Evaluation on the Implementation of the Review Report on Children and Youth Centre Services in Hong Kong: Report No. 2

Interim Report on the Operational Analysis of Children and Youth Centres in Hong Kong

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1. Introduction

101 In April 1994, the Working Party on Review of Children and Youth Centre Services published the Report on Review of Children and Youth Centre Services (Review Report), which contains a number of recommendations on the future development of children and youth services in Hong Kong. Subsequently, a Working Group was formed to prepare an Implementation Guide to Report on Review of Children and Youth Centre Services (Implementation Guide). Moreover, the City University of Hong Kong was commissioned to conduct a two-year evaluation on the implementation of the Review Report. The evaluation combines three studies, namely (a) Operational Analysis of Children and Youth Centres, (b) Social Workers' Perception of Children and Youth Services, and (c) Consumers' Satisfaction with Children and Youth Services. As the latter two studies were planned to be conducted in the second year, in this interim report only data on the Operational Analysis of Children and Youth Centres are presented.

102 In order to facilitate readers' understanding of our discussion, the major recommendations of the Review Report and the Implementation Guide are outlined as follows:

103 Basic Service Principles (Implementation Guide, p.8)

a. Concept of Person-oriented Service:
Children and Youth Centre services should be client-centred. Through the flexible use of various programmes means, children and youth services should be geared to the developmental needs of young people to enhance a well-balanced personal growth.

b. Strengthen Social Work Professional Input:
Youth workers should exercise their social work knowledge and skills to provide continual and comprehensive services with the clear direction of meeting young people's wholesome needs.
c. Responsive to Community Needs:
In planning services for children and youth, due consideration should be given to social changes, trend of youth needs and district characteristics, so as to enable service units to formulate appropriate work focus. To achieve this aim, neighbourhood level liaison, coordination with local organizations, understanding of social phenomenon and problem is very essential.

Target Groups (Review Report, p.30; Implementation Guide, p.9)

104 As a neighbourhood centre, the target group of children and youth centres includes children and youth aged between 6 to 24, able-bodied and disabled, with flexibility to serve "older youth", and their parents/guardians and family members. Particular attention should be given to those children and youth who are in need of greater professional assistance.

Needs of the Target Group (Implementation Guide, p.9)

105 To facilitate youth workers to apprehend the needs of young people today, the Working Group broadly classified needs of the target group of children and youth centres into two categories: personal developmental needs and special needs arising from disadvantaged circumstances. The two categories are listed below:

a. Personal Developmental Needs:
Young people have various general developmental needs in their growth process, which are broadly grouped as follows:

(i) building up of self image and positive life values to enable effective handling of different life situations, challenges and stresses;

(ii) achievement of life tasks and learning of developmental roles;

(iii) acquisition of ability to discriminate and act on negative influences from home, work, peers in schools and society;
(iv) development of interpersonal relationships, social skills and coping capabilities; and responsibility and abilities for community participation.

(v) development of the sense of social responsibility and abilities for community participation.

b. Special Needs Arising from Disadvantaged Circumstances:
Children and youth in disadvantaged circumstances will need more professional guidance and support from social workers and the following examples of disadvantaged circumstances are for reference of centre workers:

(i) those in disadvantaged family environment, for example, families with single or frequently absent parents, disabled family members and irresponsible or abusive parents, recent immigrant families, etc., and those from inadequate caring or problem families;

(ii) those in deprived living environment including high crime rate areas, areas under redevelopment programmes, etc., and

(iii) those affected by unfavourable social environment, for example, working parents, increased juvenile crime and misuse of drugs or alcohol, etc..

106 Youth workers should make appropriate revisions to their work plan in accordance with the individual needs and specific circumstances of young people they serve. They could also devise different levels of intervention in responding to youth needs. It ranges from enhancing the self-functioning of young people to arousing public concern over youth issues through community education.

Centre Programme Focus (Review Report, p.31; Implementation Guide, p.11)
The Review Report recommended the planning and implementation of four core programmes, which should take into account of district needs and characteristics, centre capacity and staff experience. Centres also organize non-core programmes for the aim to establish initial contacts with young people and their families. The four core services are:

a. **Guidance and Counselling:**
Children and youth centres, being operated on a neighbourhood basis, are easily accessible to young people to seek for timely assistance from social workers to deal with their difficulties in working through their difficulties and stresses. Services can be provided through various intervention methods, for example, on the spot guidance through chatting over to structured and more intensive individual and group counselling. For the complicated cases, referral can be made to relevant service units for more in-depth counselling.

b. **Supportive Services for Young People in Disadvantaged Circumstances:**
These programmes are run to provide services to young people to complement the caring function of family and to facilitate them to make the optimum use of educational opportunities. Besides, the service should aim at enhancing their self-care ability and the spirit of mutual help. They may also be designed to help those young people with special needs to integrate into the society.

c. **Socialization Programmes:**
These programmes aim at the building up of self-image and sense of self-worth; development of inter-personal communication skills and enhancement of positive family relationships, problem-solving and coping capabilities, and positive values and attitudes.

d. **Development of Social Responsibility and Competence:**
Programmes of this nature are designed to heighten young people's civic-mindedness and to stimulate participation in volunteer service and community
activities. They also aim to nourish community identity, sense of achievement and social commitment, through which young people are helped to develop a healthy identity, awareness of life's difficulties and positive ways to overcome problems. Furthermore, these programmes provide opportunities for young people to acquire knowledge of community and social problems, develop interpersonal communication and problem-solving skills, and cultivate their sensitivity and creativity, etc..

**Non-Core Programmes**

108 Non-core programmes such as drop-in service, interest groups, study/readying room service and summer youth recreational programmes, etc. will continue to be run by children and youth centres. These activities supplement the functions and facilitate the implementation of the core programmes through attracting and bringing young people and their families to the centre. They also serve the purposes to offer opportunities for young people to spend their leisure time constructively, particularly during long school holidays; to promote and publicize centre services and to establish networks with local organizations in joint functions; and to develop local identity and spirit. Non-core programmes contribute towards the social and developmental needs of children and youth.

**Principles of Staff Deployment**

109 Some of the principles of staff deployment are suggested as follows:

a. flexible deployment of manpower should be exercised in accordance with the needs of young people and the district.

b. in time allocation, priority should be accorded to the direct service to the target group.

c. division of responsibilities should be preceded with analysis of task, for example, the knowledge and skill required, its complexity, etc., so that appropriate staff could be assigned for the task and the manpower could be properly utilized.
Local Children and Youth Service Committees (Review Report, p.42; Implementation Guide, p.15)

110 To enhance collaboration and cooperation among children and youth centres, Local Committees under the existing District Coordinating Committees on Group and Community Services will be set up to assess the needs of young people in the community, to give suggestions based on work experience and professional knowledge, and to develop work focus with reference to the identified needs and the coordinated programme strategies.

Development of Community Collaboration and Linkage (Implementation Guide, p.16)

111 The service unit can strengthen community linkage and collaboration with other welfare sectors and professions. It can help to identify any possible community resources to render the most appropriate and effective services to its target groups.

