Children and Youth Services in Hong Kong: Report No. 6

Evaluation of the Local Children and Youth
Services Committee

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1. Introduction

101 The Review Report has proposed to set up Local Children and Youth Service Committees in all districts to enhance collaboration and cooperation among children and youth service units. Local Committees (LCs), set up under the existing District Coordinating Committees on Group and Community Services (DCCs), have the following functions: (a) to assess the needs of young people in the community, (b) to give suggestions based on work experience and professional knowledge, and (c) to develop work focus with reference to the identified needs and the coordinated programme strategies (Review Report, p.42; Implementation Guide, p.15 & p.21). It was expected that the Social Welfare Department (SWD) be responsible for the setting up of the LCs in various districts through their local representatives.

Views from the HKCSS and SWD

102 To obtain an elaborated views on the functions of the LC, the research team interviewed representatives from both the SWD and HKCSS. Their views are quoted as follows:

“The responsibility of the LC is to identify the needs and problems of the community and use the available resources in the community to map out a service network to provide help to the young people. Nowadays, the LC may also include school headmasters and police representatives. For example, schools may complain about the low standard of their new immigrant students. On one hand, they may attempt to solve the problem by providing them with some extra tutorials within the school. On the other hand, they may seek help from CYCs which receive grants to carry out remedial groups. If further needs are identified, e.g. parenting, the agencies would discuss whether other services could be provided, e.g. FLE. ‘Coordinated strategy’ is a method of planning by the youth organisations to deal with specific community problems using all the
services available. It can also be considered as a method to avoid overlapping of work through division of labour. This corresponds to the concept of holistic approach. Local information and statistics can be collected by the LC as a whole and disseminate to other agencies in the LC, and not necessarily collected by the agencies individually” (SWD Representatives).

103 The views of the HKCSS Representatives are very comprehensive. They highlight the functions of LC as well as the role of NGO units in the districts. As they contended, “it is expected that the SWD-organised LC, serving as a coordinated body in the community, would fulfil the following functions, which is in fact another level, and a broader concept, of integration:

(a) collect relevant data, such as crime and population statistics, from various local government departments concerned,

(b) invite different youth agencies and related organisations (e.g. schools and police etc.) to participate in the LC,

(c) identify and assess the needs and problems of different target groups in the community, based on the data collected,

(d) develop a service strategy for the whole community,

(e) the community diagnosis and service strategy plan should be submitted to the SWD headquarters,

(f) after the design of service strategy, CYCs and ITs can go back to their own catchment areas and work out their annual programme plans, probably with some kinds of cooperation among youth work agencies in the neighbourhood, if deemed necessary,

(g) the LC should at least meet twice a year.

The role of the NGOs in the LC is to:

(h) participate in the assessment of community needs,
(i) provide their own observations on community needs and problems,

(j) contribute to the formulation of service strategy,

(k) set their own programme plans to meet the young people’s needs in their catchment areas,

(l) submit annual work plans to SWD based on the suggestions made in the service strategy” (HKCSS Representatives to the Working Party on Review of CYC services).

Methods of Data Collection and Analysis

In order to examine how far this new idea has been put into practice, and how effective the LCs are in fulfilling the above-mentioned tasks and functions, the research team has conducted investigations into this subject. In the following, the structure and performance of the LCs will be discussed. The data presented below were collected through four different means:

(a) Field interviews: These were conducted in the first and third round of field visits to the 22 sample CYCs and 10 ITs.

(b) Review of Meeting Minutes: Data were collected through the meeting minutes of all the LCs, which were supplied to the research team by the SWD.

(c) Survey of Social Workers (NGO Respondents): Self-administered questionnaires were delivered, in October 1996, to all the CYC in-charges and IT team leaders who had at least 12 months of service experiences in the centre/team in which he was working since 1 January 1995. Those centre-in-charges/team leaders who did not have 12 months’ experience and/or who were not their units’ formal representatives to the LCs were not treated as valid samples. We had sent out a total of 194 questionnaires and eventually a total of 141 valid questionnaires were received, with a response rate of 72.7%. They provide data on the NGO respondents’ evaluation of LCs.

(d) Survey of Social Workers (SWD Respondents): Self-administered questionnaires, whose content is similar to the one used by the NGO respondents, were sent to all the
43 LC chairpersons (SWD local representatives) in November 1996, and a total of 43 valid questionnaires were received by the research team. They provide basic information on each LC, such as membership, structure, etc. as well as data on the SWD local representatives’ evaluation of LCs.

105 For the qualitative data, content analyses of interview records and LC meeting minutes were conducted. The analysis of survey data was assisted by SPSS. Readers should be reminded that a five-point Likert scale has been used in the questionnaires for both NGO and SWD respondents, with 1 = strongly agree, 3 = neutral, and 5 = strongly disagree. Thus the smaller the mean, the more positive the result. Reliability test and statistical tests, such as correlation analysis, t-test and Manova, were used whenever appropriate. Moreover, we must stress that although the opinions of both NGO and SWD respondents are presented together, it is not our intention to compare the differences of the two samples. Rather, we simply want to present the two views for readers’ own interpretation.
2. The Structure of Local Committee

201 In this chapter, we will examine different aspects of the structure of LC, including chairmanship, membership, relationship with the DCC, frequency of meetings, communication channels, and authority and autonomy. The comments from both NGO and SWD respondents regarding the pros and cons of the present structure, as well as the difficulties encountered and recommendations made will be outlined in the following discussion.

Chairmanship

202 At present, it is a general practice that the SWD personnel takes up the chairmanship of LC. Altogether there are 43 LCs formed in 16 districts of Hong Kong. The SWD local representatives, including 7 DOs, 21 ADOs and 15 YOs, have held the chairmanship of these LCs. In the interviews, some respondents opined that “the development and functioning of LC has been hampered by the frequent change of DOs/ADOs” (NGO) because “there were differences in their styles, knowledge of LC and leading directions” (NGO). There is one comment that “it was difficult for the ADO, in-charge of the heavy duty of chairmanship, to totally understand the situation of the whole district” (NGO), suggesting that the respondent was worrying about the ability of the chairperson.

203 On the other hand, the current practice has been queried by some respondents. There are suggestions that “it would be better to have members rotating for the post” (NGO) or “to have the chairperson elected by the members, and the role of the elected chairperson is to lead meetings and integrate discussion, there must be some kinds of support to back him/her up to function well” (NGO). One respondent recommended that “the chairperson be elected for a 3-year term, and the continuity would allow an effective assessment of community needs”; he specifically pointed out that “this would give NGOs the chances to be chairperson” (NGO).

Membership
All the LCs had CYC and IT workers attending their meetings as members. Nearly all the LCs (42) had OR workers as members in the committees too, and the remaining one had OR worker as non-committee member in attending LC meetings (see Table 1).

Table 1: Membership of LC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Composition (N = 43 LCs)</th>
<th>Attend meeting - Membe r</th>
<th>Attend meeting - Non-member</th>
<th>Not Attend</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CYC/IT Workers</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OR Workers</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSWs</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FLE Workers</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police Officers</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff of Education</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Headmasters</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FSC Workers</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probation Officers</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Board Members</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff of Housing Offices</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Bodies</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident Groups</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Organizations</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satisfaction</th>
<th>NGO (N = 140)</th>
<th>SWD (N = 43)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Satisfy with composition of membership</td>
<td>3.086</td>
<td>2.070</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Over three quarters (33) of LCs had SSWs and nearly half of them (21) had FLE workers sitting in the committees as members. There were altogether 10 and 9 LCs which had SSWs and FLE workers respectively attending LC meetings as non-members.
There were only 13 LCs having police officers and representatives from the Education Department presented in the committees as members, whereas 10 LCs had teachers, including student guidance or discipline teachers. Members of these three groups also attended the meetings of 4 LCs as non-members.

Apart from the above mentioned people, other kinds of personnel were not that well represented in the LCs. For instance, school headmasters and FSC workers appeared in only 6 LCs as members, probation officers in 4 LCs, and district board members and representatives from the Housing Offices in 2 LCs only. In addition, 4 other LCs had headmasters attending meetings as non-members, while 2 LCs had FSC workers and staff of the Housing Offices as non-members. There were no representatives from religious bodies and resident groups joining the LCs (see Table 1). On the whole, the SWD respondents’ satisfaction towards the composition of LC membership is high (2.070), while the opinion of NGO respondents is neutral (3.086).

Altogether there were 135 respondents who replied that their centres/teams (96.4%) had the same staff (i.e. the respondents themselves) attending the LC. However, their score on the perceived success of LC is 3.23, i.e. on the neutral-slightly low level. This suggests that the fixed unit representative system does not have a strong effect on the success of LC (see Table 12).

In the field interviews, some CYC and IT respondents expressed that the difficulties are “different expectations among members” (NGO), and “no clear roles and composition of membership, thus lowering the effectiveness and functions of the meetings” (NGO).

Another difficulty, frequent turnover of members, is also not easy to resolve. The respondents suggested that “the change of colleagues affected cooperation and tacit understanding” (NGO) and “the unstable representatives of NGO units, due to transferral or resignation, had posed difficulties on the cooperation in task groups” (NGO).
Another issue, agency dynamics, is also a concern of a minority of centres. As one respondent worried, “in the LC, if there were too many units coming from the same agency, a ‘main stream’ or ‘majority’ opinion would appear. This would be unfair to single centres” (NGO).

However, the major issue commonly expressed by both NGO and SWD respondents is the representativeness of LC members. They opined that the representativeness was not broad enough, especially that it was unable to have the participation of school headmasters, primary and secondary school teachers, and PCRO, etc. in the committee as members. They believed that this would hamper a deep and thorough assessment of youth needs:

(a) “In order to enhance service units to have more understanding on local conditions, as well as on the behaviour and problems of young people in the community, the LC should not only arrange SGTs and SSWs to meet with the units. The LC should also arrange representatives from other government departments, such as the Education Department and the Police, and the headmasters of schools to meet with the NGOs” (NGO).

