

**For meeting on  
18 December 2008**

**Paper FC 24/2008**

**Report of the Task Force on Youth Drug Abuse:  
Preventive Education for Parents and Students**

**PURPOSE**

This paper briefs Members on the recommendations of the Task Force on Youth Drug Abuse (Task Force) with specific regard to preventive education for parents and students.

**BACKGROUND**

2. In recent years, Hong Kong has seen a significant rise in the number of young people (under the age of 21) reported to have abused drugs. In October 2007, the Chief Executive in his Policy Address announced the appointment of the Secretary for Justice, the incumbent Deputy Chairman of the Fight Crime Committee, to lead a high level inter-departmental task force to tackle the youth drug abuse problem. Over the past year, the Task Force reviewed anti-drug measures, spearheaded cross bureaux and inter-departmental efforts, and enhanced collaboration among Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), stakeholders and the community, with a view to identifying areas of focus and improvement.

3. The Task Force has concluded its work and published a Report and an Executive Summary on 11 November 2008. They have been sent to Members under a covering letter by the Secretary for Justice on the same day, and are attached herewith for ease of reference.

**OUR STRATEGIC RESPONSE: A HOLISTIC APPROACH**

4. To combat the youth drug abuse problem, the Task Force considers that we must adopt a holistic approach to reduce the impact of the

risk factors and enhance the effect of protective factors. In this regard it reaffirms the five-pronged anti-drug strategy covering preventive education and publicity, treatment and rehabilitation, legislation and law enforcement, research, and external cooperation.

5. In order to more comprehensively and effectively avail vulnerable youth to the protective factors, it is essential to foster a caring culture for our youth within the community at large, strengthen complementary support among various sectors and stakeholders, and promote participation in the anti-drug cause by all. This is an additional and yet fundamentally important dimension in the overall strategy.

## **PREVENTIVE EDUCATION**

6. Appropriate preventive education and publicity can contribute to protective factors that would help young people stay away from drugs. The focus is on reducing the demand for illicit drugs by imparting knowledge on drugs to different stakeholders, dispelling any misconceptions, strengthening young people's life skills and resistance to adversity and temptations, and mobilising the whole community to join the anti-drug cause. The school sector is an important platform for enhancing such efforts. To tackle the drug abuse and other youth problems in a comprehensive manner, support from other policy perspectives is necessary.

7. Members' attention is drawn to Chapters IV, V and XIII of the Report which detail the Task Force's considerations and recommendations on, among other things, preventive education from different perspectives. Notable recommendations directly relevant to parents and students are highlighted in the ensuing paragraphs.

### **General Efforts (Chapter IV)**

8. The Task force considers that future preventive education and publicity efforts should cover the whole community as well as target specific groups including children, youth at risk and people around them such as parents and teachers. The messages for each target group should be

tailor-made, with emphasis on the serious health, legal, family and community consequences of psychotropic substance abuse. (Recommendation 4.2, p35 of Report) The Administration has adopted this new approach since the launch of the territory-wide campaign with the theme “不可一、不可再。向毒品說不、向遺憾說不” and “No Drugs, No Regrets. Not Now, Not Ever” in June 2008.

9. The Task Force also considers that there should be more engagement with parents to equip them with drug knowledge and skills to identify and handle youth drug problems. Multiple channels, including advertisements in the mass media, bill inserts, television drama series, resource kits, as well as seminars and sharing sessions organised by Government departments and NGOs should be utilised to reach out to parents of different backgrounds. (Recommendation 4.4, p38) The Narcotics Division (ND) is working with the Education Bureau (EDB), Social Welfare Department (SWD) and other relevant departments and NGOs to reach out to parents through various means. The production of a resource kit is underway for completion by early 2009.