112 The above outline is a summary of the major concepts and recommendations of the Review Report and the Implementation Guide. In the following discussion, we will make constant reference to these ideas to see whether the suggestions have been carried out, or effectively carried out, by the Centres. We hope that this summary would assist readers to follow our discussion.

113 Lastly, it must be stressed that the observations in this report are based only on the self-reported materials from Centre supervisors and social workers collected in our first evaluation visits to the Centres during August-October 1995. Subsequently, individual Centres were consulted, whenever appropriate, by the research team, to collect further information or verify existing data. Readers are reminded that the evaluation lasts for two years and that the final report will include more detailed information, including opinions of individual Centre workers and service recipients.
2. The Sample

201 Altogether a sample of 22 Centres\(^1\) was drawn by simple random sampling from the population of 223 centres subvented by the SWD in early 1995. The sample included Children and Youth Centres (CYCs), Children Centres (CCs), Youth Centres (YCs) and Study and Reading Rooms (S/R Rooms) across the territory. They had to meet the following criteria set by the research team before they were finally selected. The criteria were:

a. The Centres had to have been in operation since 1 January 1995.

b. As far as the SWD and the NGOs concerned understood, there had to be no plans to close the Centres for major renovation or other purposes before 31 December 1996, nor to change the Centres into Integrated Teams during the research period.

c. The Centres had to have been subvented in accordance with the normal service standard for staff establishment.

d. The Centres had to be willing to participate in the service evaluation.

202 The sampling process lasted for four months, from March to July 1995. It was a drawn out process because quite a number of CYCs could not meet the above criteria, and samples had to be re-drawn. The final list of Centres consisted of 10 CYCs cum S/R Rooms, 7 CYCs, 2 CCs cum S/R Rooms, 2 YCs and 1 CC, as in Table 1. Their opening sessions ranged from 11 to 17 sessions per week, with the mean of 13 sessions.

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i. The term “Centres” used in this report refers to the 22 sampled Centres, while we use “centres” or “CYCs” in the general sense.

Table 1: Centres and Opening Sessions
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Centre</th>
<th>Nature of Centre</th>
<th>Opening Sessions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 The Salvation Army Lok Wah Children and Youth Centre (II)</td>
<td>(II)</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 The Salvation Army Chuk Yuen Children and Youth Centre (I)</td>
<td>(I)</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 B.G.C.A. Tai Woo Children and Youth Centre (I)</td>
<td>(I)</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 B.G.C.A. Mei Lam Children Centre (IV)</td>
<td>(IV)</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 B.G.C.A. Sheung Wan Children and Youth Centre (I)</td>
<td>(I)</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Caritas Children and Youth Centre - Central District (II)</td>
<td>(II)</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Caritas Children and Youth Centre - Lei Muk Shu (I)</td>
<td>(I)</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Chinese Y.M.C.A. of Hong Kong Sau Mau Ping Centre (II)</td>
<td>(II)</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Y.W.C.A. Western District Social Service Centre (II)</td>
<td>(II)</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Y.W.C.A. Shatin Social Service Centre (II)</td>
<td>(II)</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 FMS Tai Wo Christian Children and Youth Service Centre (I)</td>
<td>(I)</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 The H.K. Federation of Youth Groups Wong Chuk Hang Youth Centre (III)</td>
<td>(III)</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 The H.K. Federation of Youth Groups Shun Lee Youth Centre (III)</td>
<td>(III)</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 The H.K. Federation of Youth Groups Tin Shui Children and Youth Centre cum Study/Reading Room (I)</td>
<td>(I)</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Baptist Oi Kwan Social Service Rotary Club of HKNW Children and Youth Centre (II)</td>
<td>(II)</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 NAAC Bishop Baker Children Centre (V)</td>
<td>(V)</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 The Chinese Rhenish Church HK Synod Choi Wan Children’s Centre and Study Room (IV)</td>
<td>(IV)</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 Methodist Centre Group and Community Service (I)</td>
<td>(I)</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 Aberdeen Kaifong Welfare Association Social Service Centre (I)</td>
<td>(I)</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 The Church of United Brethren in Christ Whampoa Children and Youth Centre (I)</td>
<td>(I)</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 Free Methodist Church Leung Tin Children and Youth Centre (I)</td>
<td>(I)</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 S.K.H. Tuen Mun Social Service Centre (II)</td>
<td>(II)</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Remark: (I) Children and Youth Centre cum S/ R Room  
(II) Children and Youth Centre  
(III) Youth Centre  
(IV) Children Centre cum S/ R Room  
(V) Children Centre
3. Community Needs

301 The Centres were quite concerned about changing youth needs in the community, and they had adopted a number of means to collect information on community needs. The majority of them (19 Centres) received feedback from service recipients concerning their expectations and views on the nature and outcome of Centre programmes. Most of these data were collected through informal or verbal means during social workers’ daily contacts with members and their parents, or through evaluation conducted after programmes. Some Centres had designed programme evaluation forms to record participants’ opinions.

302 Another channel which the majority of Centres used to assess community needs was the Local Committees (18 Centres). Most Centres found that mutual sharing among NGOs and the use of information given by some government departments on the Committees was quite effective in helping them to assess the needs of young people in the district.

Table 2: Methods used in the Assessment of Community Needs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feedback from service recipients</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Committee</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey/Study</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social worker’s observation</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact with local bodies/ residents</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local demographic data</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mass media</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government/local report &amp; statistics</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
303 Around half of the Centres collected information relating to community needs through their contacts with local schools (11 Centres) or conducted small-scale surveys and community studies (12 Centres) to tape the opinions of specific target groups. Social workers' direct observation in the neighbourhood (10 centres) and contact with local residents and organisations (8 Centres) were also popular means used by many Centres.

304 During the assessment of community needs, some Centres also collected information on local demographic data (6 Centres), and paid special attention to government reports and statistics (4 Centres), so that they could understand the unique community characteristics. Some respondents (5 Centres) felt that the news reports and articles in the mass media concerning the values, attitudes and behaviour of young people were very useful materials for them to understand changing youth needs in the larger society. Contact with other youth organisations was another method used by some Centres to share and exchange information on community needs.

305 Through various means of information collection, the following needs of young people and their parents were identified:

306 **Children**

A. Developmental needs
   a. moral education
   b. self-caring ability
   c. social consciousness
   d. civil education
   e. development of potentialities
   f. social/ interpersonal skills
   g. development of sense of responsibility
   h. study skills
   i. positive self-image/ self-understanding
   j. recreational needs
k. volunteer spirit
l. emotional control
m. problem solving skills
n. understanding of Chinese culture
o. sex education
p. proper use of leisure

B. Personal problems
   a. lack of motivation to study
   b. lack of after-school care
   c. lack of self-discipline
   d. family problems
   e. behavioural problems
   f. depression/ poor psychological health
   g. egocentric personality

307 Parents

a. knowledge of parental care of children
b. parent-child relationships

308 Adolescents and Young people

A. Developmental needs
   a. vocational and career planning/ job seeking
   b. love / relationships with opposite sex
   c. life goals
   d. self-esteem enhancement
   e. leadership development
   f. volunteer spirit
   g. interpersonal relationships/ social skills

   h. self-understanding and positive self-image
i. civil education
j. environmental concern

