

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

Head : 170 – Social Welfare Department

Programme : (5) Services for Offenders

Controlling Officer : Director of Social Welfare

Director of Bureau : Secretary for Labour and Welfare

Question : There was an increase of 21% in the number of supervision of Community Service Orders (CSO) cases served in 2007-08. According to the 2008-09 Revised Estimate, the number of cases has increased by 13%. This represents a total increase of 26% during the three years from 2006-07 to 2008-09. However, no additional social workers have been provided for the service by the Government in the past three years. Since this rising trend has still not been reflected in the 2009-10 Estimate and the number of CSO cases is not expected to increase in 2009-10, no additional manpower will be provided by the Social Welfare Department (SWD). Hence, the average number of cases served per social worker per year has increased from 107 in 2006-07 to 134.5 at present. How does SWD draw up the service and manpower planning, and cope with the 30% increased caseload?

Asked by : Hon. CHEUNG Kwok-che

Reply : The number of cases put under CSO is affected by a number of factors such as the crime rate, the number of offenders arrested by the police and convicted by court, and the courts' sentencing decisions, etc. The following table shows the actual number of cases served over the past years.

| Year | Cases Served | Increase in % |
|---------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| 2005-06 | 2 522 | - |
| 2006-07 | 2 567 | 1.8% |
| 2007-08 | 3 115 | 21.3% |
| 2008-09 | 3 228 ^{Note 1} | 3.6% ^{Note 2} |

^{Note 1} The figure is a revised estimate.

^{Note 2} The figure is calculated based on the revised estimate of 2008-09.

To cope with changes in the workload of CSO, apart from re-deploying staff, SWD will also streamline the work procedures, such as reducing unnecessary work steps and simplifying the report format, so as to enhance the productivity of staff and reduce their workload.

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| Signature | _____ |
| Name in block letters | Stephen Fisher |
| Post Title | Director of Social Welfare |
| Date | 20 March 2009 |

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

Head : 170 – Social Welfare Department

Programme : (5) Services for Offenders

Controlling Officer : Director of Social Welfare

Director of Bureau : Secretary for Labour and Welfare

Question : It is stated in “Matters Requiring Special Attention in 2009-10” under “Services for Offenders” that the Social Welfare Department (SWD) will launch a two-year pilot project to enhance the probation service at designated court(s) to assist the convicted young drug offenders to start afresh through the provision of intensive counselling/treatment programmes. Would the Administration please inform this Committee of the details of the project and the estimated expenditure involved?

Asked by : Hon. CHEUNG Kwok-che

Reply : Pursuant to the Security Bureau’s policy initiative to tackle the drug abuse problem and to implement the recommendations of the Task Force on Youth Drug Abuse, SWD has earmarked additional resources in 2009-10 to launch a two-year pilot project to enhance probation service for drug offenders. Four time-limited Assistant Social Work Officer (ASWO) posts, two each for the Probation Offices serving Kowloon City Magistrates’ Courts and Kwun Tong Magistrates’ Courts, will be provided. The pilot project will include services and programmes such as probation supervision with enhanced judicial involvement, more focused, structured and intensive treatment and counselling programmes, employment assistance, school guidance, regular urine tests, etc. The aim is to help young drug offenders quit the drug abusing habit and turn over a new leaf.

SWD will work closely with the Judiciary, the Narcotics Division of the Security Bureau, the Hong Kong Police Force, the Government Laboratory and other concerned non-governmental organisations to ensure smooth service delivery during the pilot period.

The provision for this pilot project is estimated to be \$1.8 million per annum.

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| Signature | _____ |
| Name in block letters | Stephen Fisher |
| Post Title | Director of Social Welfare |
| Date | 20 March 2009 |

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

Head : 170 – Social Welfare Department

Programme : (5) Services for Offenders

Controlling Officer : Director of Social Welfare

Director of Bureau : Secretary for Labour and Welfare

Question : With regard to the workload and manpower of probation services, the number of cases served has increased by 12% from 2006-07 to 2008-09, i.e. an average increase of 4% per year. The Social Welfare Department (SWD), however, will only increase the manpower of the services by 3% in 2009-10. Would SWD please inform this Committee how it will cope with the excess workload and provide support to the staff members concerned?

Asked by : Hon. CHEUNG Kwok-che

Reply : The number of probation cases is affected by a number of factors including the crime rate, the number of offenders arrested by the police and convicted by the court and the courts' sentencing decisions. The following table shows the actual number of cases served over the past years.

| Year | Cases Served |
|---------|--------------|
| 2005-06 | 5 554 |
| 2006-07 | 5 318 |
| 2007-08 | 5 631 |

SWD will cope with changes in the workload of probation service through re-deployment of existing staff as and when necessary.