(b) “The membership and the scope of opinions are very narrow when only social workers attend meetings and giving opinions. It would be better if there could be representatives from other government departments, such as the Police, the Education Department and the City and New Territories Administration, to attend meetings and join in the sharing and analysis. Some task groups might also be formed afterwards to follow up with the service strategy set and to oversee how services could address to the community needs” (NGO).

The opinion on the narrow scope of membership is also echoed by one SWD respondent: “the views of the NGOs were only limited to SSWs and CYC workers” (SWD). On the other hand, one NGO respondent shared with us his positive experience of having non-social work personnel attending LC meetings:
“Other people in the community, such as representatives from the Education Department and the Police, etc. were invited to the meeting. A more thorough understanding of youth needs was enhanced through sharing among the participants. Very often when other units do not have such connection and relationship with the above personnel, it is hard for them to understand their perspectives. It was the LC that invited them to participate in the meetings, which helped to map out the community conditions much clearer” (NGO).

There is little doubt that a wider representation in the LC would facilitate the assessment of community needs. However, there are also contradicting views, from both NGO and SWD respondents, which highlight the difficulties and impracticality of having a broader membership:

(a) “The NGOs were relatively conservative. They were unwilling to have non-G&C units and other organizations to join the LC” (NGO).

(b) “There were problems and doubts on what roles should the school headmasters, counselling teachers, etc. take if they were invited as members of LC. There was doubt if they simply came for giving opinions. On the other hand, they might also wonder if their opinions would be considered. If they have no clear roles in the committee, they would not come to attend meetings” (NGO).

(c) “It is very difficult to have other local organizations, such as schools and MACs, etc., to join the LC as members. The reason is that it is hard for them to take part in the task groups formed in the later days. To other members of LC, it would become an ‘only say but not do’ situation. On the contrary, the school representatives may feel that the tasks achieved by the task groups cannot reach their expectations” (SWD).
Furthermore, the size of the LC is also an area of concern if the membership is to be increased to include a wider representativeness. As a SWD respondent opined, “a number of around 20 persons is a right group size to share problems of concern....The number of members is sufficient now.” Another NGO respondent had the same opinion: “the district is too large. The number of people attending meetings was a bit more than enough. The chances for every member to talk were small.”
Figure 1: Organisational Charts of LCs in Different Districts
as at September 1996

1. **Central, Western & Island District**
   
   ![Organisational Chart]
   
   DCC
   
   LC1
   Mid levels
   Chau
   E & W
   LC2
   Chung Sheung Wan/
   Sai Ying Pun W/
   Cheung
   Chau
   E & W
   Sai Ying Pun E
   Kennedy Town
   E & W/Mount
   Davis
   LC3
   LC4

2. **Eastern District**
   
   ![Organisational Chart]
   
   DCC
   
   Shau Kei Wan/Chai Wan LC
   North Point/Quarry Bay LC

3. **Wanchai District**
   
   ![Organisational Chart]
   
   DCC
   
   LC

4. **Southern District**
   
   ![Organisational Chart]
   
   DCC
   
   LC

5. **Shamshuipo District**
   
   ![Organisational Chart]
   
   DCC
   
   Shek Kip Mei/
   Cheung Sha Wan
   So Uk/
   Lei Cheng Uk
   LC
   LC
   LC

6. **Yau Tsim/Mong District**
   
   ![Organisational Chart]
   
   DCC
   
   Mongkok LC
   Yau Tsim LC
7. **Kowloon City District**

- DCC
- Kowloon City South LC
  - (LC1)
- Kowloon City North LC
  - (LC2)

8. **Sai Kung District**

- Tseung Kwan O LC
- Sai Kung LC
- DCC

9. **Kwun Tong District**

- DCC
- Kai Yip/ Ping Shek LC
- Ngau Tau Kok/ Lok Wah LC
- Shun Tin/ Shun Lee/ LC
- Sau Mau Ping
- Tsui Ping/ Kwan Tong Town/ LC
- Yau Tong/ Sze Shan LC

10. **Wong Tai Sin District**

- (North) (West) (Central) (East)
- Wong Tai Sin LC
- Wong Tai Sin LC
- Wong Tai Sin LC
- Wong Tai Sin LC
- DCC

11. **Kwai Tsing District**

- DCC
- Kwai Chung
- Tsing Yi C&Y Service Sub-committee
- Kwai Chung South
- Central
- Kwai Chung West
- East & North
- C&Y Service
- C&Y Service
- C&Y Service
- C&Y Service
- Sub-committee
- Sub-committee
- Sub-committee
- Sub-committee
12. **Tsuen Wan District**

   - DCC
   - Tsuen Wan East C&Y Service Committee
   - Tsuen Wan Central C&Y Service Committee
   - Tsuen Wan West C&Y Service Committee

13. **Tuen Mun District**

   - DCC
   - Tuen Mun East LC
   - Tuen Mun South West LC
   - Tuen Mun North West LC

14. **Un Long District**

   - DCC
   - Un Long Town LC
   - Tin Shui Wai LC

15. **Tai Po/North District**

   - DCC
   - Tai Po LC
   - North District LC

16. **Shatin District**

   - DCC
   - LC
   - Coordinating Working Group
     - Task group A
     - Task group B
     - Task group C
     - Task group D
     - Sub-area group A
     - Sub-area group B
     - Sub-area group C
     - Sub-area group D
     - Sub-area group E
     - Sub-area group F
Relationship with the DCC

With the formation of the LCs in the territory, the past single DCC structure for service coordination in local districts has been changed. At present, there are two systems. First is a two-tier coordination system, i.e. the DCC on the higher level and the LC on the lower level. Secondly, the DCC and the LC are two separate entities, though communication still exist between them (see Figure 1). At present, 34 LCs (79.1%) are subordinate to the DCCs, whereas 9 of them (20.9%) are independent of DCCs (see Table 2). The latter structure is a violation of the policy of the Review Report, which recommended to set up the LC “under the existing DCC” (p.42).

Table 2: Relationship with DCC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Present Structure (N = 43)</th>
<th>No. of LC</th>
<th>(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subordinate to DCC</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>(79.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent of DCC</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>(20.9)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>NGO</th>
<th>SWD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(N = 135)</td>
<td>(N = 43)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear division of duties between LC &amp; DCC</td>
<td>3.079*</td>
<td>1.837</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LC should be independent of DCC</td>
<td>2.489</td>
<td>3.116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LC should merge with DCC</td>
<td>3.467</td>
<td>3.860</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* N = 139

In the Survey of Social Workers, most of the SWD respondents agreed with a clear division of duties between LCs and DCCs (1.837) (See Table 2). They too had more positive feedback on the performance of LC: “Compared to the DCC, centre workers concentrated more of their views and expertise on the youth needs of the district” (SWD). Nonetheless, the NGO respondents’ opinion on the clear division of duties between the two bodies was neutral (3.079). In the field interviews, many NGO respondents expressed their dissatisfaction towards the present unclear relationship between LC and DCC, as follows:

(a) “There lacked co-ordination between LC and DCC. It seemed that both mechanisms were independent of each other, but they should have
connection. Their relationship was unclear, and their function of mutual support was unclear too” (NGO).

(b) “The LC and DCC should have clear division of responsibilities. They should have clear and distinct roles and division of jobs so that they would not duplicate with each other. At present, the division of responsibilities between them is unclear” (NGO).

218 Apart from the unclear relationship between the two bodies, some respondents even opined that there were some obvious duplications of functions between them, or the DCC can even perform better than the LC in some areas:

(a) “The effectiveness of the LC was only average. Some of its functions could actually be done as well in the DCC” (NGO).

(b) “The LC had the same membership of the DCC. No members came from other organizations such as the Education Department, the Police, Housing Department and schools. In the DCC, there were SSWs and OR workers too.....The LC provided a chance for units to share their services only. It duplicated with the functions of the DCC” (NGO).

(c) “It was unnecessary to set up such a structure (LC) in the district. The DCC could actually serve its functions. In DCC meetings, service coordination, development of strategy and community need analysis could also be accomplished if these matters were put on the agenda” (NGO).

(d) “The LC could not coordinate units in the district and set up a community network. On the contrary, the DCC was more capable to act as a bridge” (NGO).
219 Because of the duplication of functions, there is suggestion that there is a need to consider to merge the two bodies. As one respondent noted, “the LC should merge with the DCC. There was no need for the LC to be independent out, especially when its functions had not yet developed and its direction was not clear. The merge would avoid a waste of time. Information sharing could also be done in the DCC too” (NGO).

220 On the other hand, some respondents suggested that in order not to duplicate the works of the DCC, the LC should refocus its works: “The structure of LC and DCC has senselessly piled up with one another. Their functions and contents were repeated. They needed re-positioning and re-grouping” (NGO). There is also suggestion that during the re-positioning, the LC should be responsible for district coordination in smaller neighbourhoods:

“The role of LC was a bit blur. The representativeness was insufficient because of the sameness of membership with the DCC. Unless community needs are not discussed in the DCC, otherwise the LC is an excessive structure. On the other hand, if the DCC is responsible for the district as a whole and the LC for a sub-area, community needs identified by the LC would be more specific. Classification of functions and elimination of duplications on both committees would help members to identify the importance of LC more” (NGO).

221 The last suggestion, in fact, is quite sound. The Review Report has already stressed that the LC has to agree on programme emphasis within a “catchment area” (p.42). In particular, there is opinion that “there lacked meetings on sharing and cooperation in smaller areas” (NGO).

222 Because of the opinions on the unclear relationship and possible overlapping between the two committees, the research team tried to solicit social workers’ views on the future structure of the LC. In the Survey of Social Workers, the respondents were asked whether the LC should be independent of DCC. The score of the NGO groups is moderately high (2.489), suggesting that the NGO respondents were more
inclined to support this idea, though the tendency is not so strong. However, the SWD group tended to be neutral on this matter (3.116). Moreover, both groups disagreed with the idea that LC should merge with DCC (3.467 and 3.86) (see Table 2).