B. Personal problems
a. student at risk of dropping out of school
b. school dropout
c. school adjustment problems
d. study problems
e. low self-esteem of students in band 4 and 5 schools
f. under-achievement in school
g. suicide prevention
h. emotional/psychological problems
i. resistance to school authority
j. job pressure

309 Disadvantaged Groups

A. Children from Single Parent and Pseudo-Single Parent Families
B. Children from Working Parents Families (i.e. families where both parents work)
C. Children from Low Income and CSSA Families (i.e. families receiving CSSA)
D. Street Children and Marginal Youths
E. New Immigrant Children
   a. study problem
   b. interpersonal relationships
   c. self-esteem enhancement
   d. lack of after-school care
   e. inadequate concern from family
   f. life adjustment
   g. parental knowledge of child care
   h. behavioural and emotional problems
   i. prevention of deviance

310 The research team was impressed that the Centres were motivated to assess the needs of young people and their families before their planning of programmes to meet
those needs. In particular, the formation of Local Committees became a driving force. They pushed the Centres to find time to reflect on community needs, rather than to focus on programme organisation and development.
4. Target Groups Served

401 As regards membership, the majority of the sampled CYCs and Centres with a S/R Room serve young people from 6-30 years old. For single-service centres, the two CCs serve children from 6-14 years old, while the two YCs accept young people aged 15-35 as their members. However, many of the Centres have extended their services to children and young people outside this age range. In particular, most Centres (14 Centres) regarded their members' parents as a major target group (see Table 3), and a large variety of parenting and family programmes were organised to meet their needs.

402 For Centres situated in public housing estates, young people aged 6-20 were still their major target groups. The Centres opined that most working youths would remain in districts near their work places after work, and thus it was less likely for them to attend long term programmes in the evening. On the contrary, three Centres, which are not situated in or near public housing estates, considered working youths as their major targets. One Centre, situated in a private housing estate, had specifically pointed out a large group of highly educated women as its principal clientele, who had contributed a tremendous amount of time and effort to promote volunteer services. The above examples show that many Centres had taken into account community characteristics in their programme planning.

403 Disadvantaged groups were also the major targets of most Centres. A large number of Centres targeted children who did not receive proper parental care at home, such as children from single parent families (15 Centres), children of working parents families (3 centres), or children of pseudo-single parent families (2 Centres). In the last group, one of the parents, usually the father, worked overseas or in mainland China, and thus left the children at home with one parent most of the time. The Centres usually attempted to provide services to the children's parents as well, though it was more difficult to reach them.

Table 3: Major Target Groups other than Ordinary Young People
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disadvantaged Groups</th>
<th>No. of Centres</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single parent families</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSSA families</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marginal youths/ Street children</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Immigrants</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working parents families</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudo-single parent families</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disabled young people</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autistic children</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other Groups</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working Youths</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

404 CSSA or low-income families were the second disadvantaged client group served by most Centres (12 Centres). Many Centres also provided services to street children, deviant or marginal youths (9 Centres) as well as new immigrants (6 Centres). A few Centres also provided services to disabled young people and autistic children.

405 The above data show that with the publication of the Review Report, a large number of Centres have shifted their attention from ordinary young people to other special target groups, especially the special needs and minority groups in the community. This reflects that the Centres have been responsive to community needs. This trend is encouraging and should continue.
5. District Coordination

501 With the formation of the Local Committees (LCs) in the territory, the SWD has taken on a more active role in coordinating the services provided by NGOs in various districts. At present, there is a two-tier coordination system: the G/C Services Coordinating Committee on the higher level and the Local Committee on the lower level.

502 In general, the Centres overwhelmingly agreed (19 Centres) that the LCs which they joined were successful in achieving the objective of assessing and understanding community needs. And many of them (14 Centres) had benefited from the sharing of information in the LCs. Although most of the Centres (16 Centres) did not comment too much on the giving of information in LCs, a small number of Centres (2 Centres) criticized that some of the information they wanted was not readily available, or it took a rather long time to obtain.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Effective</th>
<th>Neutral/No opinion</th>
<th>Ineffective</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Assessment of district needs by LC</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Service coordination by LC</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Information giving in LC</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Information sharing in LC</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Good working relationships among NGOs</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. LC overlap with G/C Committee</td>
<td>6(yes)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4(no)</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

503 Most importantly, more than half of the Centres (13 Centres) did not think the LCs had done a successful job in the coordination of services in the district. Six
504 Despite the unsatisfactory outcome of district coordination through a formal channel, about half of the NGOs (10 Centres) had maintained a good working relationship with other organisations in the community through various kinds of informal linkage. They agreed that their informal sharing outside the LC structure had facilitated the coordination of services between them.

505 While competition existed in some districts, only one Centre expressed serious disappointment over the conflict with another youth work unit in the neighbourhood because of an overlapping service boundary. Despite extraordinary efforts spent in coordination, the outcome was not satisfactory. The SWD had assisted in trying to resolve the conflict, but it was of little avail.

506 Inhibiting factors in district coordination, as expressed by the Centres, are summarized below. It must be noted that the opinions of the SWD are not included in this report, but they will be incorporated in the final report.

a. Some LCs had no strong leadership.

b. The LC had no authority or power to enforce decisions made in meetings, or to direct the NGOs to pursue a matter in a specific way.

c. There was a dilemma: NGOs would feel they are losing their autonomy if the LC or the SWD intervened too much in their operations.

d. A frequent turnover of Centre-in-charge of some NGOs restrained their active participation in the work of LCs.

e. Some Centre-in-charges of the NGOs did not prepare their programme plans before attending the LC meetings, and thus hampered mutual sharing and programme coordination.
f. Insufficient LC meetings (e.g. only one or two a year) limited the opportunities for mutual sharing and service coordination among NGOs.

g. Different centres had unique staff situations, programme emphases, service areas and agency policies. It was very difficult for them to reach a mutually agreed programme plan, especially on the setting of service boundaries and priorities.

h. Some NGOs were over concerned with their own programmes and "statistics" and lacked full commitment to the joint efforts of organisations in the community.

i. Many Centres opined that the LC would function more effectively if FLEOs, SSWs, SGOs, SGTs, school personnel, police officers and related professionals could be invited to attend the meetings on a regular basis.

507 Despite the respondents' general disappointment with the effectiveness of service coordination by the LCs, the LCs of Kwun Tong and Shatin were regarded by the Centres in the two districts as quite successful and effective.

508 In Kwun Tong, in addition to the G/C Services Coordinating Committee and the LC, there is a third tier, namely Liaison Committees, which coordinate the services of NGOs in small areas. In total, there were seven Liaison Committees, comprising the YO and social workers from CYCs, ORs and NLCDPs. The members assessed community needs, shared programme information, organised joint projects, and if necessary, reached a consensus on the selection of target groups to avoid the duplication of services. This structure has been in existence in Kwun Tong for many years, and the Centres were very happy with the outcome of service coordination. Moreover, the informal linkage among NGOs was very strong too.

