-wai	
Mr Francis NGAI Wah-sing	
Dr PAN Pey-chyou	
Miss SZE Lai-shan	
Dr Ricky SZETO Wing-fu	
Prof Hector TSANG Wing-hong	
Dr Rizwan ULLAH	
Mr John WONG Chung	
Mr Barry WONG Man-sing	

In Attendance

Labour and Welfare Bureau

Ms Alice LAU	Permanent Secretary for Labour and Welfare
Mr David LEUNG	Deputy Secretary for Labour and Welfare (Welfare) 1
Mr Fletch CHAN (For discussion of item 1 only)	Commissioner for Rehabilitation
Mr Tony YIP	Principal Assistant Secretary for Labour and Welfare (Welfare) 1

Miss Amy LAI	Assistant Secretary for Labour and Welfare (Welfare) 1B (Secretary to SWAC)
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Ms Jasmine LO	Executive Officer (Welfare) 1A
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Miss Clare KWOK	Executive Officer (Welfare) 1B
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Social Welfare Department (SWD)

Mr Edward TO	Director of Social Welfare
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Miss CHAN Lai-chu (For discussion of item 1 only)	Assistant Director of Social Welfare (Youth & Corrections)
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Miss Ann CHAN	Assistant Director of Social Welfare (Subventions) (AD(S))
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Education Bureau (EDB)

Dr Verena LAU (For discussion of item 1 only)	Deputy Secretary for Education (4)
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Ms Michelle CHAN (For discussion of item 1 only)	Senior Specialist (Educational Psychology Service/Kowloon 1)
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Health Bureau (HHB)

Mrs Susanne IP (For discussion of item 1 only)	Principal Executive Manager (Health)3A
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Miss Sirena YU (For discussion of item 1 only)	Assistant Secretary for Health 3B
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Department of Health

Dr Angel NG Senior Medical & Health Officer (Student
(For discussion of item 1 Health Service)3
only)

Hospital Authority

Dr Cissy CHOI Chief Manager (Integrated Clinical
(For discussion of item 1 Services)
only)

Absent with apologies

Ms Alice LAU Oi-sze
Dr Wingco LO Kam-wing
Prof Petrus NG Yat-nam
Dr Chloe SUEN Yin-wah
Ms Rebecca TSAI Ching-yu
Prof Frances WONG Kam-yuet
Ms Wendy YUEN Miu-ling

Item 1: Mental Health of Youth (SWAC Paper No. 01/2025)

2. At the Chairman's invitation, the Government briefed Members on the paper.

3. Noting that a wide variety of measures had been launched through collaboration to promote mental health of young people, Members expressed great appreciation of the Government's efforts, and raised the following suggestions/questions –

(a) Enhancing Inter-departmental and Cross-sectoral Collaboration

- i. The Government should enhance collaboration with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that worked on mental health projects and share experience with them so as to achieve synergy and improve cost effectiveness.
- ii. The Government should integrate resources of similar programmes launched by different policy bureaux and departments, for example, support hotlines 18111 and 182 183.
- iii. The Government should encourage employers to put in place family-friendly employment practices such as flexible working arrangements to cater for the needs of employees who also played the role of carers.
- iv. The Government should provide to patients support from occupational therapists and nurses regardless of whether they were patients of private or public medical institutions.
- v. The Government should make reference to the research conducted by NGOs, universities, and the Advisory Committee on Mental Health (ACMH) in formulating policies and developing mental health services.
- vi. Apart from medical-educational-social collaboration, support from family and community is crucial. For example, the Government should encourage mutual help in neighbourhood and engage district services and community care teams.

(b) Strengthening Support for Specific Groups

- i. The Government should provide more support and special assistance to newly-arrived children to help them adapt to the new environment and overcome language barrier and cultural differences.
- ii. The Government should explore mechanism for newly-arrived children to receive psychiatric services in the

Mainland and make cross-border referrals.

- iii. The establishment of the service centre which provides emotional support and counselling services to ethnic minorities (EM) is useful. The Government should leverage on existing resources to enhance publicity of the support hotline 18111 and tailor the content of “Shall We Talk” to make them culturally relevant to the EM communities. It would also be helpful to engage community leaders to promote mental health in EM communities.