**Frequency of Meetings**

Based on the information provided by the LC convenors, most LCs (72.1%) had their meetings held once in every six months. This is followed by once in 4-5 months (11.6%), 7-11 months (9.3%) and 3 months (7%) (see Table 3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sufficient Number of Meetings</th>
<th>NGO (N = 140)</th>
<th>SWD (N = 43)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 - 2 months</td>
<td>10 (7.1)</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 months</td>
<td>19 (13.6)</td>
<td>3 (7.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 - 5 months</td>
<td>12 (8.6)</td>
<td>5 (11.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 months</td>
<td>69 (49.3)</td>
<td>31 (72.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 - 11 months</td>
<td>4 (2.9)</td>
<td>4 (9.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 months</td>
<td>24 (17.1)</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 months and above</td>
<td>2 (1.4)</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceived Success of LC</th>
<th>NGO (N = 139)</th>
<th>SWD (N = 43)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 - 2 months</td>
<td>10 (7.2)</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 months</td>
<td>18 (13.0)</td>
<td>3 (7.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 - 5 months</td>
<td>12 (8.6)</td>
<td>5 (11.6)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>24 (17.3)</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 months and above</td>
<td>2 (1.4)</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When the respondents were asked whether the frequency of meetings was sufficient, the NGOs scored high on once in 1-2 months (2.1), followed by 3 months (2.316). Their score for meeting held once in 6 months, the common practice adopted by most of the LCs, is only fairly high (2.696) and for 4-5 months is neutral (2.833).
The scores for meetings held once in 7 months or above range from moderately low to low (3.5, 3.75 and 4).

225 In the SWD group, the respondents’ responses are all positive. The scores for meetings held once in 3-5 months are very high (1.333 and 1.000), followed by 6 months (1.645). The score for 7-11 months is also moderately high (2.5). Correlation analysis on both samples discovers that the more frequent the meeting, the higher the sufficiency of meeting (p<.01). Thus it is likely that both the NGO and SWD respondents tended to prefer to meet more frequently in a year.

226 Regarding the correlation of perceived success of LC by the frequency of meetings, the NGO respondents rated highly (2.2) on those LCs that had meetings held once in 1-2 months (perhaps including meetings of task groups). They remained neutral on those LCs with meetings in every 3-5 months (2.944 to 3), and gave slightly low score to 6 months (3.261). However, they gave moderately low to extremely low scores (3.667 to 5) to those LCs with less number of meetings, e.g. once in 7 months or above, suggesting that they did not perceive those LCs as successful if there was lesser number of meetings. Correlation analysis discovers that the more frequent the meeting, the higher the perceived success (p<.01).

227 On the side of SWD, their perceived success of LC is high (1.8 to 2), irrespective of the frequency of meetings (see Table 3). Correlation analysis suggests that the frequency of meeting has no effect on their perceived success of LC (p=.782).

228 In the field interviews, many respondents expressed that “the time periods between meetings were too long” (NGO). Six CYCs/ITs opined that the LCs would not function effectively if they had meetings held once a year only:

(a) “Only holding one meeting a year was insufficient to enhance service coordination among agencies in the district. At present, the LC is unable to perform its guiding function as well” (NGO).
(b) “There was no fixed number of meetings in the year....The effect was not great when there were only one or two meetings a year” (NGO).

229 Even a SWD respondent holds similar view: “Meetings were on average held once every eight months, thus did not help members to have thorough evaluation and follow-up of decided targets and plans. Meeting should be added to once a season” (SWD). Another SWD respondent, however, shared the difficulty encountered: “Most of the colleagues from the NGOs thought there was no need to call meetings to discuss service coordination. The functions of the LC were greatly reduced” (SWD).

230 As our interviews discover, 11 CYCs/ITs accepted that meetings be held twice a year. However, 10 of them preferred to have more meetings, i.e. at least three or four times a year; they thought, otherwise, they could not get a more thorough sharing and understanding of community needs, as well as a better service coordination. In particular, many respondents suggested that “the meetings should match with the time when the NGOs prepare their annual work plans” (NGO).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Formal Communication Channels other than Regular LC Meetings (N = 43)</th>
<th>No. of LC</th>
<th>(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No other formal channels</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>(53.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task groups</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>(9.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-area meetings</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>(14.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>(34.9)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opinions (N = 141) (N = 43)</th>
<th>NGO</th>
<th>SWD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Need to be supplemented by informal communication channels</td>
<td>2.787</td>
<td>2.628</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sufficient no. of meeting</td>
<td>2.829*</td>
<td>1.628</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sufficient formal communication channels</td>
<td>3.099</td>
<td>1.744</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* N = 140
Communication Channels

As shown in Table 4, 23 LCs (53.5%) had no other kinds of formal communication channel other than the regular LC meetings, while 4 LCs (9.3%) had task groups and 6 of them (14%) had sub-area meetings. Fifteen LCs (34.9%) expressed that they had other kinds of formal communication channel too. These channels included the DCC (3 units), coordinating work group (1 unit), sharing meetings with SGOs, SGTs and PCROs in the district (4 units), follow-up meetings (2 units), task groups on special problems (1 unit) and the police and social worker network (4 units).

The SWD respondents supported that there were sufficient number of meetings (1.628) and sufficient formal communication channels (1.744) in the LCs, but the NGO respondents’ opinions on these two issues were neutral (2.829 and 3.099). Nonetheless, both groups slightly agreed (2.628 and 2.787) that the formal communication channels of LCs should be supplemented by informal communication channels (see Table 4).

In the field interviews, the majority of the CYCs/ITs contended that they have maintained a good relationship with other youth work units in the district, especially through the so-called ‘informal G & C’ (i.e. informal DCC meetings attended by only NGO staff, usually before the formal DCC meetings). The function of this informal network is even better than the formal LC: “When mapping out a picture of the community and discussing the matters concerned, the informal meetings held by the units in the district were more effective than the contacts made in the LC” (NGO). For more discussion on this subject, readers can refer to the sections on Service Coordination and Community Linkage.

Authority and Autonomy

In total, there were 40 LCs (93%) which had no mechanisms to enforce the decisions of LCs (see Table 5). It was commonly agreed among the CYCs/ITs that the LC has no power to control its members. The LC “did not function well in setting service strategies because it had no legitimate power to control over the matters decided and to direct service units to pursue on specific services” (NGO). Even a LC
chairperson was disappointed about its authority: “The attendance rate was not high. There was no controlling power to prescribe and to regulate the execution of unanimous decisions” (SWD).

235 Moreover, whenever conflict arises among service units regarding the delivery of services, it is doubtful whether the LC can assist to settle the dispute. As one respondent rightly pointed out, “the LC lacked a mechanism of arbitration. It could only perform the function of mutual sharing, but not design service plans in a collective way” (NGO). Our interim report has already reported an example that a couple of CYCs organised programmes for schools in the catchment area served by an IT. When disputes occurred, the LC only facilitated mutual sharing and had no authority to help them to reach a consensus on their service boundary.

236 On the one hand, most respondents believed that the LCs have no power to enforce decisions made in their meetings. On the other, some of them still “worried that the decision reached by the LC had to be compulsorily enforced, since the participants might have different expectations on the LC” (NGO). One respondent summarized precisely the dilemma behind, “in the past, service units were accountable solely to their own organisations. It was a common practice that their headquarters passed down policies for the units to follow. Today, there comes another boss, the LC. It was difficult for them to react sincerely to the decisions of the LC. This was the major source of conflict” (NGO). His observation is echoed by a LC chairperson: “some LC members conceived that to follow the service targets and goals set by their own agencies had a higher priority than to identify, together with other service units, the problems in the district” (SWD).

237 Apart from the ‘political’ consideration, some respondents also considered the practical side of enforcement. One respondent opined that “the physical area and population size of the district is large. The community needs of each housing estate may be different. If the LC compulsorily enforced a plan on division of labour among the units (e.g. ‘A’ unit responsible for the services for single parents, ‘B’ unit responsible for the services for CSSA families, and ‘C’ unit...etc.), this would not be a
good approach. Moreover, it is difficult to control over the services of different units as they have different supervisors” (NGO).

238 The above ‘worries’ indicate that the legitimate power and authority of LC has not been made very clear to some CYCs/ITs. The research team agree with one of the respondents that “if the members had clearer understanding of the authority of LC, it might be able to coordinate service units more effectively in the development of service strategies and in the division of works among them” (NGO).

239 In the Survey of Social Workers, the NGO respondents slightly disagreed that the SWD was able to lead members to really execute the decisions made in the LCs (3.426), but the SWD agreed so (1.907) (see Table 5). When being asked whether the members were enthusiastic in executing LC decisions, the NGO group’s score is neutral (3.051), but the SWD group’s score is again high (2.163).

Table 5: Execution of LC Decisions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enforcement Mechanism (N = 43)</th>
<th>No. of LC</th>
<th>(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exist</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>(7.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Exist</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>(93.0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opinions</th>
<th>NGO (N = 139)</th>
<th>SWD (N = 43)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SWD able to lead members to really execute decisions</td>
<td>3.426**</td>
<td>1.907</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members were enthusiastic in executing decisions</td>
<td>3.051*</td>
<td>2.163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decisions should be compulsorily enforced by all members</td>
<td>3.799</td>
<td>3.395</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* N = 138 ** N = 141

240 However, both groups did not support the suggestion that LC decisions should be compulsorily enforced by all members (3.799 and 3.395). In particular, the disagreement of the NGO respondents was relatively strong on this matter, and the interview findings also show similar tendency:
(a) “We hope that the LC would maintain its present practice, i.e. members are allowed to participate in service coordination in a voluntary way. It should not have any power to request all service units to compulsorily follow its direction” (NGO).

