

**Minutes of the 35th Meeting of
the Committee on Services for Youth at Risk**

Date : 27 April 2004 (Tuesday)
Time : 2:30 p.m.
Venue : Conference Room 1
Social Welfare Department Headquarters

Present

Mr Paul Tang, JP (Chairperson)
Social Welfare Department

Mr Y C Cheng (Vice Chairperson)
Education and Manpower Bureau

Mr Lee Kwok-sung
Education and Manpower Bureau

Dr Choi Yuen-wan, SBS, JP
Breakthrough Limited

Mr Cheng Cho-chak
School Principal

Mr Hui Chin-yim, Stephen
The Hong Kong Subsidised Secondary School Council

Mrs Justina Leung, JP
The Boys' and Girls' Clubs Association of Hong Kong

Ms Jane Tsuei
The Hong Kong Council of Social Service

Mr Ma Wai-luk
Hong Kong Police Force

Miss Wendy Cheung
(representing Miss Diane Wong)
Health, Welfare and Food Bureau

Ms Esther Leung
Home Affairs Bureau

Dr Mak Kwok-hang
Department of Health

Mr Cheung Hing-wah
Social Welfare Department

Mr Allan Ng
Social Welfare Department

Miss Maria Lau
Social Welfare Department

(Secretary)

In attendance

Ms Alice Cheong
Security Bureau

Ms Annie Chan
Security Bureau

Miss Hannah Yip
Social Welfare Department

Absent with apologies

Mr Tai Hay-lap, BBS, JP
School Principal

Dr Tsang Kit-man, Sandra
Committee on Home-School Co-operation

Prof Hau Kit-tai, MH
The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Dr Tam Wing-kun
Action Committee Against Narcotics

Mr Paul Chan, JP
The Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups

Ms Winnie Ng
Security Bureau

Welcoming remarks

The Chairperson welcomed -

- (i) Mr Ma Wai-luk of the Hong Kong Police Force and Mr Allan Ng of the Social Welfare Department (SWD), who had replaced Mr Tang How-kong and Mr Simeon Choi respectively as members of the Committee and were attending the meeting for the first time; and
- (ii) Ms Alice Cheong, Senior Executive Officer (Narcotics)¹, and Ms Annie Chan, Assistant Education Officer, of the Narcotics Division of the Security Bureau (SB), who were attending the meeting to brief Members on the paper on *Review of School Drug Education Programmes*.

Confirmation of minutes of last meeting held on 2 October 2003

2. The minutes of the last meeting were distributed to Members on 25 November 2003 with proposed amendments incorporated. The minutes were confirmed with no further amendment.

Matters arising

3. Members raised no suggestion on following up on matters discussed in the last meeting.

Agenda Item 3 – Review of School Drug Education Programmes (CSYR Paper 1/2004)

4. Ms Alice Cheong briefed Members on a recent review conducted by the Narcotics Division (ND) of SB on drug / health education programmes currently run in schools and the new strategy for the provision of school drug education

programmes. Ms Cheong reported that ND had been conducting drug education programmes for secondary schools since 1984. The service was subsequently extended to Primary Schools for P.5 and 6 students as well as international schools and schools under the English School Foundation. In 1999, ND started a pilot partnership scheme whereby non-governmental organisations (NGOs) were commissioned to deliver school drug education programmes. Since 2001, school talk service had been completely out-sourced to NGOs.

5. With a view to streamlining the delivery of school drug education programmes and to achieving greater efficiency, Ms Cheong informed the meeting that ND had recently conducted a review on the delivery of school drug education programmes in consultation with the SWD. In the review it was found that in respect of current programmes for secondary schools, apart from service provided by ND, presently at least four projects were also aimed at promoting drug/ health education. To a varying degree, elements of drug education had been incorporated in the programmes of these projects. The four projects included the five Counselling Centres for Psychotropic Substance Abusers (CCPSAs) subvented by SWD, the Adolescent Health Programme (AHP) run by the Department of Health, the Hong Kong Medical Association Community Network, and the Understanding the Adolescent Project implemented by SWD in secondary schools. In particular, Ms Cheong added, compared to ND, the CCPSAs had the advantage of being able to establish a closer working relationship with schools and stakeholders because of their region-based structure. At the same time, the one-stop, comprehensive service provided by the CCPSAs could save time and resources as well as ensure timely intervention.