Signature

Name in block letters

Post Title

Date

Stephen Fisher

Director of Social Welfare

17 March 2009

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

Head : 170 – Social Welfare Department

Programme : (5) Services for Offenders

Controlling Officer : Director of Social Welfare

Director of Bureau : Secretary for Labour and Welfare

Question : The Administration states in the targets that the number of cases supervised per worker per month in the Social Service Centres (SSCs) for ex-offenders is 98, but the number of cases closed per worker per month is six. This reflects that the number of cases supervised per worker per month is much higher than that of cases closed per worker per month. Would the Administration please inform this Committee whether:

- (a) the workers of SSCs have other responsibilities apart from handling the cases? If yes, what are the details?
- (b) additional resources and manpower will be provided to reduce the workload of the workers of SSCs? If yes, what are the details? If no, what are the reasons?

Asked by : Hon. WONG Sing-chi

Reply : The number of cases supervised per worker per month is equal to the sum of (i) the number of cases brought forward from previous months and (ii) the number of cases newly opened/reopened in the month, minus (iii) the number of cases closed in the month.

As the average number of cases newly opened/reopened and that of cases closed per month are very close (five and six respectively), the number of cases supervised per worker per month has been maintained at a stable level.

- (a) Apart from casework service, workers of the SSCs also need to organise community education activities, group activities and mass programmes for ex-offenders regularly.

- (b) The Administration has no plan to increase the manpower and resources for SSCs for the time being. The operating organisation is subvented under the Lump Sum Grant subvention system and can flexibly deploy resources to meet the needs of the ex-offenders.

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| Signature | _____ |
| Name in block letters | Stephen Fisher |
| Post Title | Director of Social Welfare |
| Date | 20 March 2009 |

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

Head : 170 – Social Welfare Department

Programme : (5) Services for Offenders

Controlling Officer : Director of Social Welfare

Director of Bureau : Secretary for Labour and Welfare

Question : The Administration states that a two-year pilot project will be launched in 2009-10 to assist the convicted young drug offenders to start afresh. Please inform this Committee:

- (a) of the details, estimated expenditure and expected outcome of the pilot project;
- (b) whether the Administration will consider expanding the pilot project to cover offenders who have committed other crimes and who are in other age groups. If yes, what are the details? If no, what are the reasons?

Asked by : Hon. WONG Sing-chi

Reply : (a) Pursuant to the Security Bureau's policy initiative to tackle the drug abuse problem and to implement the recommendations of the Task Force on Youth Drug Abuse, the Social Welfare Department (SWD) has earmarked additional resources in 2009-10 to launch a two-year pilot project to enhance probation service for drug offenders. Four time-limited Assistant Social Work Officer (ASWO) posts, two each for the Probation Offices serving Kowloon City Magistrates' Courts and Kwun Tong Magistrates' Courts, will be provided. The pilot project will include services and programmes such as probation supervision with enhanced judicial involvement, more focused, structured and intensive treatment and counselling programmes, employment assistance, school guidance, regular urine tests, etc. The aim is to help young drug offenders quit the drug abusing habit and turn over a new leaf.

SWD will work closely with the Judiciary, the Narcotics Division of the Security Bureau, the Hong Kong Police Force, the Government Laboratory and other concerned non-governmental organisations to ensure smooth service delivery during the pilot period.

The provision for this pilot project is estimated to be \$1.8 million per annum.

- (b) SWD will evaluate the pilot project in due course. It has no plan to extend the project to other offenders for the time being.

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| Signature | _____ |
| Name in block letters | Stephen Fisher |
| Post Title | Director of Social Welfare |
| Date | 20 March 2009 |

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

Head : 170 – Social Welfare Department

Programme : (5) Services for Offenders

Controlling Officer : Director of Social Welfare

Director of Bureau : Secretary for Labour and Welfare

Question : According to the plan, there will be three social workers working in the Young Offender Assessment Panel (YOAP) in 2009-10. Considering that problems of young offenders are getting more complicated, would the Administration please inform this Committee whether the planned manpower is adequate to meet the needs?

Asked by : Hon. CHEUNG Kwok-che

Reply : The YOAP is a special board jointly set up by the Social Welfare Department (SWD) and the Correctional Services Department (CSD) to provide co-ordinated professional views to judges and magistrates on the most appropriate rehabilitation programme in the sentencing of young offenders.

The three social workers who serve the YOAP are able to cope with the existing workload. In the event of a sudden upsurge of cases, other social workers in SWD's Corrections Section may be deployed to assist, if necessary. SWD will continue to strengthen the collaboration and partnership with CSD to ensure smooth service delivery.

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| Signature | _____ |
| Name in block letters | Stephen Fisher |
| Post Title | Director of Social Welfare |
| Date | 18 March 2009 |

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

Head : 170 – Social Welfare Department

Programme : (5) Services for Offenders

Controlling Officer : Director of Social Welfare

Director of Bureau : Secretary for Labour and Welfare

Question : It is stated in the targets that the number of places for male and female hostels for ex-offenders will be maintained at 120 and ten in 2009-10. Would the Administration please inform this Committee of:

- (a) the factors for determining the number of places for male and female hostels for ex-offenders?
- (b) the estimated expenditure for male and female hostels for ex-offenders respectively in 2009-10?