(b) “The voluntary involvement of service units is important. They should voluntarily share their views on the characteristics of certain locality. The LC should not arrange sub-area meetings for them. The units could arrange such meetings for themselves to discuss the focus of work” (NGO).

(c) “We agree that the LC should continue its coordinating role rather than having the power to control. The district is large, and there was no mechanism to assess community needs and to measure the degree and effectiveness of centres’ response to each need. Therefore, it was hard for the LC to exercise control in so large an area” (NGO).

(d) “The LC should clarify its role clearly, particularly on whether it should assist service units to acquire information and to enhance mutual sharing, or really develop and implement services. We think in practice it should only be a meeting to share rather than a mechanism to implement service” (NGO).

241 Obviously, the NGOs, on the one hand, viewed that the SWD local representatives were not very able to lead members to execute the decisions made in the LCs; on the other hand, they preferred to have higher autonomy for themselves and to have the authority of LC to be kept to the minimal.

Concluding Remark

242 In the above discussion on the structure of LC, information on the chairmanship, membership, frequency of meetings, communication channels and authority of LC, as well as its relationship with the DCC, have been presented and examined. In the
Survey of Social Workers, the respondents were asked whether they were satisfied with the structure of LC. Again, the satisfaction level of the SWD respondents is high (2.047), whereas the NGO respondents’ degree of satisfaction is only neutral (3.136). This suggests that the characteristics of the present structure is only fairly accepted by the users.
3. The Performance of Local Committee

301 In this chapter, the performance of LC is assessed by the examination of various tasks that are supposed to be completed by the LC (see Chapter 1). The tasks include the supply of local information, assessment of community needs, coordination of services and community linkage.

Table 6: Implementation of LC Tasks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>No. of LC</th>
<th>(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organize task groups to follow up groups with special needs</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>(37.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use sub-area meetings as co-ordination mechanism</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>(30.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organize sharing with other youth organizations</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>(30.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organize task groups to follow up the community needs identified</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>(25.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarify the units’ relationship of cooperation with other youth organizations</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>(16.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organize central committee to co-ordinate the works of task groups</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>(2.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No task at all</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>(14.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>(11.6)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 43

Implementation of Tasks of LC

302 A number of meetings and task forces were organised during the implementation of LC tasks (see Table 6). Quite a number of LCs (37.2%) had organised task groups to follow up their works for the groups with special needs. About 30% of them used sub-area meetings as a coordination mechanism for local service units, and organised sharing meetings with other youth organisations, such as schools and church groups. About one quarter of them formed task groups to follow up the community needs identified by them.
303 A small number of them (16.3%) used flow charts or other means to clarify the centres’ relationship of cooperation with local youth organisations, e.g. schools. Only one LC (2.3%), i.e. Shatin LC, has organised a central committee to coordinate the works of various task groups. Six LCs (14%) had not organised any special tasks at all, while another 6 LCs had organised other kinds of task, i.e. to conduct community need surveys in sub-areas (1), and to collect local units’ work focus on a half yearly interval (4).

The Supply of Information

304 In the field interviews, altogether 8 CYCs/ITs (25%) expressed that the LCs had not provided the most updated and accurate information of the community as requested. The following comments are not uncommon:

(a) “The supply of information was insufficient. This reflected that government departments in the district did not support the LC very much” (NGO).

(b) “Regarding the supply of information, the LC did not perform this function...and the information provided was not comprehensive enough....Moreover, the SWD did not take the initiative to provide the information” (NGO).

(c) “Some government departments were unable to support the LC and to provide the information required. For example, information on CSSA and single parent families were hardly provided by the Social Security Branch of the SWD” (NGO).

305 Without sufficient local information, the respondents opined that the assessment of community needs was affected because “different youth service organizations would have their own emphases on different aspects, it was hard to decide on the priority of needs” (NGO). Our interim report has already reported that there was complaint on the low efficiency of the SWD local representatives in providing the NGOs with service recipients’ data (e.g. information on CSSA families), which had
adversely affected their delivery of services. Despite these negative comments, some other NGO respondents could understand the limitations and constraints of the LCs:

(a) “The LC has provided information on some target groups, e.g. information on single-parent and CSSA families. However, in many occasions, the chairman could not answer to the request of the units to provide the information and statistics concerned because he might not have the channels to obtain some information” (NGO).

(b) “It was difficult to collect the information required by the units. Even in the City and New Territories Administration, there was no information on new immigrants. Moreover, some of the CSSA families might not want to have contacts with outsiders” (NGO).

306 On the other hand, some CYCs/ITs did not think the information provided was very useful. For instance, one respondent said that “the information provided by the LC confirmed the community observation by the unit, but did not help them to gain new insights on community needs” (NGO). Another one replied that “the information provided was more on the remedial side, e.g. information on the Police Superintendent Discretionary Scheme and crime statistics....They did not render great assistance to those units which mainly provide developmental and preventive services” (NGO).

307 From the information obtained from the LCs, the majority of them had provided their members with local demographic data, crime statistics, and information on local service units, organisations, schools and SSWs (81.4% to 90.7%). About half of them supplied information on CSSA families, new immigrants and SGTs to their members (48.8 to 51.2%). The list of CYCs and ITs providing outreach services to schools in the district was supplied by 44.2% of LCs, while 34.9% of them provided information on teenagers under the supervision of the Police Superintendent Discretionary Scheme.

308 Apart from this, information on single parent families (18.6%), disabled youths (14%) and school drop-outs (11.6%) were supplied by only a small number of LCs
(see Table 7). Ten LCs (23.3%) had provided other types of information, such as Special Study on Youth Support Network Schedule of School Talks by the Police (4 LCs), youth crime survey report (2 LCs), reference materials on sex education (1 LC), survey reports on the district and on the population of housing estates (1 LC), and young probationers of the district (2 LCs).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local Statistics/Information on (N = 43)</th>
<th>No. of LC</th>
<th>(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>(90.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crimes</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>(88.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of service units, organizations and schools</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>(86.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of SSWs</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>(81.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSSA families</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>(51.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of SGTs</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>(48.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New immigrants</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>(48.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of CYCs and ITs providing school services</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>(44.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police Superintendent Discretionary Scheme</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>(34.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single parent families</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>(18.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disabled youths</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>(14.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School drop-outs</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>(11.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>(23.3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opinions (N = 141)</th>
<th>NGO</th>
<th>SWD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Information useful</td>
<td>2.907*</td>
<td>1.767</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Able to provide information as requested</td>
<td>3.277</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sufficient supply of information</td>
<td>3.383</td>
<td>2.163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supply within a short time after request</td>
<td>3.496</td>
<td>2.233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall rating of supply of information</td>
<td>3.257*</td>
<td>2.054</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* N = 140

Regarding the overall rating of supply of information by LCs, the score of the NGO respondents was slightly negative (3.257), as against the positive score (2.054) given by their SWD counterparts. The best score, 2.907, given by the NGO respondents is on the usefulness of information, which is only regarded as neutral.
They slightly disagreed that the LCs were able to provide information as requested by them (3.277), and that the supply of information was sufficient (3.383). Furthermore, they disagreed, on a moderate level, that the information could be supplied within a short period of time after request (3.496).

310 On the other hand, the scores given by the SWD respondents are in general high, but the order is the same as the NGO respondents (see Table 7). That is, they gave the highest score to the usefulness of information (1.767), followed by the sufficient supply of information (2.163); and the lowest score was given to the supply of information within a short time after request (2.233). Statistical tests also support that the last item is possibly the least satisfied item perceived by both groups of respondents (p<.01).

Assessment of Community Needs
311 The Review Report recommended that one of the functions of LC is to assess the needs and problems of young people in the neighbourhoods (p.42). As shown in Table 8, in all the LCs, community needs were assessed through mutual sharing among members. A majority of the LCs (90.7%) also made use of the information and statistics provided by the government during their assessment. These were the two major methods adopted by them. When compared, special sharing meetings with local people (39.5%) and community need studies (30.2%) were not that commonly adopted.

312 In the field interviews, many respondents expressed a number of difficulties faced by the LCs in the assessment of community needs. One of them is that some LCs cover a large geographical area, and thus “the community needs are not the same in different localities” (NGO), and this is why “the discussion on community needs was too vague” (NGO). They opined that due to the “differences in service characteristics, contents and boundaries, it was hard to have an united discussion of the needs of young people in the district” (NGO). Because of the large service boundary, the LC “only identified community needs of the district as a whole, but did not help service units to identify the needs in their own service areas. The centres had to find out the needs by themselves” (NGO).
Nonetheless, one respondent held a totally different view. She preferred to have a large LC district than a smaller one: “Different agencies might have different work foci because of the differences in their service areas. The LC allowed the units to share together. In this way, it helped members to view the district as a whole, rather than to view things in individual sub-areas” (NGO).

### Table 8: Assessment of Community Needs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Methods (N = 43)</th>
<th>No. of LC</th>
<th>(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Through sharing among units</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>(100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Through information and statistics provided by government</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>(90.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Through specially organized sharing meetings with local people</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>(39.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Through community need surveys</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>(30.2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opinions (N = 141)</th>
<th>NGO (N = 43)</th>
<th>SWD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sharing useful</td>
<td>2.614*</td>
<td>1.442</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Able to help identify community needs</td>
<td>3.021</td>
<td>1.558</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Able to make effective assessment on service demand</td>
<td>3.241</td>
<td>1.744</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Able to prioritize community needs effectively</td>
<td>3.350*</td>
<td>2.256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall rating of need assessment</td>
<td>3.058**</td>
<td>1.750</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* N = 140 ** N = 139

Many CYCs/ITs opined that the analysis of community needs by the LCs was in general superficial. This opinion is best summarized by one of the comments: “The things discussed in the meetings were too vague. They were not of any practical use in service delivery” (NGO). Another respondent added, “the discussion was not scientific and logical. Very often the discussion of local youth problems in the meetings remained on a low level. On the whole, the LC did not have good preparation in the discussion of these matters” (NGO). Moreover, it is suggested that
the limited scope of membership and insufficient information are factors that hamper the thorough need assessment:

(a) “Community needs were not assessed clearly. There were insufficient representatives and information. Thus, members were not helped to understand the changes of the locality and how the work could really be put into practice” (NGO).