6. With regard to drug talk service for primary schools, Ms Cheong reported that the review indicated that the service provided by ND had been very well received because of the lack of similar service. There was also a need for some local schools serving South Asian students such as Pakistanis, Indians, and so on, to engage the drug talk service of ND because these schools needed support to organise their own programmes. For international schools and schools under the English School Foundation (ESF), apart from utilising ND's service, some also engaged NGOs to provide drug talks.

7. Taking into consideration the findings of the review, Ms Cheong said that the Action Committee Against Narcotics (ACAN) and its Sub-committee on Preventive Education and Publicity (Sub-committee) had endorsed that ND would adopt the following strategy starting from the 2004/05 school year –

- (a) for secondary schools, to achieve better utilisation of available resources, drug education programmes currently provided by ND would be

withdrawn. ND would continue to liaise with relevant government departments for a co-ordinated approach in conducting education programmes for secondary school students on drugs. In particular, ND and SWD would co-ordinate work plans to ensure that drug education programmes would be carried out smoothly by the five CCPSAs for secondary school students;

- (b) for primary and international / ESF schools, since there was no similar government-funded drug education programme as well as an obvious and on-going demand for drug talk service, ND would maintain the current service provision; and
- (c) the Hong Kong Jockey Club Drug InfoCentre (DIC), the first-ever exhibition centre dedicated to drug education in Hong Kong, would be opened in June 2004. The community-based drug education centre would serve as a focal point for the provision of drug education activities for young people and complement drug education service provided for schools. (Post Meeting Note: The centre was opened following the Opening Ceremony officiated by the Chief Executive on 21.6.2004)

8. Mr Hui Chin-yim noted that with effect from the 2004/05 school year, drug education service by NGOs for secondary schools would be stopped while the new DIC would commence operation. Mr Hui was concerned that the DIC would only serve to introduce the negative effects of substance abuse and its capacity might not be able to accommodate the demand from schools. He added that schools might welcome service of the DIC because it was new. With time, Mr Hui believed that many schools might prefer school drug talks, which had a greater diversity and offered the chance for students to ask questions on the spot. Mr Hui was of the opinion that in addition to the new DIC, the current provision of school drug education programmes should be maintained for the time being and then reviewed later.

9. Ms Alice Cheong explained that ACAN and its Sub-committee had already reviewed the current provision of drug education programmes, which indicated a duplication of service. Ms Cheong pointed out that instead of withdrawing the service of drug education programmes, ND was providing a new option to schools in drug education. This would continue to be complemented by the services currently provided by CCPSAs and other similar projects. With regard to the DIC, Ms Cheong said that the Centre would target at young people by providing interactive-based education programmes. For instance, there would be an interactive theatre where a story about three young people and drugs would be presented. Visitors would take part in discussions and have the opportunity to vote and decide whether

one of the characters would take drugs.

10. Mrs Justina Leung welcomed the new initiative of the DIC and the initiative in more effective deployment of resources. She believed that drug education programmes should be an on-going process and that more entry points should be utilised to enhance the impact of drug education. Mrs Leung suggested that the media was an effective way of reaching young people and signs could be put up in places like bars and karaoke to remind young people of the negative effects of drugs.

11. Ms Alice Cheong reported that a new announcement in public interest (API) would be broadcast in May to June to promote the anti-drug messages. Apart from this, ND was planning to produce a TV show on the anti-drug cause as well. Ms Cheong added that relevant publicity leaflets were being handed out in karaoke and bars.

12. Ms Jane Tsuei said that according to the school survey conducted in 2000, 12.9% of secondary school students indicated that they would likely take some psychotropic substances. Moreover, 2.6% had taken heroin and 4.1% taken psychotropic substances. While recognising the benefits of drug education, Ms Tsuei was of the opinion that current programmes tended to focus more on primary prevention. She believed that more in-depth work in secondary prevention was necessary, which could be achieved with the Beat Drugs Fund encouraging more projects in that direction. Ms Tsuei inquired whether there would be another school survey and whether similar survey would be conducted in primary schools.

