

Environmental Report 2002

Health, Welfare and Food Bureau

Profile of Key Responsibilities

The Health, Welfare and Food Bureau is responsible for policy areas of health, food and environmental hygiene, elderly, social welfare and women's issues. It aims to formulate and coordinate policies and programmes:

- (i) to ensure that adequate welfare support is available to those in need;
- (ii) to safeguard and promote public health and to ensure that no one is prevented, through lack of means, from obtaining adequate medical treatment;
- (iii) to improve environmental hygiene and ensure food safety in the territory; and
- (iv) to promote the well-being and interests of women in Hong Kong.

2. Upon the implementation of the Accountability System on 1 July 2002, the Health, Welfare and Food Bureau has assumed the additional responsibility for the policy areas of agriculture, fisheries and food and environmental hygiene portfolios from the then Environment and Food Bureau and is organised into five divisions for the following responsibilities :

Health Division

- Policy matters relating to medical and health services, including review of health care delivery and financing systems, development of primary health care services, prevention of communicable and non-communicable diseases, development of Chinese medicine, provision of hospital services and manpower development issues.

Food and Environmental Hygiene Division

- Policy matters relating to food supply, food safety and environmental hygiene, agriculture, fisheries, animal welfare and management.

Elderly Services Division

- Policy matters relating to elderly services and social security; and
- Elderly Commission.

Welfare Division

- Policy matters relating to social welfare provision including subvention, planning, manpower, relevant Funds, social capital and specific welfare services for family and children, young people and offenders, war veterans and people with disabilities.

Women's Division

- Policy matters relating to women's issues, including the Women's Commission, impact of government policies, legislation and services on women, and international conventions on women's issues.

3. The estimated expenditure of the Health, Welfare and Food Bureau in 2002-03 was \$151.6 million. The Bureau had 20 directorate officers and 131 non-directorate staff as at 1 July 2002. Its establishment ceiling for 2002-03 was \$58 million.

Environmental Goal and Policy

4. The Health, Welfare and Food Bureau supports the HKSAR Government's initiatives to improve the environment and is committed to help improve our own environmental performance by:

- (i) compliance with relevant environmental protection ordinances;
- (ii) promotion of waste reduction;

- (iii) advising other bureaux on the impact of their policies on public health;
- (iv) minimising the production of environmental pollutants and/or nuisance;
- (v) improving the general environmental conditions; and
- (vi) saving of resources.

Environmental Aspects and Impacts

5. The policies under the purview of Health, Welfare and Food Bureau may have environmental impact in various aspects, including waste disposal, air pollution and conservation of the environment. Such impacts would be taken into account when drawing up the policies.

Environmental Protection Measures

6. The following measures are relevant to environmental protection:

(A) Under policy areas

(i) Clinical waste

to map out with the Hospital Authority the way forward in delivering Government's objective to dispose of clinical waste in an environmentally sound manner.

Performance

The Hospital Authority, through segregation of its clinical waste from municipal waste, reduced the amount of its clinical waste requiring disposal from 0.1 kg per patient bed per day in 2001 to 0.09 kg per patient bed per day in 2002.

(ii) Smoking and tobacco control

to reduce smoking prevalence and hence improve the air quality, by discouraging smoking, educating the public, particularly the young, on the health risks involved, containing proliferation of tobacco use and protecting the public from passive smoking to the maximum possible extent.

Performance

Hong Kong's smoking prevalence rate is among the lowest in the world. In 2000, only 12.4% of the population aged 15 or above were daily smokers, representing a significant drop from 23.3% in 1982. To further strengthen our tobacco control framework, the Bureau launched in June 2001 a consultation exercise to consult the public on a host of legislative proposals to amend the smoking legislation. The consultation exercise ended in September 2001 and the Bureau is currently refining the proposals taking into account the feedback received and the results of related studies.

(B) Within the office

(i) Waste minimisation

- ✧ use of “scrap” paper and recycle paper
- ✧ extended use of refillable ball pens
- ✧ reuse of envelopes, loose minutes jackets and action tags
- ✧ use less paper cups
- ✧ reduce use of greeting cards
- ✧ reuse of decorative materials at festive seasons
- ✧ place notices near photocopiers to remind staff of double sided copying
- ✧ encourage circulating information, reports and consultation papers etc. through electronic means instead of using paper
- ✧ keep the number of paper publications to the absolute minimum
- ✧ use the blank side of used paper for drafting and photocopying
- ✧ avoid sending original documents which have been sent by fax or email
- ✧ use double-side photocopiers
- ✧ use plain paper fax machines instead of thermal paper ones
- ✧ recover paper for recycling
- ✧ review regularly the actual need against monthly supply items that have expiry dates

Performance

Generally effective

(ii) Energy conservation

- ✧ remind staff to switch off lights, air-conditioners and personal computers outside office hours
- ✧ encourage staff to use staircase for interfloor traffic
- ✧ use energy-saving fluorescent lights
- ✧ use energy efficient equipment, such as power-saving photocopiers, printers and computers
- ✧ keep room temperature at a reasonable level to avoid excessive air-conditioning

Performance*Generally effective*(iii) Others

- ✧ implemented the Government's "Smoke-free Workplace Policy"
- ✧ organised the e-Christmas Card Design Competition in December 2002 to promote environmental awareness. The winning design had been used as the Bureau's e-Christmas card
- ✧ use unleaded fuel for departmental cars

Performance*Generally effective****Environmental Awareness within the Bureau***

7. To improve the environmental awareness within the Bureau, a directorate officer has been appointed as the green manager of the Bureau since 1993. The officer has provided a focal point for introducing and reviewing environmental protection initiatives. Staff of the Bureau would be encouraged to attend training/workshops on green management and will continue to identify measures, both under policy areas or within the office, to protect our environment.