(b) “During the identification of community needs, very few local people participated in giving their opinions on youth needs. There also lacked correct and sufficient information and statistics to support the discussion, thus the assessment of community needs was not comprehensive” (NGO).

315 In sharp contrast, when there is enough representation in the LCs, the result on need assessment would be very different. As one respondent contended, “the LC helped staff of different service units to exchange views on community situation. It helped the units to identify community needs, and provided guidelines on how to address to them. This helped the units to have a better and more thorough understanding of the community because the LC had gathered different groups of personnel together” (NGO).

316 Although very few respondents believed that the LCs have done a good job in comprehensive need assessment, many did agree that they have at least achieved the function of mutual sharing among service units:

(a) “There were no in-depth discussions and systematic assessment of community needs identified by different service units. As a result, the LC only performed the function of sharing service needs among the units, but lacked a comprehensive assessment of community needs in the district as a whole” (NGO).
(b) “The LC provided a chance for service units to share their work foci. Yet it did not enhance the units’ total understanding of community needs, and then responded with coordinated efforts” (NGO).

(c) “The LC’s functions were more on the levels of mutual sharing and exchange. This also helped to build up relationship among units in the district” (NGO).

(d) “The LC only focused on the sharing of work plans and foci of service units in the district. There was hardly any discussion in relation to a total assessment of the needs and problems of young people in the community” (NGO).

317 The above observations support the findings of the Survey of Social Workers in which many NGO and SWD respondents agreed that the mutual sharing in the LC was useful (see Table 8). In view of the above difficulties faced by the LCs, one respondent suggested a solution, perhaps an expensive solution, to the problem of ‘vague’, ‘non-scientific’ and ‘low-level’ assessment of community needs:

“During the assessment of community needs, there definitely exists some limitations as it is only based on the sharing and professional judgement of service units. If the LC intends to conduct studies on community needs, it is hard for the units to take up the duty as they have already had very heavy workload in their own units. It would be better if the LC could have the resources to employ professionals to conduct the studies” (NGO).

318 In the Survey of Social Workers, the respondents were asked to give their opinions on the assessment of community needs by LCs (see Table 8). Regarding the overall rating of need assessment, the NGO respondents again gave a neutral score (3.058), as opposed to a high score given by the SWD respondents (1.75). The NGO group agreed, on a moderate level, that the mutual sharing on community needs
among members were useful to their own units (2.614). They remained neutral on the contention that the LCs were able to help local organisations to identify community needs (3.021). However, they slightly disagreed that the LCs were able to make effective assessment on service demand in the community (3.241) and to prioritize community needs effectively (3.350).

319 Similar to our earlier discussion on the supply of information by LCs, the SWD respondents’ scores are generally higher than the NGO’s, but the order is the same. They gave very high scores to the usefulness of mutual sharing among LC members (1.442) and the effectiveness of LCs in identifying community needs (1.558), followed by the effectiveness of LCs in assessing service demand (1.744) and in prioritizing community needs (2.256). Statistical tests suggest that the assessment of service demand and the prioritization of community needs are the least satisfied areas expressed by both groups of respondents (p<.01).

**Service Coordination**

320 The LC is expected to develop a coordinated strategy in providing services for young people so that their needs could be addressed in a holistic manner; it is also expected to assist various parties in the district to agree on programme emphasis within a catchment area. These include specifying and prioritizing community needs, mobilizing appropriate resources, defining roles of different parties involved and reviewing progress of work (Review Report, p.42-3).

321 In the Survey of Social Workers, the NGO respondents gave moderately low scores to the statements that the LCs were able to effectively coordinate local units to avoid unnecessary service duplication or service gap (3.418), and that the LCs were able to set comprehensive service development strategies effectively (3.664). This suggests that they tended to disagree that the LCs had fulfilled these two functions of service coordination (see Table 9).

322 On the contrary, the scores given by the SWD respondents on these two items are high (2.14 and 2.093), suggesting that they tended to support the effectiveness of LC in performing the function of service coordination. Findings of the field interviews
also confirm the tendency of these two groups of respondents, as presented in the following.

Table 9: Service Coordination and Community Linkage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Coordination</th>
<th>NGO</th>
<th>SWD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Able to coordinate local units to avoid service duplications/gaps effectively</td>
<td>3.418</td>
<td>2.140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Able to set a comprehensive service development strategy effectively</td>
<td>3.664*</td>
<td>2.093</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Linkage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Able to maintain an intimate relationship among local units effectively</td>
<td>3.270</td>
<td>1.860</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship among local youth work units is good</td>
<td>2.163</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* N = 140

On the side of the NGOs, many sample CYCs/ITs disclosed in the field interviews that the function of service coordination has not been effectively performed by the LCs. Most of them opined that the LC lacked a clear and comprehensive strategy in service development:

(a) “There was no comprehensive system to prioritise services and response to local needs” (NGO).

(b) “The LC did not help service units to discuss and execute a comprehensive service strategy. In the meetings, most of the time were used to share the units’ recent services and current situations. There was no coordination on which units should take up what kinds of service” (NGO).

(c) “The LC still stayed at the stage of identifying problems and service needs. It did not bring up and discuss service strategy, and investigate into methods to deal with the community problems” (NGO).
In sharp contrast, the SWD respondents inclined to believe that the LCs were effective in performing the function of service coordination:

(a) “The LC assisted us to get to know the colleagues of children and youth services in the district. We shared our experiences, annual work plans, and had service co-ordination. Resources were, thus, effectively used” (LC Chairman).

(b) “The LC could link up local children and youth service units. Through different angles, they assessed the needs of young people. Units were encouraged to utilize resources, firstly, to meet the youths’ major needs; secondly, to take care of the needs of some neglected groups; and thirdly, to co-operate with other units so as to provide more comprehensive services” (LC Chairman).

(c) “The LC could gather together colleagues of children and youth service units in the district to develop service goals and directions for the service users. This was a very good mechanism for sharing and discussion” (LC Chairman).

Despite the above contrasting views held by the NGO and SWD respondents, there are still a few NGO respondents who agreed that the LC has rightly performed its role in service coordination. For instance, one of them commented, “through the LC, service units were able to extend services to some areas where no services were rendered before....According to the work focus set by the LC, the whole district joined together to put forth its work” (NGO). In fact, many of them highlighted the difficulties faced by the LC, which are largely related to the NGOs’ own orientations and policies:

(a) “Very often, service units have their own views on community needs. They have also set priority in the services rendered....Putting them together to discuss service priority in LC might not have any results” (NGO).
(b) “It is pointless that the prioritization of community needs was to be done by the LC because the community is too large. Members might not understand the ‘angles’ and views of each other. Moreover, they have different experiences. It was difficult for them to agree on which needs had the priority for service” (NGO).

(c) “No matter how the identification and prioritization of youth needs were done in the LC, service units still have their own characteristics and service focus. They might not follow what the LC had decided. Thus, when performing this function, the LC had faced certain difficulties” (NGO).

(d) “The LC had no arrangement on the division of works among service units. This was difficult to be carried out. The units did not want such an arrangement too. During the delivery of services, the practical situation had to be considered. If one unit delivered service to a school, it should not exclude other units to deliver services of the same kind to the school” (NGO).

326 Moreover, the NGOs’ attitudes and readiness is also an area of concern. There are comments that the members were “so mindful of their own steps or fearful of making mistakes that they did not want to be involved” (NGO) and that “agency dynamics, such as the openness of agencies, also affected the cooperation and coordination” (NGO).

327 Other factors, such as those related to schools, are also appealing. Some of the respondents opined that if the LC could not invite school teachers to attend its meetings, the coordination of service would not be comprehensive: “If there was only coordination among the service units without the participation of schools, the function of matching units with schools was not great because a school might not accept only one centre to serve its students” (NGO). On the other hand, as one respondent
disclosed, “some schools had many centres to serve them at the same time, but some had none because there is no designated catchment area for the CYCs” (NGO).

328 There are also a number of SWD respondents who admitted that there were some difficulties in deciding a set of strategy for coordinating the service units. For example, one of them commented, “there were problems of how to effectively coordinate the youth service units in the district, as well as to identify service directions and strategies for the future” (LC Chairman). In particular, in some areas such as the outlying islands, the youth service units are “so dispersed that there are certain difficulties in coordinating them” (LC Chairman).

329 Although many LCs did not have an effective mechanism to develop coordinated strategy, some respondents agreed that mutual sharing in meetings provided service units with opportunities to understand the contents and types of services rendered by other units when responding to community needs. This is of tremendous value in community-based service planning:

(a) “In the meetings, through sharing on recent situations of services provided by the units, it was easier for us to know the way to put our resources and to focus our services. Then there would be no duplication of service” (NGO).

(b) “When service units reviewed and presented community needs in their own service areas, they also made reference to the needs of other areas. They would feel free to select different service foci, after knowing that the services they did not provide, would be provided by other units. This avoided the existence of service gaps” (NGO).

330 The views of the NGO are also supported by the SWD respondents: “Agencies made use of this mechanism to understand the work of one another, meanwhile making coordination among themselves. Thus, it helped to avoid the duplication of services and the wastage of resources” (SWD). Apart from the value of mutual sharing in meetings, our findings also suggest that, since an effective mechanism for
coordinated strategy did not quite exist in many LCs, some service units would take the initiative to discuss among themselves through informal (non-LC) channels if the duplication of services existed:

(a) “The LC did not assist in the division of works in sub-areas. It was the units which initiated to do that...to avoid service duplication” (NGO).