13. Dr Choi Yuen-wan said that the figures in the school survey indicated that everything was well under control. He was also of the opinion that drug treatment and education in Hong Kong had achieved world-class standard. On the other hand, Dr Choi said that while local facilities like the new DIC had world-class hardware, the necessary software and human ware for effective service were however lacking; thus, programme for secondary prevention was lacking. He agreed that research and survey were essential to facilitate planning of targeted service and that the Lotteries Fund and the Beat Drugs Fund could encourage more initiatives in secondary prevention.

14. Mrs Justina Leung raised concern about issues of cross border substance abuse. She observed that more and more young people were going to the Mainland for drugs because it was cheap and convenient. Owing to the fact that that group of substance abusers was a very mobile one, Mrs Leung suggested that it would be important to give thoughts to how the target group could be reached for intervention. Dr Choi Yuen-wan pointed out that study on cross border substance abuse had not

been successful so far. He added that the danger in cross border abuse lay in the prevalence of fake drugs on the Mainland market, which could cause considerable short and long term damage.

15. In response to Ms Jane Tsuei's inquiry about future school survey, Ms Alice Cheong said that another survey would be conducted in 2005. Ms Cheong went on to report that the Administration was very much concerned about issues of cross border substance abuse. There was presently a standing mechanism between Hong Kong and Guangdong authorities to exchange views on tackling the issues. In addition, more education programmes on the subject would be conducted. Mr Ma Wai-luk added that Mainland authorities had also noted the escalating problems of cross border substance abuse. He said that law enforcement agencies on both sides met regularly with emphasis on stamping out drug manufacturing and trafficking. Mr Ma believed that apart from law enforcement, policies setting out clear strategies in tackling issues of cross border substance abuse would also be essential.

16. Believing that school-based school drug education would be more effective, Mr Cheng Cho-chak asked if there were any training and software to facilitate teachers in conducting such programmes. Ms Alice Cheong agreed that teachers played a key role in sustaining drug education in school. ND would therefore arrange visits to the DIC for school principals and teachers in May to promote the Centre to the school sector which could benefit from the new facilities. Teachers' workshop on drug education was also in the pipeline.

Agenda Item 4 – Bullying in Schools (CSYR Paper 2/2004)

17. Mr Y C Cheng briefed Members on the paper on bullying in schools. Mr Cheng said that recent incidents of bullying behaviour of students had helped raise awareness towards the problem. He reported that to facilitate planning of discipline / guidance service and teachers' training, the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) collected information from both primary and secondary schools about cases of student problem which they had managed on a annual basis. Among the problems reported, the overall figure of bullying in schools for the past three years from 2000/01 to 2002/03 was below 0.2% of the school population per annum. To further assess the support required by schools in managing bullying, a survey was conducted in February 2004 whereby all primary and secondary schools were required to furnish EMB with information on physical bullying cases handled by the schools from September 2003 to February 2004. Mr Cheng stressed that the emphasis was on providing support to schools-in-need in handling such incidents. Mr Cheng went on to highlight measures that EMB had taken to help schools address issues of bullying, which included the production of a resource package entitled '*Co-creating a*

Harmonious School' to provide teachers with a systematic and comprehensive set of reference materials and tools in dealing with bullying in school, allocation of additional resources for organising more programmes under the Smart Teen Challenge Project, distribution of a parent pamphlet on '*Help Your Child Develop a Harmonious Relationship in School*' to raise parents' awareness on issues of bullying and educating them on the importance of early detection and prompt intervention, and so on. Mr Cheng ended the presentation by underscoring the importance of concerted efforts of schools, teachers, parents, students and the community at large to effectively combat bullying.

18. In response to the Chairperson's inquiry as to whether there was any study on schools with a greater prevalence of bullying among students to identify possible contributing factors, Mr Y C Cheng said that schools reporting more incidents of bullying were usually found to have no clear directive and no determination in dealing with bullying. He said that to effectively tackle the problem, a whole school approach with clear policies, determination and prompt action was essential. Mr Cheng told Members that some schools with a larger number of low-achieving students reported no incident of bullying, while some operating small-size classes had such incidents indicating that class size and teacher-student ratio were not significant contributing factors.

