

Minutes of the
Social Welfare Advisory Committee (SWAC) Meeting
Held on 26 June 2003 (Thursday)

Present

Mr Wilfred Wong Ying-wai (Chairman)

Mr Darwin Chen

Mr Stephen Chow Chun-kay

Ms Christine Fang Meng-sang

Mr Keith Lam Hon-keung

Dr Leung Cho-bun

Mrs Mary Leung Ling Tien-wei

Mr Poon Huen-wai

Mr Aaron Wan Chi-keung

Mr Stephen Yau How-boa

Miss Jessie Yu Sau-chu

Miss Phidias Tam (Secretary)

In Attendance

Health, Welfare and Food Bureau (HWFB)

Mr Robin Gill Deputy Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food (Welfare)

Social Welfare Department (SWD)

Mrs Carrie Lam	Director of Social Welfare
Mr Cheung Hing-wah	Assistant Director, Youth and Corrections
Mr Fung Pak-yan	Assistant Director, Family and Child Welfare
Mrs Justina Ho	Chief Social Work Officer (Family and Child Welfare)

(1) Update on Measures to Support Young People

[SWAC Paper No. 08/03]

The paper provided an update on initiatives and measures in place to promote the healthy development of young people and support the youth at risk, including “One School Social Worker for Each Secondary School” , Understanding the Adolescent Project, Peer Counsellor Programme, Integrated Children and Youth Services Centres, services for young night drifters, psychotropic substance abusers and young offenders, and services to address the training and employment needs of youth.

2. Members made the following comments:

(a) To tackle the problem of youth unemployment, improvements were needed in the education system to ensure that students were equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to be employable when leaving school;

(b) To ensure the most effective use of resources on youth services, rationalisation of services was needed in some areas. A small fee might be charged for certain services, and the feasibility of adopting a voucher system might be explored.

(c) Qualitative measures of performance should be included in funding and services agreements (FSAs). For ascertaining the long-term outcome of programmes, follow-up measurements after a longer period might be taken. It would also be useful to measure the youth’ s ability to cope.

(d) As large amounts of public funding have been injected to education and skills training for youth, the welfare sector should be more focused on the growth of individuals. To this end, more emphasis should be put on involving the families.

(e) The interfacing between Integrated Children and Youth Services Centres (ICYSCs) and Integrated Family Service Centre (IFSCs) would be an important issue in the coming years. There were common problems to be tackled by youth services and family services. They might be merged in the long run.

3. The Government’ s response included:

(a) Since the completion of the fundamental expenditure review on youth services in 1999, the positioning of the Social Welfare Department (SWD) with regard to youth services had been clear. SWD focused on supporting youth at risk or facing challenges, while the Home Affairs Department focused on the positive development of young people.

(b) Qualitative measures of services were important. Provisions in the new FSAs would be moving towards outcome measures instead of output measures.

(c) The Committee on Services for Youth at Risk, which was participated by SWD, the Police, the Education and Manpower Bureau, the Department of Health, school principals and other concerned parties, provided cross-sector collaboration. If SWAC Members had identified areas where duplication of services existed, SWD would welcome their advice.

4. The meeting concluded that SWD could further explore building on its strengths to further enhance its services to support the youth. The possible integration of ICYSCs and IFSCs in future should be examined. The Government should also critically review what in the education system had contributed to the youth unemployment problem and address this issue in a cross-departmental and cross-sectoral manner.

(2) Interim Report on the Implementation of the Review of Family Services

[SWAC Paper No. 09/03]

5. The paper reported the interim results of 15 IFSC pilot projects which were set up following the Review of Family Services completed in May 2001. Based on the empirical data and the recommendations by the consultant team, SWD was ready to convert all Family Services Centres into IFSCs, but there was no pre-set timetable for full implementation by subvented NGOs.

6. Members made the following points:

(a) The evaluation of IFSCs was comprehensive and objective. There was consensus that the IFSC model was support-worthy, and the model was welcomed by providers and users of family services.

(b) Some employees of NGOs working in non-family service settings were worried about the possible impact on staff in the process of integration. More communication with the workers was recommended to help them understand the benefits of the IFSC model for users as well as social workers.

(c) It might be premature to conclude that strategic alliance was not an effective way to form and run an IFSC. NGOs might take longer to adapt their practices in a strategic alliance but it was possible that these alliances could become equally effective and efficient in the long run.

(d) As IFSC workers should be multi-skilled in order to serve their clients better, the Government and NGOs should ensure that adequate training would be provided to social workers of IFSCs.

7. The meeting agreed that moving towards IFSCs was the right direction for family services. As regards the pace of implementing the IFSC model in NGO-run family services, the Committee noted that SWD did not have a pre-set schedule and was ready to have more communication with the sector. It was recommended that the concerns of NGO employees should be addressed, and more time could be allowed for testing out the formation of IFSCs through strategic alliance. SWD was welcome to make a presentation to SWAC again when it had formulated new plans.

Health, Welfare and Food Bureau

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