(b) “Insufficient meetings and the limited meeting time did not allow the LC to go further into setting a coordinated strategy. This job was left behind for the units to handle through informal channels after the meetings. The LC did not accomplish this task” (NGO).

(c) “When discovering the possibility of duplication of services or the likeness of service recipients, the units would initiate informal coordination, i.e. privately discuss and share the problem of division of works. There was no formal coordination and division of works in the LC” (NGO).

The ‘initiative’ certainly requires a higher involvement of service units as well as good rapport among the units concerned. In the Survey of Social Workers, the NGO respondents replied that the relationship among youth work units in the district was good (2.163) (see Table 9), suggesting that the conditions for the use of ‘informal channels’ exist. However, when conflict of interest arises, the informal channel might not always function well. One of the respondents is quite right to point out, “if it only depends on the initiative of service units, the coordination is not comprehensive at all. We need a generally recognized mechanism to take up the coordinating role” (NGO). Although the LC is supposed to be the ‘recognised mechanism’, the research team agree that under the present system, both effective formal and informal channels are equally important in service coordination.

Community Linkage
In addition to the function of service coordination, the LC is also expected to establish a closer network with different social systems in the community, e.g. primary and secondary schools, SGOs, etc. to strengthen support services for young people (Review Report, p.42). Our interviews with sample CYCs and ITs discover that they held diversified views on the performance of LC in this area. Regarding the task of community networking, some agreed that the LC is effective, but others disagreed. The following are the views of those who agreed that the LC can strengthen the working relationship of the local youth work units with other systems:

(a) “The LC acted as a bridge in the community. It arranged SSWs to meet with the units so that they had a chance to acquire deeper understanding of the community” (NGO).

(b) “The LC helped the units to build up a community network, for example, with the SWD Group Work Unit, SGTs, SSWs and representatives from other government departments, e.g. the Police, Education Department” (NGO).

Although the above respondents opined that the LC can assist them to build up a better linkage with SSWs and representatives from other government departments, yet other respondents contended that these are the people whom they had least contacts with through the LCs:

(a) “The LC has strengthened the coordination between local NGOs and SWD, but not so between NGOs and schools/other government departments” (NGO).

(b) “The SSWs can be contacted when working with schools directly. The LC was not of much help” (NGO).

(c) “The Housing Department arranged managers from different housing estates to take turn to attend LC meetings. It was doubtful whether they knew the community needs of all the estates and could
answer the requests of all service units coming from different estates. There was little value to keep contacts with them” (NGO).

334 Similarly, as regards communication and cooperation, the respondents held diversified views on the performance of LC. For those NGO respondents who disagreed, they had such negative comments as: “There lacked positive communication and understanding among LC members.” “Communication was not good when meeting twice a year. Colleagues did not want to have more meetings.” “Coordination and linkage among NGOs were not sufficient.” “Everybody was serving their own units; they lacked cooperation.” Even the same view was expressed by a SWD respondent: “The LC performed mainly the function of exchanging views. Actually, there were very few cooperation works.” On the other hand, an opposite view is presented in the following, which highlights that the LC has facilitated communication among different local organisations:

“When local units met together, there was a chance for them to review matters of interest and attention. Thus, this broadened their minds on community problems. The LC invited concerned parties or people to its meetings to meet and discuss with local units. This increased communication and cooperation with different organisations in the district. It was easier for the LC to invite local bodies, such as SSWs and SGTs, to attend meetings. This saved up much time and energy of social workers going separately to visit and know them. On the other hand, during the sharing, local units understood more about the situations in schools and, then, discussed on the division of works” (NGO).

335 Obviously, the views on the performance of LC in maintaining an effective community linkage are quite diversified. They suggest that some LCs may have performed better than others, or the overall performance of LC in this area may be on an average level. As the findings of the Survey of Social Workers show (see Table 9), although the SWD respondents agreed with the effectiveness of LCs in maintaining an intimate relationship among local units (1.86), yet their NGO counterparts slightly
disagreed with this statement with a mean value of 3.27, which is on the ‘neutral-slightly negative’ level, again suggesting that the performance of LC in maintaining effective community linkage is only fair.
4. Members’ Performance and Perceived Success of LC

In this chapter, we will present findings of the field interviews and the Survey of Social Workers to examine members’ performance in the LC. The members include social workers from the NGOs and representatives from other youth organisations and government departments. The performance of the SWD local representatives will also be discussed with reference to the data collected. Difficulties faced by the members and LC are also highlighted if such data are available. Lastly, the perceived success of LC by both groups of respondents will be discussed.

NGOs and Other Organisations

In the Survey of Social Workers, the NGO respondents only slightly agreed that they themselves (2.671), as well as the SWD local representatives (2.794), had clear understanding on the functions of LC, while their score on other LC members (except SWD staff) is quite neutral (3.163). Their overall rating on the item ‘understanding of LC functions’ is 2.881, again a neutral score (see Table 10).

On the contrary, the SWD respondents strongly agreed (1.186) that they had clear understanding of LC functions, and their score on other LC members’ understanding is also high (2.14). The findings of both groups of respondents suggest that other LC members’ understanding of LC was lower than the SWD local representatives’ (p<.01).

As one LC chairperson said, “some LC members did not have clear understanding of their responsibility, role and authority. There were often changes of the participating members. As a result, the progress was affected to quite an extent” (SWD). Another respondent in the interview gave this explanation for the NGOs: “Since the publish of the Review Report, the implementation of all the matters concerned was in a hurry. The NGOs did not have enough time for preparation. On the other hand, there was not yet any consensus among them” (NGO). When talking
about consensus, it is quite right that even social work units held different views on the roles and functions of the LC, particularly in the beginning stage. The differences in their understanding of LC can be further illustrated by other interview data:

(a) “The LC should aim at the development of service strategies, but colleagues were often misled. They thought it had to deliver direct services in response to youth needs” (NGO).

(b) “There were sometimes discrepancies in the expectation of workload and expectation of colleagues from different service units. The members of LC felt it was a burden if they took up the work” (NGO).

Obviously, a lot of communication problems existed among the service units during the preparatory stage of LC. Regarding the participation of members in implementing LC tasks, the NGO respondents in the Survey of Social Workers regarded their own participation as on a moderately high level (2.567). Furthermore, they rated the OR workers’ participation as slightly high (2.738). However, their scores on CYC workers, IT workers and SWD representatives are only neutral (2.915 and 2.965), and their score given to SSWs is slightly negative (3.34). The participation of other youth organisations (e.g. schools, church groups) and government departments was regarded by them as low (4.029).

On the other hand, the SWD respondents gave a very high participation score to themselves (1.349). They also gave high scores to OR workers, CYC workers and IT workers (2.023 and 1.907), followed by moderately high score to SSWs (2.674). Their scores to other youth organisations and government departments are neutral (2.977 and 2.973) (see Table 10). The findings of both groups of respondents suggest that among all the LC members, other youth organisations and government departments had the lowest participation in LC, followed by SSWs (p<.01).

Interview data also show that the participation of LC members was in general not high. As one respondent commented, the effectiveness of LC “depends on the
level of attendance and responsibility-taking of the representatives. There were some service units thinking that this system was ineffective, and thus they did not support its implementation. Almost a half of the units did not totally commit” (NGO). As already highlighted in our interim report, there were comments that some NGOs did not prepare their programme plans before attending the LC meetings, thus hampering mutual sharing and programme coordination; and some NGOs were over concerned with their own programmes and ‘statistics’, and lacked commitment to the joint efforts of the LC.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 10: Performance of LC Members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Clear Understanding of LC</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondents of questionnaire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SWD representatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LC members (except SWD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall rating of understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participation of LC Members</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondents of questionnaire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OR workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CYCs and ITs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SWD local representatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSWs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other youth organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other government departments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall rating of participation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* N = 140 ** N = 37

408 In particular, findings from the interviews with sample CYCs/ITs also correspond with survey data that the SSW was the least active group among the social work professionals in the LC. Even the SWD respondents gave similar comments, as in the following. On the whole, there are many negative comments regarding the SSW’s performance in the LC:

(a) “Other youth work units, such as SSW, did not think the LC was important to them, thus their participation was very low” (SWD).
(b) “The SSWs had lower commitment. Those agencies rendering SSW services would send different SSWs to attend LC meetings by rotation. This greatly affected their continuity of participation” (SWD).

c) “FLEOs, SSWs or front-line workers did not participate and commit enthusiastically” (SWD).

d) “The establishment of LC is to develop annual work plans and collect information for the CYCs. As a result, the participation of other services, such as SSW, was low” (NGO).

Despite these negative comments, the practical difficulties relating to SSW’s participation in the LC has to be noted. As one respondent explained, “the SSWs have to attend too many meetings in the community. Due to the division of service areas, they might have to attend different LCs and give the same views on the same problems. Thus they might feel confused and a waste of time” (NGO). If this explanation is true, it can explain why SSWs of the same NGO were sent to attend LC meetings by rotation.

Moreover, the interview data also show that, similar to survey data, the participation of other non-social work organisations, including government departments, was also less active. The respondents gave the following opinions on their performance:

(a) “Only the centre-in-charges clearly understood their roles in the LC. Representatives of other organizations such as SSWs, school headmasters and teachers did not quite know their roles played in the LC. They were invited by the LC to sit in the meetings, but they did not know what to express” (NGO).
(b) “Except social workers, other members did not actively participate. They only came to be present in the meetings and had no obligation to assist in the assessment of community needs. They only gave their opinions but did not involve in any in-depth discussion” (NGO).

(c) “Representatives of non-social work organizations and government departments did not have much understanding on children and youth services. Their views might not reflect the actual situations. This affected their commitment” (SWD).

(d) “The participation of local people invited to attend LC meetings was not high because they did not understand the functions of LC” (NGO).