19. Mr Hui Chin-yim agreed that bullying was not a serious problem in schools. On the other hand, he had three observations on the issue. First, Mr Hui was of the opinion that bullying would be more likely when students had weak learning capacity and thus low interest in learning. As such, he believed that contrary to Mr Y C Cheng's report, teacher-student ratio was important in preventing bullying and that a larger establishment of teachers might be required for some schools. Similarly, Mr Hui was of the opinion that some schools might need a greater provision of school social workers to take care of students with greater needs. In short, Mr Hui suggested that instead of a standard provision of teachers and social workers for all schools, provision should be made according to the needs of individual schools. Second, Mr Hui believed that the policy of integration had contributed to bullying in schools with students having lower intelligence becoming victims of such incidents. He proposed that EMB should review its school placement policy to allow parents greater right in choosing schools for their children. Finally, Mr Hui stressed that EMB's support to schools in tackling bullying was very important. He said that EMB needed to remind schools of the significance in adopting a whole school approach to guidance and discipline. Reminder to parents to enhance their awareness of early detection and early intervention was equally essential.

20. Mrs Justina Leung agreed that teachers were very hard-pressed, particularly in certain districts, having to take care of teaching on one hand and

student discipline on the other. In addition, many teachers nowadays lack both experience and training in handling students' behaviour problem. Mrs Leung concurred that to effectively address issues of bullying in schools, early detection and a whole school approach as well as support and training for teachers were very important. Mrs Leung told Members that two secondary schools for which her agency was presently providing school social work service had used their own resources to employ extra school social workers to strengthen their support service.

21. Mr Y C Cheng thanked Members for their comments and suggestions. He said that EMB had convened an inter-departmental meeting on tackling bullying in schools with representatives from the Police, SWD, Department of Justice, relevant school councils and professional organisations. Assistance from the Police, SWD as well as NGOs would be enlisted and more resources would be made available to support schools-in-need. Mr Cheng shared that young people nowadays tend to be less respectful towards authority. Under the circumstances, teachers without adequate training in handling students' behaviour would find it difficult to manage in the classroom. To address teachers' needs, all teachers under training were required to take courses in dealing with behaviour problems of students. EMB was also trying out a new scheme of arranging new teachers to go through a year's practicum with a view to giving them the opportunity to acquire actual work experience. In addition, Mr Cheng said that more support would be provided for teachers from schools with students of greater need. While believing that work pressure was not particular to teachers but common among other professions, Mr Cheng pointed out that one of the emphases of the education reform was to put less demand on paper work giving teachers more space and time to work directly with students. He added that teachers' workload would be reviewed and adjusted in the long run.

22. With regard to the suggestion of allocating more school social work provision for schools with greater need, the Chairperson pointed out that in view of resource constraint, there was no intention to change the policy of 'one school social worker for each school'. He suggested that it would be more practical for schools to make use of community-based service and their own resources to strengthen support for students.

23. Dr Choi Yuen-wan said that bullying is a behavioural phenomenon. Presently, a psychological profile of those young people engaged in bullying was lacking making effective intervention difficult. He proposed sampling those youth to obtain a psychological profile for the purpose of developing intervention strategies. Dr Choi told Members that attempt was being made in understanding the psychological profile of non-engaged youth. He believed that non-engaged youth was not a homogeneous group. It was essential to know if and how many of these young people had depression, attention deficit, dyslexia, and so on for provision of

targeted service. Dr Choi stressed that evidence-based practice was most important.

24. Responding to the Chairperson's comment that early detection was equally important, Dr Choi Yuen-wan said that after considering the recent case of domestic violence in Tin Shui Wai, the Fight Crime Committee recommended developing a protocol / checklist for assessing the needs and risk of families. Dr Choi also highlighted the important role of first contact points including police officers in the reporting room and school social workers in early detection and early intervention.