509 In Shatin, both the SWD and NGOs were very active in the work of the LC. After the assessment of community needs by G/C units in six sub-districts of Shatin,
they concluded that the community needs were quite similar in the six areas. Five working groups, composed of member organisations, were formed to design programme strategies to tackle the following five areas of concern: (a) parenting education, especially for working parents and single-parent families, (b) adjustment to the school system, (c) youth developmental needs, (d) the promotion of social consciousness, and (e) deviance of young people, e.g. gangs and drug abuse. The Centres asserted that through participation in the working groups, they acquired mutual stimulation and support, as well as respect from their counterparts. They were also given full autonomy on whether to adopt the programme packages designed by the working groups.

To conclude, our findings suggest that the LCs were effective in involving the Centres in the assessment of community needs. Nonetheless, the work of the LCs has to be improved, especially in the area of service coordination. If necessary, the successful experiences of Kwun Tong and Shatin can be shared by the LCs of other districts. In the meantime, Youth Officers of the SWD should take up a more active role to help coordinate CYCs in small neighbourhood. Lastly, it must be stressed that apart from the effective leadership of the SWD, the active participation of NGOs is a crucial factor in the success of the LCs.
6. Resource Utilization

601 Many Centres had encountered difficulties in resource utilization (see Table 5). Manpower resources were the major problem faced by more than two-thirds (15 Centres) of the Centres. Eight of them said that their services were seriously affected by frequent staff turnover and their inability to fill a vacant post within a reasonably short period of time. Further studies and poor promotion prospects (i.e. no SSWA post in CYCs) were the two main reasons for staff turnover. The other Centres contended that the small number of social workers and insufficient staff training could not cope with the increasing demand for professional services.

Table 5: Difficulties Encountered in Resource Utilization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Difficulties</th>
<th>No. of Centres</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manpower</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insufficient Rooms (Peak Time)</td>
<td>9*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Resources</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equipment</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centre Premises</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centre Location</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insufficient Rooms (Non Peak Time)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Facilities</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Remark : * The 9 centres include those 4 centres which had the same problem in non peak time.

602 Frequent staff turnover was no doubt the most significant inhibiting factor in the service development of the Centres. In a Centre with a serious problem of staff turnover, the management admitted that not only could the new core services outlined in the Review Report not be smoothly implemented, but even the quality and quantity of services previously rendered to the community were not sustainable. For instance, youth members of a social group had to face four different social workers in one year.
Insufficient club room was the second major problem undermining the smooth operation of the Centres. There was a shortage of rooms in nine Centres during peak times, such as Saturday afternoons and summer vacations. Four Centres even complained of a shortage of rooms during non-peak times. A minority of Centres felt that the lack of a properly equipped counselling room obstructed the development of counselling services.

Nearly all the Centres revealed insufficient OC subvented by the SWD, and they had to make tremendous efforts exploring and applying for extra funding from the community and commercial enterprises. However, when all these financial resources were taken into account, only eight of them admitted that they still faced difficulties in soliciting funding.

Eight Centres felt that their old and old-fashioned recreational, audio-visual and computing equipment was not attractive enough to retain young people in the Centres. Similarly, some Centres claimed that their poor physical condition (5 Centres) or location (5 Centres) had discouraged many young people from using their services. In particular, two Centres which were housed in estate community centres pointed to many difficulties relating to room usage and centre management.

Only two Centres encountered difficulties in using community facilities, e.g. no community hall in the neighbourhood, no priority for the use of Urban Council facilities, etc., indicating that it was not a common problem faced by the Centres.

Obviously, many Centres were hard hit by a manpower problem. The provision of effective social work services usually requires a stable team of skilful and experienced staff members. Unfortunately, this was not the case of many Centres. Unless some remedial actions could be done to alleviate this adverse situation, the professionalization of CYCs would be hampered.
7. Programmes and Service Delivery

701 The Working Party on Review of Children and Youth Centre Services recommended four core programmes to be organised in CYCs. They are (a) guidance and counselling, (b) supportive services for young people in disadvantaged circumstances, (c) socialization programmes, and (d) development of social responsibility and competence.

Guidance and Counselling

702 Upon the publication of the Review Report, the majority of Centres paid more attention to guidance and counselling services than in the past. In fact, some Centres had already offered these services for many years but they were not properly recognised nor reported in monthly statistics to the SWD. The Centres were glad that guidance and counselling have become one of the major service areas under the new policy. It reflects that their past efforts have been recognised by the government. Many Centres were also happy to see that the positive change in programme policy would enhance the professional image and helping role of the Centres.

703 Many Centres also opined that the new programme policy had reminded their staff to re-focus their service on guidance and counselling, in addition to the developmental programmes previously emphasized by youth workers. Some asserted that to provide these services in CYCs would have the advantage of minimizing the labelling effect of OR and SSW because the centres also organised a large variety of recreational and socialization programmes alongside remedial services. Moreover, centre workers and their members have already established various kinds of working relationships, which will result in an efficient service with a higher quality.

704 As far as the sampled Centres are concerned, the following clients were their major target groups in guidance and counselling:

a. Centre members, including ordinary members, group members and programme
participants
b. Non-Centre members, including young people and parents.
c. Members of single parent, pseudo-single parent and working parents families
d. Members of CSSA and low-income families
e. Street children, marginal youths and members of juvenile gangs

705 The following major problems were dealt with by the counselling services provided by the Centres:

Young People

a. school dropout
b. emotional problems
c. communication skill
d. study problems
e. vocational problems
f. behavioural problems
g. problems related to work
h. problems related to sex
i. peer relationships
j. interpersonal relationships

Parents and Families

a. parenting and child care
b. communication problems with children
c. couple relationships
d. family problems

706 The working approaches used by the Centres were quite generic. Two-thirds of them (17 Centres) adopted at least three kinds of principal methods listed in Table 6. The majority of them used both casework (19 Centres) and groupwork (19 Centres) as methods. Short-term programmes were also a popular means used by many
Centres (17 Centres). Some Centres (5 Centres) also provided guidance and
counselling services through long-term special projects, such as a telephone hotline
service.

Table 6: Principal Methods Used in Counselling Services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Centres</th>
<th>Casework</th>
<th>Groupwork</th>
<th>Programme</th>
<th>Project/Hotline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C1</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C2</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C3</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C4</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C5</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C6</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C7</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C8</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C9</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C10</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C11</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C12</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C13</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C14</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C15</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C16</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C17</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C18</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C19</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C20</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C21</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C22</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Remark: ¹The order of Centres in this Table does not correspond to that in Table 1.
²Groups, programmes and projects, as reported by the Centres, might not be
mutually exclusive.

707 Despite counselling services becoming a core service area in youth work, it
must be noted that many Centre workers, especially the new-comers, were not
confident with respect to counselling skills and knowledge. This is another area of concern, as it might hamper the effective delivery of services.