Asked by : Hon. LAU Wai-hing, Emily

Reply : (a) It has been the Social Welfare Department's established practice to allocate hostel places for male and female discharged prisoners using the 120:10 ratio. Judging from the occupancy rates as shown in the table below, the allocation is about right.

| | 2005-06 (%) | | 2006-07 (%) | | 2007-08 (%) | |
|----------------|----------------|--------|----------------|--------|----------------|--------|
| | Male | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female |
| Occupancy rate | 93.62 | 87.25 | 99.39 | 90.53 | 92.17 | 99.31 |

- (b) The estimated provision for hostels for ex-offenders in 2009-10 is \$6.4 million, comprising \$5.5 million for male places and \$0.9 million for female places.

Signature

Name in block letters

Post Title

Date

Stephen Fisher

Director of Social Welfare

20 March 2009

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

Head : 170 – Social Welfare Department

Programme : (5) Services for Offenders

Controlling Officer : Director of Social Welfare

Director of Bureau : Secretary for Labour and Welfare

Question : It is stated that the cost per resident per month for the probation home and the reformatory school will be \$37,646 in 2009-10, which is \$810 higher than that in 2008-09 and also higher than the cost of other type of hostels. Would the Administration please inform this Committee of:

- (a) the reasons for the above differences in cost;
- (b) the details of the above cost; and
- (c) the cost per resident per month for the past five years (i.e. from 2004 to 2008)?

Asked by : Hon. WONG Sing-chi

Reply : (a) & (b) The increase of \$810 in the cost per resident per month for the probation home and the reformatory school in the 2009-10 Estimate as compared to the 2008-09 Revised Estimate is mainly due to the anticipated increase in operating expenses.

The probation home and the reformatory school provide statutory services in a confined institution whereas hostels for ex-offenders under this programme provide accommodation and other services in an open setting. These hostels for ex-offenders are run by the subvented sector whereas the probation home and the reformatory school are provided by the Government.

The cost figures of the probation home and the reformatory school reflect the full cost of services rendered by the Social Welfare Department (SWD), which include the cost of staff fringe benefits charged to different expenditure heads and other non-cash expenditure such as depreciation, in addition to the expenditure reflected under SWD. On the other hand, the cost figures of the hostels for ex-offenders are the net total cash provision required after taking fee income into account. No direct comparison of costs between the Government and the subvented sector should be drawn.

- (c) The cost per resident per month for the probation home and the reformatory school in the past five years is as follows:

| Financial Year | Probation Home \$ | Reformatory School \$ |
|----------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|
| 2004-05 (Actual)# | 30,391 | 50,925 |
| 2005-06 (Actual) | 33,565 | 62,764 |
| 2006-07 (Actual) | 30,861 | 50,380 |
| 2007-08 (Actual) | 35,586^ | |
| 2008-09 (Revised Estimate) | 36,836^ | |

The cost figures for 2004-05 reflect only the provision under the control of the Director of Social Welfare. They do not cover the cost of fringe benefits, which is charged to different expenditure heads. With effect from 2005-06, cost figures were prepared on a full cost basis as explained in (a) and (b) above.

^ Due to the re-location and co-location of the probation homes, reformatory school and remand homes/places of refuge to a new residential training complex, namely the Tuen Mun Children and Juvenile Home (TMCJH), in 2007, the same unit cost is applicable to all cases under the care of TMCJH.

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| Signature | _____ |
| Name in block letters | Stephen Fisher |
| Post Title | Director of Social Welfare |
| Date | 20 March 2009 |

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION**

Head : 170 – Social Welfare Department

Programme : (5) Services for Offenders

Controlling Officer : Director of Social Welfare

Director of Bureau : Secretary for Labour and Welfare

Question : What are the details of the two-year pilot scheme to assist convicted young drug offenders to start afresh, including the expected increase in caseload to be handled by the Social Welfare Department (SWD) after the additional provision of \$1.8 million per annum?

Asked by : Hon. WONG Sing-chi

Reply : Pursuant to the Security Bureau's policy initiative to tackle the drug abuse problem, SWD will launch the two-year pilot project targeting young drug offenders who are convicted and ordered by the court to be put on probation. It will include two major components –

- (1) Core modules which involve intensive supervision and monitoring of the probationers (e.g. reporting sessions, urine tests, curfew checks and progress report to court); and
- (2) Targeted training and treatment programmes which address the risks and needs of the probationers beneath their offending and drug abuse behaviour (e.g. psychological problem, poor interpersonal relationship, etc.).

The estimated provision of \$1.8 million per annum is to create four Assistant Social Work Officer (ASWO) posts to trial run the pilot project. Having regard to past experience in handling convicted young drug offenders under probation services, the pilot project is planned to serve 240 cases per annum, i.e. 60 cases per ASWO, at two designated Magistracies.

SWD will conduct an evaluation on the pilot project in due course.

Signature

Name in block letters

Post Title

Date

Stephen Fisher

Director of Social Welfare

31 March 2009