(e) “As some members were busy with their works, it was difficult for them to make time to participate, especially those colleagues who were not directly delivering children and youth services. This affected their attendance in meetings” (SWD).

411 To sum up, although the SWD respondents’ overall rating on members’ participation in LC tasks is on the high level (2.225), yet the NGO respondents’ overall rating on this item is slightly low (3.224) (see Table 10). Based on the findings from both qualitative and quantitative data, we conclude that the overall performance of LC members can be regarded as fair only. The LC has in fact faced a lot of constraints in soliciting the support of its members, though most of them coming from the social work profession. A respondent highlighted precisely one of the major obstacles:

“The LC of this district was doing quite well. However, the layers of structure and the number of meetings associated with the implementation of LC tasks required much of the service units’ time if they wanted to participate fully. On the other hand, if the attitudes of the organisations were ‘cold’, or they even did not encourage their
local units to participate too much in this mechanism, it would be hard to expect full participation from the unit representatives” (NGO).

412 Undoubtedly, an effective LC certainly requires the active participation of its members, including social workers and members from other organisations and government departments. It seems that smoothing works on both headquarters and district levels are more than necessary if the LC is to enhance the participation of local representatives.

**SWD Local Representatives**

413 Data collected from the field interviews show that many sample CYCs/ITs were disappointed about the performance of SWD local representatives. Some of the negative comments are related to the unhelpfulness of SWD staff, for example: “The SWD staff just ‘looked on with folded arms’. They themselves also did not quite understand the functions and aims of LC” (NGO). Another respondent added, “we wished to obtain more information through the LC, but the SWD hesitated. The YO immediately ‘closed the door behind’. He did not want to try to get the requested information. It was guessed that the YO might worry that he had to lead the NGOs to conduct some research” (NGO).

414 The lack of a well-developed strategy to help the members to participate and to implement the works of LC is another negative comment on the SWD local representatives:

(a) “The SWD staff did not quite value the work of LC, and just did what was minimally required, e.g. held a meeting once a year” (NGO).

(b) “The SWD did not coordinate the service units to divide responsibility and avoid service duplication. There was no follow-up with the units to see whether they had carried out the decisions of the meetings” (NGO).
(c) “It was doubtful whether the SWD had ever used any method to mobilize the NGOs to participate actively in LC activities” (NGO).

(d) “Meetings were too few. I did not know who was in-charge of the LC. The attempt by the SWD to put forward the work of LC was also limited” (NGO).

Weak and ineffective leadership is another area mostly criticized by the respondents:

(a) “On the part of identification of community needs, the LC seemed not to have performed its function because the leader could not stimulate the members to think about the issues concerned” (NGO).

(b) “The SWD staff could not take up the leading role. They did not effectively set service strategy and direction of work, leading to duplication of resources, inflexibility and inability to respond to community needs quickly” (NGO).

(c) “The SWD colleague was not enthusiastically leading the LC. As a result, other members had no strong commitment” (NGO).

Despite all these negative comments from the sample CYCs/ITs, analysis of the findings from the Survey of Social Workers indicates that the NGO’s evaluation of SWD local representatives was not that negative. For instance, the NGO respondents’ overall rating on the SWD local representatives’ performance in LC is neutral (3.187). They slightly agreed (2.794) that the SWD local representatives had clear understanding on LC functions (see Table 11), but they only gave neutral scores to comments that the SWD local representatives were enthusiastic in implementing LC tasks (2.965) and that they were able to enhance the participation of youth social work organisations (3.156). Furthermore, they slightly disagreed that the SWD local representatives had strategies and steps in the implementation of LC (3.284), and they gave moderately low scores to SWD local representatives’ performance in enhancing
the participation of other government departments (3.447) and other youth organisations (3.475).

417 On the other hand, the SWD respondents gave a high score (1.815) to their own overall performance. Among the six items listed in Table 11, they gave very high scores to their performance in ‘having clear understanding of LC functions’ (1.186) and ‘being enthusiastic in implementation of the works of LC’ (1.349). They also rated themselves highly on ‘having strategies and steps in implementation of LC’ (1.535) and on ‘enhancing the participation of youth social work organisations’ (1.651). Similar to the NGO respondents, their two lowest scores were given to their performance in enhancing the participation of other youth organisations (2.093) and other government departments (2.622). The findings suggest that when compared with other tasks, the SWD local representatives might have more difficulties in mobilizing other government departments to participate in the works of LC, as the score 2.622 is one of the lowest given by the SWD respondents so far.

Table 11: Performance of SWD Local Representatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>NGO</th>
<th>SWD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have clear understanding of LC functions</td>
<td>2.794</td>
<td>1.186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being enthusiastic in implementation</td>
<td>2.965</td>
<td>1.349</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Able to enhance the participation of youth social work organisations</td>
<td>3.156</td>
<td>1.651</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have strategies &amp; steps in implementation</td>
<td>3.284</td>
<td>1.535</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Able to enhance the participation of other government departments</td>
<td>3.447</td>
<td>2.622*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Able to enhance the participation of other youth organizations</td>
<td>3.475</td>
<td>2.093</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall rating of SWD performance</td>
<td>3.187</td>
<td>1.815*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* N = 37

418 The findings of both groups of respondents in the survey suggest that the SWD local representatives were particularly less able to mobilize the support of non-social work organisations (p<.01), especially other government departments. One
respondent gave the following reason: “The establishment of the LC was recommended by the Review Report; other non-social work organizations might not accept such an idea. It is doubtful if the SWD was able to mobilize more government departments to participate in the LC” (NGO).

419 It seems that most of the respondents admitted the difficulties in gaining the full participation of other youth organisations and government departments in the LC. However, if the LC could gain the support and recognition of the ‘social worker’ members, it would still be a useful mechanism in community-based planning. To achieve this aim, effective leadership is a requisite. The following are two striking examples how an effective leader can influence the participation of other members of the LC, particularly those social work colleagues:

(a) “The LC functioned very effectively because the enthusiastic impetus of the chairperson influenced every member, who became very keen and committed. On the other hand, members also improved and benefited from the chairperson’s attitude of continuous improvement” (NGO).

(b) “Two years ago, members responded insincerely. They wondered what content the meeting had and what suggestions be forced on them to follow. Therefore, they met together to discuss before the LC meeting. In the meeting of July 1996, the situation changed. There was an atmosphere of genuine sharing. Although there was no practical work decided, all of us really cared about the needs of the young people. The change was because a new chairperson (DO) was in position. He had very sincere attitudes, cared much about young people and was very social work oriented. His attitudes influenced other people very quickly, including the representatives of the Education Department and Housing Office. For example, a representative from the Education Department, aged about thirty, was a youth of the same district. Under the influence of the chairperson, he shared his feelings of growing up in the community and his
experiences on community establishments and youth welfare, on behalf of the young people in the district, rather than as a representative from the department. One of the chairperson’s strength was that he did not force the units to do what had been decided in the meetings. It does not mean that the units did not wish to follow the recommendations of the LC, but it was necessary to take into consideration the differences between the district as a whole and the sub-areas. At present, the LC is better than the one in the past” (NGO).

Table 12 : Perceived Success of LC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>By Organisations</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>(%)</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NGOs (overall)</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>(100)</td>
<td>3.236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGOs (Shatin)</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>(11.4)</td>
<td>2.125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SWD local representatives</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>(100)</td>
<td>1.907</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>By Service Units (N = 140)</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>(%)</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children Centre (and cum S/R)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>(12.9)</td>
<td>2.889</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Centre (and cum S/R)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>(13.6)</td>
<td>2.947</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CYC</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>(30.0)</td>
<td>3.429</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CYC cum S/R</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>(37.9)</td>
<td>3.226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>(5.7)</td>
<td>3.750</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>By Years of Service in Current Centres (N = 141)</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>(%)</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12 - 17 months</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>(17.7)</td>
<td>3.320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 - 23 months</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>(15.6)</td>
<td>3.136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 - 29 months</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>(17.7)</td>
<td>3.200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 - 35 months</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>(6.4)</td>
<td>3.222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36 months &amp; above</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>(42.6)</td>
<td>3.250</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fixed Representatives (N=140)</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>(%)</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fixed Representatives (N=140)</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>(96.4</td>
<td>3.230</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Perceived Success of LC

The Survey of Social Workers found that there is sharp contrast between the two groups of respondents on their perceived success of LC. The SWD respondents gave a high score (1.907) to the success of LC, whereas the NGO respondents gave a slightly low score (3.236). However, the respondents of NGO units in Shatin gave a high score of 2.125, which is the highest among all the LCs.
If we examine the respondents’ perceived success by service units, it is found that most of them did not regard the LCs as successful (see Table 12). When compared, the opinions of single service centres tended to be neutral (2.889 and 2.947), but the CYCs’ scores are slightly negative (3.226 and 3.429). The ITs’ score is even more negative (3.75), but the sample of this group of respondents is small. Moreover, no correlation is found between the NGO respondents’ perceived success of LC and their years of service in current centres (scores range from 3.136 to 3.320, p=.421).

Moreover, a total of 24 sample CYCs and ITs (75%) expressed in the interviews that they had made reference to the LC’s assessment of community needs when they decided on their annual work plans. Similarly, the survey findings also show that many NGO respondents had referred to the discussions and decisions made in the LC during their preparation of annual work plans (mean=2.468).
5. Conclusion and Recommendations

501 The LC has a very short history only. The evaluation after the two-year experimental period concludes that its overall performance is average, as reflected by the opinions of CYCs and ITs. While the SWD local representatives’ perceived success of the LC is high, their NGO counterparts gave a neutral-slightly low score only.