While all the Centres provided guidance and counselling to their clients, the criteria used to differentiate these two services were very different, and sometimes even contradictory. The following is a list of these criteria. Most Centres used more than one of them to distinguish between guidance and counselling.

a. **Problem**: All the Centres agreed that the problems handled in counselling should be complex or serious, which deserved in-depth interviews and follow-up.

b. **Number of interviews**: Some Centres used the number of interviews with clients as one of the criteria. But they differed from using one, two or three times as the cut off line between guidance and counselling. However, some Centres did not accept this concept and stressed that the number of interviews was not crucial. Whether one regards an interview as counselling should depend on the nature of the problem and the counselling elements provided during the interview, even though it may be the first interview with a client.

c. **Time period**: Most Centres expected that a relatively long period of follow up was required in counselling, but they did not specify how long the time period should be. One Centre contended that a longer time period should not be used as a criterion, for if the interviews contained counselling elements, even a half-hour interview should be treated as counselling.

d. **Staff qualification**: The majority of Centres required counselling to be conducted by trained workers, and welfare workers (WW) could only engage in guidance. But a few Centres also allowed WWSs to provide counselling to members with whom a good working relationship had already been established, albeit under the close supervision of a trained social worker.

e. **Files and record**: The majority of Centres agreed to keep proper, detailed records of clients who received counselling services, but this did not apply to guidance. However, the research team identified cases in which counselling services
were not treated as such in statistics, simply because the staff concerned had no time
to compile detailed records of clients.

f. Counselling process: A few Centres asserted that for proper counselling, there
should be a process of intake, assessment, problem identification, treatment plan and
intervention. A contract with clients should also be required.

709 In view of the discrepancies existing among the Centres, the issue has to be
resolved through a central body with representatives from the NGOs. Otherwise, the
statistics submitted to the SWD will largely reflect the different interpretations and
definitions used by CYCs, and not their actual performance in this core service area.

Supportive Services to Young People in Disadvantaged Circumstances

710 Similarly, the Review Report reminded the Centres of the significance of
supportive services to young people in disadvantaged circumstances, such as single
parent families, new immigrants and marginal youths, etc.. Nonetheless, unlike
guidance and counselling which had already been rendered by many front-line
practitioners in the past few years, the concept of supportive services was relatively
new to them, and some of them had not previously engaged in any kinds of these
activities. Not surprisingly, they came under psychological pressure when the
policy changed. As one social worker stated, "in the past when there was no
prescribed policy on this aspect, it was a bonus if we organised supportive services,
and there was no pressure at all. But now we feel the pressure."

711 Disregarding the emotional and psychological state of individual front-line
workers, most of the sampled Centres had made adjustments to their programmes and
manpower structure so that resources could be directed into the development of
supportive services. As shown in Table 3 above, a large number of Centres targeted
single parent families (15 Centres), CSSA families (12 Centres), marginal youths or
street children (9 Centres), new immigrants (6 Centres), working parents families (3
Centres), pseudo-single parent families (2 Centres) and other special needs groups.
Table 7: Major Methods Used in Supportive Services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Methods</th>
<th>Single parent family/ Pseudo-single parent families</th>
<th>Working parents families</th>
<th>CSSA families</th>
<th>New Immigrants</th>
<th>Marginal youths/ Street children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guidance and counselling</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programme fee subsidy/ fee exemption</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recreational programme</td>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training programme</td>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjustment programme</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homework consultation</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutorial class</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>After school care project</td>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Volunteer work</td>
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<td>Volunteer project (long term)</td>
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<td>Socialization group</td>
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<td>✓</td>
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<td>Parent gathering</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parent training programme</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent group</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outreach service</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community advocacy</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Remark: Some of the target groups could be overlapped.

712 The Centres provided a variety of services and programmes to these deprived groups. As shown in Table 7, the major ones included guidance and counselling, recreational, training and adjustment programmes, moral education, homework consultation, tutorial classes and after school care projects for children, volunteer services, parents’ work and different kinds of group activities. The nature of programmes was quite comprehensive.

713 The development of a new service area was not at all easy. In particular as all the CYCs rushed off in the same direction and approached the same groups of
clients (except marginal youths). Many Centres faced difficulties in recruiting and motivating members of disadvantaged groups to participate in their programmes. Information on CSSA and single-parent families is not readily available to the public. The Centres had to obtain information on these potential service recipients mainly with the assistance of the SWD. The efforts made by the SWD were often regarded as fruitful, but in some cases the cooperation was not that smooth. For example, delays in providing the information occurred.

714 In communities where the number of potential clients from disadvantaged groups is limited, the Centres faced competition from other CYCs. As some Centres opined, there was a tendency for services provided to the same client groups to overlap, e.g. to single parents and CSSA families, particularly in districts where service coordination was not that effective. As discussed earlier, ineffective coordination of services occurred in many districts.

715 As most Centres offered fee exemption or reduction to the CSSA or single-parent families, a few respondents admitted that some of them became professional clients who shopped around centres and chose the fee-exempt or fee-reduced recreational programmes, but not the educational ones. A couple of Centres have developed preventive measures to stop their services being abused, such as limiting the number of fee-exempt or fee-reduced programmes which a deprived client can attend.

Socialization programmes

716 On the whole, the Centres were very experienced and capable of organising socialization programmes for children and young people. They did not express any difficulties in this area. The following are highlights of the socialization programmes run by the Centres:

a. school adjustment programme
b. programme to enhance motivation to study, tutorial service and study group
c. self-discipline and self-care training
d. interpersonal relationship training  
e. moral education and moral development award scheme  
f. self-confidence training, self-esteem enhancement and self-understanding programme  
g. personal value development  
h. creativity training, training in expressive skills and critical thinking  
i. programme on understanding the community  
j. environmental protection  
k. programme on love and sex, and relationships with opposite sex  
l. fan club and friendship group  
m. peer support and peer counselling programme  
n. football group, DEA group, rambling club and military training  
o. programme on enhancing family relationships  
p. communication skills training  
q. leadership training  
r. vocation and job-seeking programme  
s. Chinese oral training  
t. social norms group  
u. idolatry programme  
v. stress management group  
w. “say no” training group  
x. mothers’ group, women’s group, parental training and parents’ club

Development of Social Responsibility and Competence

717 As with the socialization programmes, the Centres were very competent and experienced in this service area. Most of the programmes were organised in areas of volunteer training and service, and on understanding Hong Kong society. The following are highlights of these programmes:

a. volunteer and social service groups  
b. volunteer work  
c. outstanding volunteer election
d. award scheme for social service projects  
e. toy libraries  
f. programme to develop concern for other people  
g. scout training for children  
h. programme for understanding Hong Kong / current issues  
i. programme to understand politics and elections  
j. civil education  
k. community advocacy programme  

Development of Core Services  

718 After the first round of evaluation visits, we are of the opinion that all the Centres performed quite well in "socialization programmes" and "programmes for the development of social responsibility and competence". The Centre workers were experienced, confident and competent in organising these kinds of programmes.  

719 For guidance and counselling, the large majority of Centres were able to commit resources and develop programme plans in this service area. In fact, many Centres had already been providing such services before the publication of the Review Report. Thus, in general, they welcomed this new programme policy. Where resources were available, most of the trained Centre workers were willing to offer counselling services to their members, parents and other in need of it. Nonetheless, some of them felt unsure of their counselling skills and requested more in-service training.  

720 Compared with the other three core services, the development of supportive services for disadvantaged groups has lagged behind. As far as this discussion is concerned, we laid much stress on systematic and planned service provisions with a relatively long-term staff commitment from the Centres. We would not treat any haphazard provision of service as satisfactory. For instance, where a group of marginal youths happened to hang around in a centre, the staff were forced to work with them unwillingly, and the boys were engaged in casual activities without clear
service objectives or direction. We would not treat this kind of intervention as satisfactory, even though the service was provided and recorded in statistics.

