

I. Introduction

Chapter 1 Background

1.1 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 (“FCC”), to lead a high level inter-departmental task force (“Task Force”) to tackle the youth drug abuse problem. The Task Force summed up its work and recommendations in its Report on Youth Drug Abuse (“Report”) in November 2008.

1.2 Considering the degree of seriousness of the youth drug abuse problem, and recognizing that proper school-based drug testing scheme may serve to deter and prevent drug abuse as well as facilitate early intervention of drug abusers so that they would be motivated and guided towards counselling or treatment at an early stage, the Task Force recommended that a research project be commissioned to devise possible school-based drug testing schemes for voluntary adoption by schools in Hong Kong.

1.3 In July 2009, the Chief Executive set out directions to tackle youth drug abuse problems. One of the key strategies is the carrying out of the Trial Scheme on School Drug Testing in Tai Po District in the school year 2009/10 (“2009/10 Scheme”), which was launched in December 2009.

1.4 The 2009/10 Scheme was completed smoothly in June 2010. More than 12,400 students joined the Scheme¹, representing some 61% of the student population. A total of 2,495 students were randomly selected for the

¹ According to the Protocol, the Trial Scheme includes drug testing and support programmes.

screening test. Of these, 1,975 students took the test and no confirmed positive case was found.

1.5 In view of the positive feedback of stakeholders, the absence of possible adverse implications, the apparent success of creating awareness to help arrest the trend of youth drug abuse, the Scheme was extended in Tai Po to the school year 2010/11 (“2010/11 Scheme”). This would reinforce the grounds gained last school year and sustain the overall momentum of school drug testing.²

² Security Bureau (Narcotics Division) and Education Bureau (November 2010), “School drug testing”, paper submitted to the Legislative Council Panel on Security (LC paper no. CB(2)197/10-11(01).

Chapter 2 The 2010/11 Scheme

2.1 The Scheme is a joint initiative of the Government (led by the Narcotics Division (ND), Security Bureau (SB) and Education Bureau (EDB)) and 23 public sector secondary schools in the Tai Po District, supported by parties in the social welfare, healthcare and related sectors. Same as the 2009/10 Scheme, the development of the 2010/11 Scheme is guided by the following principles:

- a) Helping students in their best interest;
- b) Voluntary participation;
- c) Keeping personal information strictly confidential; and
- d) Professional testing and support services for students.

2.2 The purposes and imperatives of the 2010/11 Scheme, same as those of the 2009/10 Scheme, are as follows:

- a) For prevention – it will enhance the resolve of those students who have not taken any drugs to continue to stay away from drugs. They will be in a better position to say “no” to their peers when they are tempted to try drugs and this will help prevent the spread of drugs in schools; and
- b) For rendering assistance to students – the Scheme will trigger the motivation of those students abusing drugs to quit drugs and seek help, especially those who are trying drugs at an early stage. The Scheme will also provide appropriate support services to those students who wish to pull themselves out of the drug trap. The Scheme could also shed light on the effectiveness of cross-sector and multi-disciplinary downstream support service to student drug abusers.

2.3 Very often, young drug abusers have little motivation to seek help. Added to the hidden nature of psychotropic substance abuse, they may remain hidden from the usual help networks for quite some time until they are trawled by social workers or arrested by the police after they have abused drugs for a number of years when serious damage has already been done to their body and spirit. Apart from enhancing the resolve of those students who have not taken any drugs to continue to stay away from drugs, it is believed that by triggering the motivation of those students who have abused drugs to seek help, school drug testing would guide them towards counselling or treatment.

2.4 Each month, approximately 3% to 5% of participating students from a school would be randomly selected and tested by the Student Drug Testing (SDT) team. Each school was visited once or twice a month and some 24 to 40 students were randomly selected and tested during the visit(s). Students were not informed in advance of the date and time of visits.

2.5 For screened negative cases, the project officer would inform the results to the school principal via a school visit report and the principal would inform the parents or guardians of the students concerned.

2.6 For screened positive cases, the project officer would immediately inform the school principal and the school principal would notify the identified students' parents or guardians and invite them to a meeting on the day. The SDT team would provide on-the-spot counselling to the identified students. In addition, various counselling measures would be provided to the identified students, including:

a) The school principal would notify the designated teachers for

- b) The SDT team would make immediate arrangements for the attendance of a school social worker and a case manager from the designated Counselling Centre for Psychotropic Substance Abusers (CCPSA), who would provide counselling services and necessary support to the identified students and their parents or guardians;
- c) The case manager, school social worker and/or designated teachers would discuss with the parents or guardians on matters related to the immediate welfare of the identified students and preliminary suggestions on appropriate support programmes.

2.7 The urine specimens concerned would be sent to the Government Laboratory for a confirmatory test and the result of which would be available in about 5 working days. The identified students and/or their parents or guardians could also request to have another test to be conducted by an independent laboratory.

2.8 When the cases were found to be false positive (i.e. when the result of the confirmatory test by the Government Laboratory or the independent laboratory was found to be negative), relevant parties would be informed. The case manager would abort the support services. In case the students or parents/guardians concerned had emotional distress, the case manager would provide necessary counselling services to them, and the school social worker would also provide necessary backup, if required.

2.9 For confirmed cases, according to the Protocol, the case manager would inform the students and their parents or guardians and continue to coordinate the support services. The project officer would inform the school

principal of the result and the school principal would release the result to the designated teacher and school social worker. The case manager would also convene a multi-disciplinary case conference to formulate a support programme for the identified students. For experimental or non-dependent regular abusers, various services would be provided to them, including:

- a) Counselling and assistance from school social workers and designated teachers at school;
- b) Community-based support services outside school, such as counselling sessions in the designated CCPSA, thematic therapeutic groups, community service programmes, family or interpersonal relationship training and psychiatric or psychological intervention; and
- c) Basic medical support;
- d) Subject to the agreement of the identified students and/or their parents or guardians, they would participate in a mentoring scheme and each of them would be matched with a mentor;
- e) Cases with psychiatric and other medical complications could be referred to the Psychological Medicine Clinic of Alice Ho Miu Ling Nethersole Hospital or Substance Abuse Clinic at Prince of Wales Hospital for specialist medical treatment.