25. Following up on Dr Choi's comment on early detection of problems, Mrs Justina Leung inquired about the function of the Student Health Service under the Department of Health (DH) in identifying students-in-need and referring them to appropriate welfare service. Dr Mak Kwok-hang told Members that Student Health Centres (SHCs) over the territory were providing assessment service for primary and secondary students. Since February 2002, an enhanced referral mechanism had been put in place to refer those identified to be in need of follow up to appropriate service units. If further assessment was required, SHCs would arrange for students to be attended by clinical psychologists and / or other medical personnel. According to Dr Mak, only health conscious students and parents would attend appointments with the SHCs. That was why DH implemented the Adolescent Health Programme (AHP) to provide school-based health education service with a view to reaching out to those in-need. Dr Mak agreed with the necessity of profiling students exhibiting various types of problems so as to identify their needs for the provision of targeted service. He also suggested that issues of interfacing of the AHP and the Understanding the Adolescent Project in both primary and secondary schools should be examined with a view to enhancing effectiveness of the programmes in addressing students' needs.

26. In response to Mr Hui Chin-yim's comment that existing support service for students were segmented and lacked co-ordination, Mr Cheung Hing-wah pointed out that school social workers could serve as contact point for engaging and co-ordinating relevant welfare service to serve schools. He went on to tell Members that issues of interfacing of student guidance programmes currently run by DH, EMB and SWD were being examined by the three parties.

Agenda Item 5 – Reviewing Overnight Outreaching Service for Young Night Drifters (CSYR Paper 3/2004)

27. Mr Cheung Hing-wah briefed Members on the findings and recommendations of the review of overnight outreaching service for young night drifters (YNDs). Mr Cheung reiterated that on the advice of the Committee, two

focus groups comprising supervisors / service co-ordinators of the 18 overnight outreaching teams and representatives of SWD district offices respectively were convened in October 2003. The objectives of the focus groups were to consolidate the experience of the overnight outreaching teams in serving YNDs, obtain feedbacks from service users and relevant stakeholders on current service provision, and gather views from service users and stakeholders on further enhancement of the service. Mr Cheung said that statistics on output / outcome performance and feedbacks from service users as well as related stakeholders showed that setting up overnight outreaching service to address the needs of YNDs was in the right direction. Most significantly, the service was serving a very important function of making connection with a group of youth-at-risk who would otherwise be overlooked by conventional daytime service. Through such connection, YNDs were linked up with mainstream young people and other support service, which helped the YNDs cut down on night-drifting behaviour and develop a more socially acceptable life pattern. Apart from overnight outreaching service, the 18 teams were also engaged in occasional daytime follow up activities with a view to providing the target group of young people with more effective and comprehensive support. Based on the findings of the review, it was proposed that overnight outreaching should remain to be the primary and core service of the overnight outreaching teams. Instead of engaging in follow up activities in the daytime, the teams should, in collaboration with other young people and welfare service units in individual districts, further strengthen service interfacing and networking for the purpose of more effectively linking young people up with daytime service.

28. Mrs Justina Leung commented that it was good to consolidate the experience of the service. She was of the opinion that providing daytime follow up service was necessary and essential because workers of the overnight outreaching teams had built up trusting relationship with the target group of youth making subsequent follow up easier and more effective. More importantly, Mrs Leung did not think that performing daytime follow up service would thin out manpower for overnight outreaching work. She said that operating agencies could flexibly deploy manpower to suit the needs of YNDs. On the other hand, Mrs Leung agreed with the importance of promoting interfacing of overnight outreaching and other welfare service. She shared the positive experience of collaboration between overnight outreaching teams operated by her agency and an anti-drug project as well as the benefits of merging the service of District Youth Outreaching Social Work Team and overnight outreaching team.

29. Similarly, while concurring that the primary and core service of the overnight outreaching teams should be overnight outreaching, Ms Jane Tsuei also believed that daytime follow up by the teams was necessary. She said that service outcome was more important than defining the scope of service, and that agencies

should be allowed to exercise flexibility in operating the service according to district needs.

30. Mr Cheung Hing-wah said that operating agencies had all along been allowed to exercise flexibility in running the service according to district needs. He added that SWD's District Social Welfare Officers would continue to co-ordinate service provision so that YNDs would be provided with comprehensive support.