721 As regards the development of supportive services, our data suggest that about two-thirds of the Centres (15 Centres) had long-term planning, orientation, strategy and staff commitment to a specific service area, addressing particular community needs. Five Centres were in the process of “catching-up”, whereas two Centres seemed to have no concrete service plan and direction. Of these seven Centres, five of them had faced very frustrating staffing problems.

722 To reiterate, supportive services were a relatively new service area for many Centres. The research team holds the belief that it is quite reasonable for them to take more time to synthesize programme policy, assess community needs, motivate and train staff members, formulate programme plans, test market responses and avoid competition with other CYCs. The research team will follow up such development in the second year to see whether there is any improvement in this service area, particularly by that time the Centres would have acquired more working experiences.

Reaching Out to Schools

723 As mentioned above, many Centres were poorly equipped and in bad repair, or housed in inconvenient locations. In the face of keen competition from commercial enterprises and other organisations which provided modern facilities and trendy entertainment for young people, the majority of Centres had to re-adjust their programme strategies. Reaching out to the community to bring services to the young people in their own places has become an important working approach of most Centres. However, it must be stressed that the Centres, in general, put much more emphasis on reaching out to schools than on reaching out to street corners.

724 All the Centres had reached out or attempted to reach out to primary and secondary schools in the neighbourhood. Social groups, workshops, seminars, exhibitions, shows, camps and training activities were popular approaches. Nonetheless, no Centres had offered casework services to students in schools.
The Centres organised a large variety of programmes, such as the following, to address the needs of school students in the school context:

a. self-awareness, understanding and growth
b. self-image, respect and confidence
c. study skills and interests
d. adjustment for F.1 students
e. emotional problems
f. stress management
g. dating, courtship and love
h. sex education and guidance
i. prevention of sexual abuse
j. interpersonal relationships
k. leadership training
l. military training
m. training for class monitors
n. peer counselling
o. "Big brothers" and "Big sisters" schemes
p. anti-drug abuse
q. fighting crime
r. vocational guidance
s. life dynamics and transition
t. volunteer services
u. civic education
v. parent programmes
w. training for teachers on handling students' misconduct

Many of these programmes were in close collaboration with school social workers and guidance teachers, and the Centres were satisfied with the communication and cooperation. Those Centres with a good working relationship with school personnel were even allowed to organise programmes in class.
727 For the lucky Centres which had school social workers of their own organisations in the neighbourhood, cooperation between the two parties was smooth. Not so for the unlucky ones. However, there were no reports of serious conflict between Centre workers and school social workers from other NGOs.

728 Some Centres disclosed that in dealing with situations of insufficient manpower, social workers from other centres of the same agency had to be deployed to assist in long-term or large-scale school programmes. In return, their staff were also required to help their colleagues in other districts if necessary. Faced with high staff turnover, the pooling and flexible deployment of manpower resource on this occasion was certainly a relief.

729 Although there were still reports of negative responses to Centre services, an increasing number of schools were willing to enter into long-term collaboration agreements with the Centres. As such, the latter could tailor-make annual programme plans to meet students’ needs in accordance with the specific requirements of each school. In this regard, the services provided were far more person-centred than the piece-meal and ad hoc programmes. The use of questionnaires by some Centres to solicit feedback from school personnel was also a useful channel to strengthen the cooperation of the two parties and the quality of services.

730 The positive reaction of schools shows that reaching out to schools was a feasible alternative for the Centres in view of the keen competition from non-social work organisations. It should also be regarded as one of the objective criteria to measure the Centres’ effectiveness of service refocusing.

731 Our observations indicate that more than half of the Centres had done an impressive job in providing services to students in the school context. A few Centres had even provided an outstanding social work service to schools in the neighbourhood. Particular attention should be given to two Centres (one CYC and one single service centre of two different NGOs) which faced such unfavourable factors as an aged population in this neighbourhood, poor physical setting, location
and equipment, and insufficient manpower. With vision and commitment, flexible deployment of staff members and constructive relationships with schools, the two Centres survived these adverse conditions and delivered excellent centre services to young people in schools. The example shows that with flexibility, determination and the right leadership, unfavourable physical and staffing conditions are only small hurdles to social workers in the course of carrying out their professional duties.

**Working with Marginal Youths**

732 As shown in Table 3, there were nine Centres which regarded street children and deviant young people as their major target groups. To be specific, only six of them had provided counselling and supportive services to marginal youths or juvenile gang members who hung around in their Centres or adjacent areas. For the purpose of discussion in this section, marginal youths refer to those young people to whom an outreach social work team would normally provide services.

733 Among these six Centres, four of them had developed systematic intervention strategies and annual work plans to implement this service. Two centres even took the initiative to work with marginal youths on street corners and in playgrounds. In view of the tremendous demands on staff manpower, one Centre applied outside funding to employ extra staff to assist in the development of the project. The Centres asserted that as the needs were overt in the community, they had to respond to them with a long term programme strategy, and a proactive approach was more appropriate than a reactive one.

734 By comparison, the other two Centres, though also working with marginal youths, were more reactive and lacked long term commitment and systematic planning. Coupled with the problems of staff turnover and insufficient staff training, they faced tremendous pressure from their work with marginal youths. But they had no choice as the youths liked to hang around in their Centres.
Thus there were two kinds of response from the Centres. One was to react with systematic, long-term planning in dealing with this specific target group. The other response was to act haphazardly with little commitment. In both approaches, the outreach social work team in the district was consulted. The result shows that the closer the cooperation between the OR and Centre, the better the service outcome.

For most of the Centres which did not provide services to marginal youths, there was no plan nor commitment to develop this service. The following are the reasons, or excuses, they offered:

a. There was no such need in the community.
b. There was an outreach social work team in the district.
c. The Centres had other service priorities.
d. Their workers were overloaded.

Although most Centres began to be aware of the significance of counselling and supportive services, working with marginal youths was not their priority, and thus resources were not committed to the development of services to this target group. Nonetheless, none of the sampled Centres had refused to provide services to marginal youths if they happened to hang around in their Centres.

In fact, working with marginal youths in a centre is not an easy task at all. Many Centres have experienced the following difficulties. Firstly, as the marginal youths shared centre facilities with other target groups, sometimes they would disturb young children and other members. Complaints had been received from parents, and some of them even discouraged their children from going to the Centres. This resulted in a decrease in membership.

Secondly, on the management side, there was a much higher demand on manpower as staff members had to check rooms frequently and keep the youths in order. Special facilities and equipment had to be used to cater for their needs. Sometimes conflict between centre members and marginal youths arose when the former felt that the benefits they had previously enjoyed (e.g. workers' attention and
recreational equipment) were transferred to the marginal youths as a result of their misbehaviour.

740 Thirdly, the discrepancy in attitudes towards marginal youths between programme staff and clerical staff/caretaker was also a source of conflict between the youths and non-programme staff. Sometimes even disagreement on how to handle the misbehaviour of marginal youths existed among programme staff. Sometimes, poor coordination between staff members of different grades and sub-teams resulted in operational problems.