502 At present, the SWD local representatives hold the chairmanship of all the LCs, but there are suggestions to have the chairman elected or rotated among members. Stronger backup and support should be given to the chairpersons. The LC members are mainly youth workers from CYCs, ITs and ORs. It is generally opined that the members’ role is unclearly defined, and the representativeness of LC is not broad enough. It would function more effectively if FLEOs, SSWs, SGOs/SGTs, school headmasters, representatives from other government departments and other related professionals could be invited to attend meetings on a regular basis. To implement this, however, the size of LC, agency dynamics and the level of participation of non-social work organisations are also factors to be considered. Moreover, the frequent turnover of NGO and SWD staff has restrained the smooth development of LC. The frequent absence of agency representatives in meetings also inhibited its work.

503 The relationship between LC and DCC is blurred, and thus it should be clearly defined to members as soon as possible. In some areas, their works have overlapped, but no support for a merge of the two parties is found. In order to avoid duplication, the LC should refocus its works and concentrate on smaller areas within a larger district. Moreover, the NGOs inclined to support an independent LC.

504 In some LCs, the number of meetings was too few, e.g. one or two meetings a year. It is found that the more frequent the meetings, the higher the members’ perceived success of LC. Insufficient meetings have limited the opportunities for
mutual sharing and service coordination among members. It is preferable to have at least three to four meetings a year, and the meetings should match with the time on the preparation of annual programme plans by service units.

505 In addition to the LC meetings, other common formal communication channels are task groups, sub-area meetings and sharing meetings. However, more than half of the LCs had no other formal communication channels other than the LC meetings. Both SWD and NGO recognise the necessity and significance of informal communication channels.

506 The majority of LCs have no authority to enforce decisions made in their meetings, or to direct the NGOs to pursue matters in specific ways, but there was no agreement on whether this would affect or enhance members’ participation. However, both SWD and NGOs prefer to retain the voluntary elements currently enjoyed by members; they do not support LC decisions be compulsorily enforced. The members would feel a loss of autonomy if the LC intervenes too much in the units’ operations.

507 The supply of information by the LC was criticized by the NGOs. For instance, some of the information they requested were not easily available, or it took a rather long time to obtain. In general, the information supplied, though fairly useful, was not regarded as sufficient. Thus this area of work has to be strengthened.

508 The performance of LC in assisting the NGOs to identify community needs was only fair. Factors that inhibited an effective assessment of community needs include the large geographical boundary covered by some LCs and superficial analysis due to insufficient representativeness and supply of information. Although many NGOs have benefited from the mutual sharing of views and information among themselves in LC meetings, the LC was less effective in the assessment of service demand and prioritization of community needs. Nonetheless, quite a number of NGOs admitted that they have referred to the discussions and decisions made in the LC when preparing their annual programme plans.
Many NGOs did not think the LC has done a successful job in the coordination of services in the district. However, they have to bear part of the responsibility too. It was very difficult for them to reach a mutually agreed programme strategy, especially on the setting of service boundaries and priorities because different service units had unique staff situations, programme emphases, service priorities and agency policies. However, since the LC has facilitated mutual sharing and exchange of information among members, service units would make adjustment on their programme plans after meetings. Should there be possibility of duplication of service, they would use informal channels to discuss the matter over with the parties concerned, as many NGOs have maintained good working relationship with each other through various kinds of informal linkage in the community.

There are diversified views on whether the LC has fulfilled the function of establishing a better linkage between youth work units and other local organisations. This may suggest that the LCs in some districts could have performed better than others, or the overall performance of LC in this area is fair, as reflected in the survey of NGO workers.

On the whole, the overall performance of LC members was fair only. When compared, the SWD local representatives had clearer understanding of LC than other LC members, whereas there were discrepancies in the expectations and understanding of LC among NGO representatives. Moreover, the participation of CYCs, ITs and the SWD local representatives in the works of LC was regarded by the NGOs as average, which is however still higher than the participation of SSWs and other kinds of social worker. The major reasons for the lower participation of SSWs are heavy workload and unclear understanding on the role they played in the LC. Moreover, the participation of other youth organisations and government departments was low, mainly because they did not have clear understanding on the functions of LC as well as children and youth services, and they did not feel such obligations too.

The overall qualitative comments on the SWD local representatives’ performance in the organisation of LC were not that positive, for example, unhelpful
attitudes of some staff, lack of well-developed strategy to implement LC, and weak and ineffective leadership in some districts. To be specific, the overall rating on their performance is on the neutral-slightly negative level. The SWD staff were particularly weak in enhancing the participation of other youth organisations and government departments. Nonetheless, a few cases illustrate that a good leadership from the SWD would have positive influences on service units and enhance their participation in the LC.

**Recommendation --- The model of Shatin**

513 The LCs have certainly performed some of the functions as recommended in the Review Report, although there are differences in the degree of effectiveness among various districts. It must be stressed that apart from the effective leadership of the SWD, the active participation of NGOs is also a crucial factor in the success of LC. In the meantime, it is necessary to coordinate the ‘social worker’ members and assist them to reach a consensus on the structure and functions of LC, and to strengthen the understanding, communication, cooperation and linkage among them. Yet they also need a sound mechanism to allow all these tasks to be carried out.

514 In the Survey of Social Workers, the Shatin LC has obtained the highest ‘perceived success’ score among all the LCs, suggesting that it was an effective or successful LC from the NGO respondents’ perspective. Findings from the interview with sample CYCs/ITs in Shatin also support this contention (despite that there were still weaknesses in some areas, which are inevitable in any experimental period). Since the LC has completed the two-year exploration stage but there is still no model structure for them, the research team is confident to recommend the Shatin model.

515 The Shatin LC, subordinate to the DCC, has an unique organisational structure, comprising the larger committee, sub-area groups, task groups and the Coordinating Work Group (see the last chart in Figure 1). It meets four times a year, but due to the existence of different work groups, meetings are held more frequently than expected. The following is an outline of its structure as well as the opinions of some respondents and the research team:
Sub-area Groups

516 Unlike other districts, there is only one LC in Shatin, despite its large area. However, there are six sub-area groups, which are responsible for the assessment of community needs in six sub-districts of Shatin. After discussion in the sub-districts, the members would meet and share the situations of each sub-district in the LC.

Task Groups

517 Parallel to these sub-area groups are four task groups (five in 1995), which are responsible for the design of programme strategies to tackle the work foci highlighted in the LC. The work foci are the community needs commonly identified by different sub-area groups. Examples of these are parenting education, adjustment to the school system, youth developmental needs, the promotion of social consciousness, and the deviance of young people, e.g. gangs and drug abuse, etc..

518 The LC members must join one task group as member. They can join a second one if they have the interest. As a respondent opined, “it is good to join the task groups on a compulsory basis. ‘To give’ ensure that people will be committed and do the local work well” (Shatin NGO). However, the LC members are given full autonomy on whether to adopt the programme packages designed by the task groups in their own service units. One of the rationales for organising the task groups is that members may have different areas of concern and expertise. Dividing them into small groups and letting them follow up their own areas of interest is more efficient than discussing all the issues in the larger committee.

519 Some people might query the time spent in the task groups. However, it all depends whether gain will outweigh loss. Different service units may have their own service foci. The task groups not only help them to better address to the community needs, but also enhance the opportunities of mutual learning and cooperation among fellow members:

“When the unit representatives participated in different task groups, through mutual sharing on services and community needs, they gathered together and integrated more vigorous working experiences,
service formats and methods. In this way, members had a better grasp of service demand and could effectively promote certain kinds of service. Simultaneously, they absorbed and gained other members’ experiences when other task groups reported their result and progress in the LC meetings” (Shatin NGO).

520 Some respondents asserted that through participation in the task groups, they acquired mutual stimulation and support, as well as respect from their counterparts. Others added the advantage of better utilization of resources:

(a) “In setting a comprehensive service strategy, the task groups compiled handbooks for special tasks. They also arranged sharing meetings for colleagues. From this point of view, the LC helped us to establish service strategies. On the other hand, the centre staff would make reference to or use the programme packages designed by the task groups in their own programmes. This undoubtedly helped to save manpower and resources” (Shatin NGO).

(b) “In the task groups, we examined the feasibility of some programme strategies with other members, which was helpful to the service development in our centre. We knew more about the programme information and resources of other units. We could also join hands with other members in the task groups to provide experimental services to selected targets, e.g. schools. The present system has facilitated our centre’s service development; it is not a work burden to us” (Shatin NGO).

521 Moreover, some respondents also expressed that the task groups helped to “enhance community linkage and network among service units” (Shatin NGO). As they organised a series of activities and programmes, this also helped to “increase local people’s understanding and knowledge on some problems and needs of the young people” (Shatin SWD).
Coordinating Work Group
522 To better coordinate the works of different task groups when the LC does not meet, the Shatin LC has organised a Coordinating Work Group in 1996. It is chaired by the YO and composed of the convenors and deputy convenors of various task groups as members. Apart from coordination, it also helps to prepare the works of task groups before the quarterly LC meetings. The respondents regarded this attempt as an improvement to the former structure.

Membership
523 The LC is chaired by the DO. Its members consist of mainly social workers from the group and community services, including CYCs, IT, ORs, NLCDPs and SSWs. And SGTs, school headmasters and representatives from other government departments are not members. However, the research team recommends that during the assessment of community needs by the sub-area groups, the representativeness should be broader and it is better to invite non-social work organisations to participate in the assessment, whereas in the task groups where programme strategies are discussed and developed, the participation should be confined to social work professionals. Less meetings but more meaningful involvement of non-social work organisations might enhance their motivation and willingness to participate in the LCs.

Final Remark
524 Although it is the Shatin model that we recommend, the research team also understand that the unique situations in some districts may not allow this model to be carried out, or the structures currently employed by the LCs are already effective and acceptable to their members. However, for those who do not satisfy with the present structure of their LCs, they should seriously consider using the recommended model. Of course, this model is not a panacea, and we should not expect highly on it. As we have already stressed, a successful LC requires not only a sound structure, but also the effective leadership of SWD as well as the active participation and high commitment of the NGOs in the local community.