2.10 Addicted (dependent) abusers requiring voluntary residential programmes could be admitted to the 40 drug treatment and rehabilitation centres run by seventeen non-governmental organizations (NGOs). After completion of the residential programme, the rehabilitated student could resume schooling in a mainstream or other school, with EDB providing placement assistance to facilitate social reintegration.

2.11 The support programme summarized above may last up to six months and would not go beyond 31 December 2011 upon completion of the Scheme. The identified students could continue to receive support services outside the Scheme from the designated CCPSA, school social workers, designated teachers, the mentoring scheme and related parties. Other services from relevant government departments (e.g. Integrated Family Service Centres of Social Welfare Department (SWD)) and NGOs would also be available to the identified students and/or their parents or guardians.

2.12 The 2010/11 Scheme was successfully completed in May 2011. Over 10,200 students had participated in the Scheme representing some 55% of the student population. A total of 2,668 students were randomly selected for the screening test. Of these, 1,977 students took the test and no confirmed positive case was found. Among the selected students, 622 students were assessed as being not suitable for the test in view of their physical condition or having taken medications. Sixty-six students could not provide a urine specimen for testing at the relevant time. Three students refused to take the test and the schools contacted their parents according to the protocol. There was one screened positive case and was confirmed as false-positive by the confirmatory test conducted by the Government Laboratory.

2.13 According to the Protocol issued by the Government in connection with the Scheme, the Scheme is defined to comprise drug testing and support programmes highlighted above.³ Nevertheless, drug testing should not be seen as a standalone panacea. It can be a key component of a comprehensive programme to implement a healthy school policy.⁴ Thus, apart from drug

3 Narcotics Division (2009), *Trial Scheme on School Drug Testing in Tai Po District, School Year 2009/10: Protocol*, p.2.

4 Narcotics Division, Security Bureau and Education Bureau (2010), "School drug testing", information paper submitted to the Legislative Council Panel on Security dated 11 November 2010 (LC paper no. CB(2)197/10-11(01), p. 4.

testing, a series of anti-drug educational and preventive activities and counseling services were organized by the CCPSA in Tai Po and the 9 NGOs providing school social work service to the 23 secondary schools in Tai Po. For the CCPSA in Tai Po, they had organized anti-drug talks and seminars for parents and students. Additional resources had also been provided to the 9 NGOs to enable them deploy extra school social workers to the 23 secondary schools in Tai Po. The additional social workers, together with the stationing school social workers at the 23 secondary schools, had arranged a variety of anti-drug educational preventive programmes and provided counseling and guidance services to students, especially those students who were at risk. Furthermore, additional financial provisions were made available to the 23 secondary schools in organizing anti-drug educational programmes for their students. These programmes and services were provided to all students in the 23 secondary schools, regardless of whether the students had participated in the Scheme or not. In other words, while the Scheme is consisted of drug testing and the support programmes for students tested positive, there are various anti-drug educational programmes and counseling services provided to students regardless of whether these students have or have not participated in the Scheme. These educational and counseling services will definitely have an impact on students in secondary schools in Tai Po. Accordingly, in the evaluation, the impact of the Scheme could not be separated from that of the various anti-drug educational programmes and counseling services, which were not considered to be part of the Scheme but were nevertheless simultaneously implemented in the 23 secondary schools in Tai Po.

Chapter 3 The Evaluation Research

3.1 Policy 21 Limited (“Project Team”) was commissioned to conduct an Evaluation Research for the 2009/10 Scheme (“2009/10 Research”), which lasted until June 2010. To make the most of the extended Scheme in Tai Po, the evaluation research was extended to cover the implementation of the Scheme in school year 2010/11 (“2010/11 Research”). A more robust approach was adopted to address the limitations in the research to date, to better assess the effectiveness of the Scheme over a longer period of time and to gather more data and experience for further development school drug testing in Hong Kong.

3.2 It may be noted that the 2009/10 Research is subjected to a number of inherent limitations. For example, no rigorous assessment of the awareness, attitude and behaviours of students before the launch of the Scheme in December was possible as the 2009/10 Research only started in January 2010. The time span of testing that the 2009/10 Research covered was too short to measure the impact to a significant extent. Nevertheless, the merits for further developing school drug testing in Hong Kong could be supported by positive research results to date despite such limitations.

3.3 The 2010/11 Research, which is a continuation of the 2009/10 Research, conducted in the school year 2010/11, is to address the previous research limitations, better assess the effectiveness over a longer period of time and gather more data and experience for further developing school drug testing in Hong Kong. The objectives of the present research are as follows:

- a) Building on the results of the 2009/10 Research to conduct comprehensive assessment of the Scheme in school year 2010/11 to evaluate its effectiveness, focusing on both the process and

outcomes;

- b) Based on the findings in (a) above, to make suitable recommendations that may revise or supplement those made in the Final Report of the Research for further developing school drug testing in Hong Kong.

3.4 This final report is based on findings obtained from the pre-test survey conducted between October and November 2010 (October 2010 pre-survey) and post-test survey conducted between May and June 2011 (June 2011 post-survey) on all 23 secondary schools in Tai Po and a random sample of secondary schools outside Tai Po, as well as in-depth interviews conducted with stakeholders of the 2010/11 Scheme.