

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since 1997, the Narcotics Division (ND) has been working closely with stakeholders to formulate a plan on drug treatment and rehabilitation (T&R) services every three years (Three-year Plan). The Three-year Plans set out the strategic directions for T&R services as a reference for service providers to develop plans and programmes that could effectively respond to the latest drug situation and needs of drug abusers and rehabilitees of the time.

This is the tenth Three-year Plan, covering the period from 2024 to 2026. The preparation of this Three-year Plan is supported by the Working Group on the Three-year Plan (2024-2026) (Working Group) led by the Chairman of the Action Committee Against Narcotics Sub-committee on Treatment and Rehabilitation (T&R Sub-committee), Professor Dennis WONG Sing-wing, and comprising members from a wide range of relevant fields including social welfare service units, T&R agencies, medical professionals, academics, the Hospital Authority, and relevant Government bureaux/departments (B/Ds). As in the previous Three-year Plans, ND extensively consulted stakeholders and service units of the anti-drug sector through meetings and focus group discussions.

According to the Central Registry of Drug Abuse (CRDA), there has been a general decline in the total number of reported drug abusers since 2009, despite a slight rebound in 2021. Nevertheless, the number as well as the proportion of reported drug abusers who are aged under 21 have been rising since 2018. There are 659 (12%) reported drug abusers below 21 years old in 2023. Meanwhile, the proportion of the newly reported drug abusers who are 35 years old or below is 40% in 2023. On the other hand, the median drug history of newly reported abusers in 2023 is 6 years, which has exceeded the record of 5.7 years in 2019 before the outbreak of the COVID-19 epidemic. As to the types of drugs abused, the proportion of psychotropic substances has been gaining ground and is as high as 68% of the total reported drug abusers in 2023. Among the psychotropic substances abused in the reported cases in 2023, cocaine and methamphetamine (commonly known as “Ice” in Hong Kong) are the most common. At the same time, the prevalence of cannabis remains a concern. It has been the most common type of drug abused among reported drug abusers aged under 21 since 2019. The decriminalisation and even legalisation of

recreational use of cannabis in some overseas jurisdictions in recent years has posed challenges to anti-drug work in Hong Kong.

To facilitate the formulation of the Three-year Plan (2024-26), ND had consulted about 80 service units/stakeholders in the anti-drug sector between April and September 2023. The views collected during the consultation mainly covered six major areas, namely -

- (a) evidence-based treatment of abusers of psychotropic substances, especially for cocaine, “Ice” and cannabis;
- (b) prompt response to drug scene and changes in social environment;
- (c) encouraging drug abusers to seek help;
- (d) support for specific groups of drug abusers;
- (e) aftercare services for drug rehabilitees; and
- (f) other areas of anti-drug work, including capacity building of relevant personnel, drug-related researches, as well as preventive education and publicity (PE&P).

Arising from the consultation and after discussions at Working Group, T&R Sub-committee and the Drug Liaison Committee, 44 strategic directions under seven broad categories have been drawn up, namely –

- (a) To foster cross-disciplinary and cross-sectoral collaborations;
- (b) To provide targeted treatment for abusers of psychotropic substances, especially for cocaine, “Ice” and cannabis;
- (c) To respond promptly to changing drug scene and social environment;
- (d) To encourage drug abusers in seeking help and treatment;
- (e) To provide support for drug abusers from specific population groups that responds to their needs, and such groups include ethnic minorities, people who abuse drugs in the context of sex (particularly men who have sex with men with drug abuse problem), pregnant drug abusers and drug-abusing parents, and drug abusers of older age;
- (f) To provide aftercare support and services; and
- (g) Other areas of anti-drug work, including research, licensing of drug treatment and rehabilitation centres, Methadone Treatment Programme, drug abusers with offence history and PE&P.

The above strategic directions serve as a reference for service providers of the anti-drug sector to develop plans and programmes that could effectively respond to the latest drug situation and needs of drug abusers and rehabilitees. ND, in partnership with relevant Government B/Ds, will continue to oversee and co-ordinate efforts in taking forward T&R initiatives in accordance with the strategic directions with a view to helping the needy ones to recover from drug abuse and re-build a healthy and fruitful life.