741 Despite the difficulties, the Centres which provided this service opined that in fact, the marginal youths would continue to hang around in the Centres or adjacent areas even if they were not served by social workers. As they were very "marginal", if nobody offered them a helping hand, their problems might deteriorate further, leading to more disturbance in the Centres. The Centres believed that parents would change their attitudes if they could witness the positive changes in this group of young people.

742 To conclude, when compared with the outreach services to students in schools, services to marginal youths were far under-developed. Due to insufficient staff training and the potential conflict between centre members and marginal youths, many Centres were hesitated to adopt a proactive approach to extend services to young people in street corners. However, with supportive services to young people in disadvantaged circumstances becoming one of the core programme areas, the welfare of marginal youths and street kids should not be overlooked by the Centres. On the other hand, the authorities concerned should provide relevant in-service training to equip frontline staff with the sophisticated skills in working with this "particular" client group. Without this support, it is unlikely that the services provided are effective.

Non-Core Programmes
Many Centres still regarded non-core programmes as an important means by which to contact members and potential clients, and to understand their needs. Some Centres contended that these programmes, mainly recreational in nature, help to neutralize the labelling effect derived from the increase in remedial services. They could also satisfy some of the social needs of young people and their families in the neighbourhood. Thus most Centres did not reduce the number of programmes. Rather, more non-social work trained staff were directed to organise these programmes.

However, with the increase in professionalization in CYCs, some workers worried that non-core programmes would lose their significance, although the Review Report did not imply this. It must be stressed that, from the researcher's point of view, the value of non-core programmes should not be undermined at this stage. Many non-core programmes help recruit members, widen the membership base, and develop a young people's network through which social workers can provide guidance and counselling whenever necessary. Programmes based on family activities also serve as a good opportunity for busy Hong Kong parents to participate in meaningful activities with their children. The following example is a real case:

“A working mother took her daughter to a one-hour interest class every Saturday afternoon. Including travelling and preparation, she had to spend about two hours alone with her child. While waiting for her child to finish class, she stayed with other parents in the drop-in area. This was a wonderful time for mutual sharing among the mothers. Sometimes, the father also accompanied his daughter to the centre. Then the couple very much enjoyed the one-hour free time while their daughter was attending class. This was the only time in the week that they could be together alone without their children.”

The above case reflects the positive side effect of non-core programmes on family life, couple relationships and parent-child relationships, which has been overlooked by many practitioners. Of course, from a cost-effective point of view, non-core programmes should be organised by non-social work trained workers as far
as possible. And our data collected in the evaluation visits show that a large majority of the Centres have followed this principle.
8. Inhibiting and Facilitating Factors

Resources and Manpower

801 As discussed earlier, problems related to manpower and resources were common in many centres. The existing staffing standard was regarded by many Centres as incompatible with the professionalization of centre services. The insufficient number of trained social workers hindered the provision of professional services, in particular in single service centres. The problem was further worsened by high staff turnover in many Centres. Some Centres suggested that even an additional CA would be of tremendous help to trained workers who could then be released from spending too much time on tedious and routine administrative work.

802 Similarly, the inadequacy of resources and facilities was also an obstacle to the actualization of the new programme policy. For example, social workers felt awkward providing counselling services if there was no properly equipped counselling room. Although many workers accepted the principle of community-based planning, they became frustrated when soaring youth problems could not be effectively tackled due to limited manpower and resources.

803 Another area of concern is the inadequate training and experience, especially in counselling services, of some social workers, which generated work pressures on them. With the publication of the Review Report and the trend towards the professionalization of CYCs, they also felt under pressure to provide certain kinds of services, e.g. supportive services, in order to satisfy the official requirements, even though sometimes the need was not that urgent in the community. Moreover, the professionalization of CYCs also induced resistance from some support staff and untrained staff, especially in services to marginal youths.
Most centres expressed difficulties in differentiating between the four core services, which are vaguely defined in unclear instructions for filling in statistical forms. Take counselling programmes for marginal youths as an example: whether they should be defined by the nature of the programmes or by the nature of participants, remains in doubt. Classification by the former would result in a counselling service, otherwise it would be a supportive service. In particular, some programmes contain elements of two or three core services. It is difficult to simply treat them as one kind of service. Because of such confusion, more time and effort was demanded of social workers when filling in the required forms.

Due to the unclear instructions, the categorization of services was left to individual workers or Centre-in-charge. When they left their jobs, their successors would use other criteria to fill in the forms. This resulted in inconsistencies in the reporting of statistics.

Moreover, social workers' paper work increased because they have to submit two sets of forms, one to the SWD and one to the HKCSS. Some Centres even have to submit another set of forms to their own agency. As there are some differences between Form E5, as required by the SWD and the CIS Form, as required by the HKCSS, some workers suggested combining them to reduce their tedious administrative workload.

Also, under the new policy, the Centres are required to submit an annual work proposal in October, followed by a concrete annual work plan in March for the following financial year. In their work plans, the Centres have to specify in detail the nature of activities and the number of participants. Explanations have to be given if there are differences between the two work plans. Some Centres queried the early submission of the October work proposal as inappropriate and unnecessary because it obstructed the flexibility of programme planning which is supposed to be under continuous review, allowing for modification to meet rapidly changing youth needs. The present arrangements result in a waste of manpower.
Service Standard

808 As a clear service standard has yet to be worked out, some social workers were ambivalent as to how much work should be completed. Without a clear service standard, e.g. caseload, they opined that time and manpower could not be properly allocated. On the other hand, some workers were impressed that despite the professionalization of CYCs, the SWD continued to measure Centres by the number of members. They feared that part of the subvention had to be withdrawn due to insufficient membership. The situation was regarded as worrying as many Centres had deployed their staff to organise professional activities with a limited number of participants, which might, in the long run, result in a decrease in membership.

809 In addition, many professional services did not require membership. For example, reaching out to schools with tailor-made programmes to meet the students' needs did not necessarily help recruit students as centre members. Similarly, marginal youths might not be willing to register as members even though they hung around in the Centre, and they sometimes even deterred children and parents from becoming members. Thus, in view of the confusion, many Centres hoped that a service standard could be set up as soon as possible to guide their work focus and service direction.

Status of CYCs

810 Many Centre workers conceived (or perhaps misconceived) that the Review Report had over-emphasized remedial services and undermined the traditional developmental services of CYCs. They agreed that in fact, the concept of an holistic approach encourages social workers to assess and intervene in clients' problems from an all-rounded perspective, which should include both remedial and developmental aspects.

811 Some social workers further argued that with the introduction of Integrated Teams, the status of CYCs has been degraded. One criticized that the Review Report
very much stressed the significance of children and youth services, but not children and youth “centre” services. In particular, for those NGOs without OR and SSW, they worried about limited space for their future development, as they have no chance of forming an Integrated Team.

Positive Feedback from the Centres

812 In general, the majority of Centres held positive views of the new programme policy prescribed in the Review Report. They very much appreciated that their past efforts spent on counselling services and services to parents and older youths have at last been recognised.