Agenda Item 6 – Implementation of the Understanding the Adolescent Project in Secondary Schools in the 2004/05 School Year (CSYR Paper 4/2004)

31. Mr Cheung Hing-wah presented the paper on the details of implementing the Understanding the Adolescent Project (UAP) in secondary schools in the 2004/05 school year. Mr Cheung reported that the positive effects of the primary preventive programme of the UAP on students, parents and teachers had been confirmed in the evaluation study conducted by the Chinese University of Hong Kong in the 2001/02 school year. It was also evident that both the welfare and the education sectors fully recognised the benefits of early identification and timely intervention in promoting the healthy development of young people. More importantly, the UAP had promoted the establishment of a strong collaborative network among social workers and teachers in helping students. Given the positive outcomes, the Administration had decided to continue implementing the project in the coming academic year. Mr Cheung said that NGOs operating school social work service would be allocated a sum of \$40,000 per school to run the UAP in schools they were serving. This sum was subject to efficiency savings to be advised by SWD. He also suggested that NGOs and schools would be encouraged to explore alternative funding including fee charging to sustain the project in the long run. Mr Cheung went on to introduce the plan to develop an e-screening tool for the UAP in secondary schools for the purpose of making the project a truly school-based one whereby NGOs and schools could have the flexibility of conducting the screening process at a pace suitable to them. Tentatively, it was anticipated that the e-screening tool would be ready for full-scale application in the 2006/07 school year.

32. Dr Choi Yuen-wan told Members that in the pilot UAP in primary schools, statistically significant changes in terms of family culture and anger management had been found. He pointed out that the UAP in primary schools had the advantage of having a full spectrum of service including a Universal Programme for all students, an Intensive Programme for those identified to be in-need, and tertiary intervention in the form of counselling service. Furthermore, parents' participation was also higher and training was provided to all school principals as well as teachers greatly facilitating the development of a resilience culture in school. Dr Choi was of

the opinion that interfacing of the UAP in primary and secondary schools was very important as primary school years were the incubation period for behaviour problems while secondary school years were the time when problems would materialise. He proposed running primary preventive programmes in primary schools and booster programmes developed on the concepts of resilience in secondary schools.

33. Recognising the positive effects of the UAP, Mr Hui Chin-yim shared that his schools had been using its own resources to provide follow up service in Secondary Two for students who had participated in the project. He said that teachers who had taken part in the project had the feeling that they were not alone in helping students. Mr Hui believed that the UAP would facilitate the development of a harmonious school and suggested that EMB should take over the UAP in secondary schools. With regard to resources for running the project, Mr Hui asked for how long schools and NGOs would be provided with the allocation of \$40,000 per school.

34. Mr Cheung Hing-wah explained that as school social workers had been performing a very significant role in the implementation of the UAP in secondary schools, transferring management of the project to EMB might require further deliberation. The Chairperson, on the other hand, said that funding for the UAP in secondary schools would be reviewed annually.

35. Ms Jane Tsuei suggested SWD to discuss with NGOs on possible effects of the reduction in funding and how to adjust the programmes without affecting the effectiveness. Mr Hui Chin-yim believed that less resource should not have much implication either on the programmes or the effectiveness. Mr Hui said that service providers should be able to innovate. For instance, instead of going to a camp site, school premises could be utilised to run some of the programmes at a much reduced cost. Mr Cheung Hing-wah agreed to include a part on innovative programme planning in the train-the trainer programme for social workers and teachers.

36. Mrs Justina Leung said that e-screening tool would be used in the UAP in primary schools starting from the coming school year and inquired why a similar tool could only be ready for full-scale application in secondary schools in the 2006/07 school year. Miss Maria Lau explained that the development of e-screening tool for primary schools was started during the pilot project, while e-screening tool for secondary schools was still in its proposal stage. Miss Lau added that the tentative time schedule had taken into account the need to test run and fine-tune the tool before full-scale application.

Any other business

(The Chairperson left the meeting at that juncture due to an urgent phone call.)

Reviewing membership of the Committee

37. Mr Cheung Hing-wah said that the Home Affairs Bureau (HAB) had been developing proposals on issues relating to Government advisory / statutory bodies. SWD would be reviewing the membership of the Committee with reference to HAB's suggestions, and Members would be kept posted of the development.

Action : SWD

38. As Members raised no further business for discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

Date of next meeting

39. The next meeting was scheduled on 22 September 2004 (Wednesday) at 2:30 p.m.