(c) *Caring for Students’ Mental Health at School Level*

- i. Members welcomed the provision of “two school social workers for each school”, and enquired whether cross-disciplinary support from professionals in school such as speech therapists, occupational therapists and physiotherapists were adequate, in particular for students with special educational needs.
- ii. Members enquired whether there were adjustments to programmes launched in light of the changing circumstances and mental health needs.
- iii. While appreciating the comprehensiveness of the “Three-Tier School-based Emergency Mechanism”, Members were concerned that stigmatisation of mental health issues may discourage students in need from seeking appropriate assistance. The Government should consider renaming schemes/programmes in relation to mental health to address the problem.
- iv. The Government should expand the first-tier mechanism under “Three-tier School-based Emergency System” to cover a larger pool of students, and conduct screening at schools regularly so as to identify students with high risks.
- v. Since youths were often reluctant to seek assistance from teachers and professionals, the Government may consider offering mental health first aid course at school to students to equip them with skills in identifying common

mental health issues among their peers and providing mutual help and support.

- vi. The Government should establish a systematic mental health curriculum and nurture children's emotional skills such as expressing and managing emotions beginning from pre-school or primary stage.
- vii. The Government should conduct "crisis drills" at school regularly to equip teachers, students and other stakeholders with response capabilities in case of suicidal behaviours. Such drills could also raise awareness to mental health issues.

(d) Social Media

- i. The Government should explore the use of artificial intelligence (AI) on social media to provide timely mental health support to young people.
- ii. In light of the potential adverse impacts of abusive online content at social media platforms to young people, it should be the social responsibility of the operators of such platforms to manage content.

(e) Others

- i. The Government should facilitate parents to acquire knowledge to identify mental health needs of their children, enhance the publicity for Smart Parent Net and strengthen support to parents as carers.
- ii. The Government should explore the collection of mental health related information by application of bio-technology or AI to facilitate early detection.

4. The Government thanked Members' views, and made the following responses –

- (a) Since mental health issues were multifaceted and cut across multiple domains, the Government would continue to provide mental health support services through close cross-departmental/-disciplinary cooperation and by a multi-

pronged approach.

- (b) Destigmatisation and reducing labelling effect of mental health issues were important for effective intervention. The Government would review the materials of schemes/programmes so as to promote mental health and raise awareness.
- (c) The Government had set up a Dedicated Fund of \$500 million to help NGOs meet development needs, in particular enhancing professional knowledge of their staff, which included providing training programmes in relation to the theme “identification and support for persons of all ages with mental health concerns in need of professional intervention”.
- (d) The Government reviewed the effectiveness of programmes launched and refined policies and measures in light of the review findings.
- (e) There were a variety of education programmes to encourage help-seeking behaviours and quality sleep under the ACMH initiatives.
- (f) The “Mental Health Literacy” resource packages were developed with reference to the recommendations in the Hong Kong Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Epidemiologic Survey (6 to 17) and the Hong Kong Youth Epidemiological Study of Mental Health (HK-YES) (Age 15-24). As a result, materials related to improving sleep hygiene, physical activity, emotional regulation, resilience building, and help-seeking were included in the packages.
- (g) To render support to schools, school social workers collaborate with other professionals (such as educational psychologists, speech therapists, and guidance personnel) as appropriate to attend to the needs of students.
- (h) The Government reviewed student growth programmes on an on-going basis. For instance, the “Understanding Adolescent Project (Primary)” was enhanced in the 2019/20 school year by providing additional student group activities and training for parents. The training materials would be

further enriched and made available to schools in the 2024/25 school year.

5. The Chairman commended the Government for implementing a series of measures and initiatives in delivering comprehensive mental health services through multi-disciplinary and cross-sectoral collaboration. He also thanked Members for their views and invited the Government to consider Members' comments.

**Item 2: Latest Development of the Dedicated Fund
(SWAC Paper No. 02/2025)**

6. At the Chairman's invitation, the Government briefed Members on the progress of implementation of the Dedicated Fund.

7. Members offered the following suggestions –

- (a) NGOs should be encouraged to share their experience in undertaking Mainland exchange tours.
- (b) SWD should explore recording training programmes and uploading them online so as to benefit more NGOs.

8. The Government thanked members for their views and suggestions, and made the following responses –

- (a) SWD encouraged participants of Mainland exchange tours to share their experience, and had thus held a sharing session for participants of the tours in February 2025.
- (b) SWD welcomed training programme which included elements of “train the trainer”. In considering applications under the Fund, priority would be accorded to programmes that maximised learning opportunities.

**SWAC Secretariat
May 2025**