## **The School Sector (Chapter V)**

10. To enhance efforts targeting students, EDB should (a) review and strengthen the anti-drug elements in various Key Learning Areas and subjects, notably in the new senior secondary curriculum to be implemented in 2009-10; and (b) encourage and provide more opportunities for students to engage meaningfully in Other Learning Experiences (OLE) for positive peer influence and life values cultivation. (Recommendation 5.2, p49) EDB will, among other things, enhance its efforts to promote students' participation in uniformed group activities, Smart Teen Camps, visits to the Hong Kong Jockey Club DrugInfo Centre and other youth development programmes such as the Understanding Adolescent Project<sup>1</sup>, and P.A.T.H.S.<sup>2</sup>,

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<sup>1</sup> EDB has organised the Understanding Adolescent Project (UAP) for primary schools since the 2004-05 school year. The UAP is a comprehensive support programme for personal growth. It aims at enhancing students' resilience in coping with the challenges they have to face as they grow up. Findings from students' evaluation questionnaires indicated that students who have participated in the UAP generally made progress in anger management, conflict resolution, goal setting and interpersonal relationship.

<sup>2</sup> To promote the holistic development of adolescents in Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust donated HK\$400 million to implement a four-year project known as 'P.A.T.H.S. to Adulthood: A Jockey Club Youth Enhancement Scheme', in collaboration with EDB and SWD. The term 'P.A.T.H.S.' denotes Positive Adolescent Training through Holistic Social programmes.

and by exploring further collaboration with other parties for offering OLE opportunities to students.

11. To complement the efforts at schools, all departments and NGOs concerned should strengthen their drug education programmes for students, with improved format and content. Subject to arrangements with schools, the Administration should further enhance and coordinate the various programmes, to extend the coverage to all primary (upper primary students) and secondary schools as far as possible in three years' time. (Recommendation 5.3, p50) In the 2008-09 school year, the ND-sponsored and SWD-subsided programmes would reach half of the primary school students of Primary Four and above and 75% of secondary schools.

12. Regarding parents, more anti-drug talks and programmes should be co-organised with parent-teacher associations and their federations to enhance home-school cooperation in the anti-drug cause. (Recommendation 5.8, p56) The theme of the Committee on Home-School Co-operation Annual Symposium held in October 2008 was dedicated to healthy family with prevention of drug abuse as an integral element. Hundreds of parents, teachers and school personnel attended.

### **Complementary support (Chapter XIII)**

13. Youth drug abuse is a complex problem, intrinsically linked to a number of other social issues. It is often one of the many symptoms of deeper problems of the family, growth, learning or career being faced by our younger generation. To tackle the drug abuse and other youth problems in a comprehensive manner, collaboration with the Family Council, Women's Commission, Commission on Youth, bureaux and departments, NGOs and stakeholders should be enhanced.

14. Efforts in tackling the youth drug abuse problem should be made by relevant bureaux and departments in a complementary manner, and where appropriate, with more collaborative opportunities in pursuing the programmes in related policy areas, including family matters, youth development, health matters and youth employment. (Recommendation 13.1, p196)

15. Strengthening families can go a long way to help solve the drug abuse and other youth problems. We support the various initiatives being pursued by the Family Council. Apart from drug education for parents, more general parental education would be helpful, in areas like understanding the physical and psychological development of children, adolescent health, communication skills, effective parenting skills as well as skills in preventing and dealing with children's behavioural problems. ND will seek cooperation with the Family Council, government bureaux and departments and NGOs alike in general parenting programmes to include anti-drug elements.

16. Another example is the Adolescent Health Programme (AHP) run by the Department of Health (DH) as part of the Student Health Service. In view of the rising trend of youth drug abuse, DH has been working towards enhancing drug education as an integral element in promoting adolescent health. Starting the 2008-09 school year, drug abuse prevention and relevant life skills training will be made mandatory for all participating Secondary One classes. This should be an effective way to make use of the AHP platform manned by healthcare professionals and staff. ND will enhance coordination with DH to ensure complementary efforts in drug education for students (paragraph 11 above).

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

17. The Administration will pursue the implementation of the recommendations in a vigorous manner and continue engagement with various stakeholders on a sustained basis. For this purpose, an inter-departmental Working Group will be set up under the chairmanship of the Commissioner for Narcotics to steer, co-ordinate and monitor the implementation of the Recommendations of the Task Force. It will report to both the Action Committee Against Narcotics and the Fight Crime Committee.

## **ADVICE SOUGHT**

18. Members are welcome to note and comment on the recommendations of the Report.

Narcotics Division  
Security Bureau  
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