813 On the operational level, the Review Report was regarded by the Centres as putting children and youth services on the right path. It encouraged the Centres to pay more attention to disadvantaged and special needs groups. As a result, they became more responsive to community needs. In particular, the division between core and non-core programmes always reminded them of the difference in quality between these two kinds of programmes. The Review Report empowered the Centres to allocate more manpower and resources to counselling and supportive services. Professional staff were deployed to organise core services so that they could utilize their professional knowledge more appropriately.

814 Moreover, the categorization of the four core services was appreciated. With a clearer grouping of professional services, it reminded social workers not to over-concentrate on one or two kinds of service, e.g. socialization programmes or programmes for the enhancement of social responsibility, so that the development of services would be more balanced in meeting the needs of the needy. Social workers became more client-centred, rather than programme-oriented, in their delivery of services.

815 The emphasis on evaluation and accountability was also welcomed by many front-line social workers, as this helped them to look into the quality of services.
constantly and seriously. They also paid more attention to the balance between manpower input and service outcome.

Viewing youth services as a whole, most Centres welcomed the professionalization of CYCs, which would help them to reduce the past diversity in programming, to have a clearer service focus, to achieve a common goal in the psychological and social development of young people, and to gain professional vision and orientation in the development of youth services in Hong Kong. As frontline social workers become increasingly alert to the quality of services they provide, the professional image of CYCs will be enhanced in the long run.
9. Conclusion

901 The service refocusing of CYCs has undoubtedly shaken many front-line practitioners, especially those who were suspicious of the underlying motives of the Review Report, those who had a fixation on the developmental perspectives of CYCs, and those who thought the status of CYCs was being degraded.

902 However, many social workers accepted that the policy change was on the right track, even though on the administrative side many areas need to be improved. As one Centre concluded, the Review Report brought about more positive effects than negative consequences. Most Centres welcomed the new programme policy; they felt that professionalization would enhance the image of CYCs and youth work profession.

903 Most Centres began to give up past, programme-oriented services and adopt the person-centred approach. Instead of waiting for young people to come, they began to engage in a proactive approach. Bringing services to students in the school context was a feasible and effective reaching out approach. The positive reaction from schools not only indicates that their strategies were successful, but also suggests that traditional school social work, with its manpower constraints, is unable to meet the developmental needs of a large number of young people.

904 The person-centred perspective was again expressed in their services to disadvantaged groups. It also reflects that many Centres were quite responsive to community needs. Normally, these deprived social groups have very little knowledge of community services. Had the Centres not taken a proactive, person-centred and community-oriented approach, the chance of their receiving social work services would have been very slim. Guided by the Local Committees, the use of various means to assess community needs was quite successful.

905 The Review Report has performed one very important task. The division of core and non-core programmes has successfully directed the Centres to re-deploy trained social workers to engage in activities that required more professional skills,
especially counselling and supportive services to disadvantaged groups. Although non-core programmes were still regarded as important and valuable services to the community, the majority of Centres used untrained programme staff to organise these activities.

906 Most Centres recruited young people aged 6-30 and their parents as members, but they had the flexibility to serve older members whenever necessary. Parents have now become a major target group of most Centres.

907 The Review Report has particularly highlighted the provision of services to young people in need of greater professional assistance. Most Centres are developing services in this direction. It is obvious that a large number of supportive services have been extended to single parent and pseudo-single parent families, working parents families, CSSA and low-income families, and new immigrants. As all the CYCs targeted similar deprived groups in the same community, the possibility of a duplication of services existed, in particular when service coordination in a district was ineffective.

908 Some Centres have worked with marginal youths and street children, but most of them have not. At present, the degree of staff training, experience and readiness in most Centres was still not compatible with the high demands of providing services to marginal youths, in particular when the service has to be provided inside a Centre. But this is an area that can be further developed in the near future, especially when the duplication of services to certain client groups becomes visible.

909 The Centres were very experienced and competent in organising socialization programmes and programmes that enhance the social responsibility and competence of young people. In these two core service areas, no difficulties have been encountered. As regards guidance and counselling, many Centres favoured the introduction of this core service, as their staff had already engaged in this kind of activity for some years. But some front-line workers still lacked
confidence and felt incapable of carrying out casework duties. In-service training in this area is required.

910 There are some other areas of concern. Most centres faced a lot of problems in resource utilization, such as staff turnover, insufficient staff training, insufficient club rooms, and poor physical conditions. Although a small number of Centres, with the right leadership and strong commitment, could overcome some of these barriers by using the reaching out approach, the problems still exist and have hampered the effective delivery of services in many Centres.

911 The Local Committees were regarded as quite effective in the mutual sharing of information among NGOs and in the assessment of community needs. However, improvement should be made in the coordination of services in the districts. Inhibiting factors came from both the SWD and NGOs. However, successful models such as the ones in Shatin and Kwun Tong should be made reference to by the LCs of other districts.

912 Improvement is also required in many aspects of administrative work, such as the reporting system, the submission of annual work plans, and the design of a viable service standard. In particular, the relationship between professionalization in CYCs and the decrease in membership should be seriously taken into account.

913 Lastly, I am quite impressed by the recent development of service refocusing in CYCs. The programme policy outlined in the Review Report has been followed closely by all the Centres, though their achievement varied in accordance with the unique circumstances of individual Centres. However, if they continue to strive in the current direction, and with the same kind of commitment, the professionalization CYCs is not too far away.

-End-
### List of Abbreviations

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B.G.C.A.</td>
<td>Boys’ and Girls’ Clubs Association of Hong Kong</td>
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<td>CA</td>
<td>Clerical Assistant</td>
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<td>CC</td>
<td>Children Centre</td>
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<td>CIS</td>
<td>Clientele Information System</td>
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<td>CSSA</td>
<td>Comprehensive Social Security Assistance</td>
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<td>CYC</td>
<td>Children and Youth Centre</td>
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<td>DEA</td>
<td>The Duke of Edinburgh’s Award Scheme</td>
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<td>FLEO</td>
<td>Family Life Education Officer</td>
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<td>FMS</td>
<td>Finnish Missionary Society</td>
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<td>G/C</td>
<td>Group and Community</td>
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<tr>
<td>HKCSS</td>
<td>Hong Kong Council of Social Service</td>
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<td>LC</td>
<td>Local Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>NAAC</td>
<td>Neighbourhood Advice-Action Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organization</td>
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<td>NLCDP</td>
<td>Neighbourhood Level Community Development Project</td>
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<td>OC</td>
<td>Other Charges</td>
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<td>OR</td>
<td>Outreach Social Work Team</td>
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<td>SGO</td>
<td>Student Guidance Officer</td>
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<tr>
<td>SGT</td>
<td>Student Guidance Teacher</td>
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<tr>
<td>S.K.H.</td>
<td>Sheug Kung Hui Diocesan Welfare Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>S/R</td>
<td>Study and Reading</td>
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<tr>
<td>SSW</td>
<td>School Social Worker</td>
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<td>SSWA</td>
<td>Senior Social Work Assistant</td>
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SWD  Social Welfare Department
WW  Welfare Worker
YC  Youth Centre
Y.M.C.A.  Young Men’s Christian Association
YO  Youth Officer
Y.W.C.A.  Young Women’s Christian Association