

**Minutes of Panel on Welfare Services Meeting
10 May 2004
“Update on Support for Vulnerable Elders”**

	Administration’s Response
Elderly suicide statistics	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="528 521 1355 958">1. According to the Multi-Disciplinary Study on the Causes of Elderly Suicide in Hong Kong commissioned by the Administration in 2002, suicide rates are generally higher among men worldwide. Certain personality traits, such as neurotic, less extroverted and open to experiences, might lead to suicidal behaviour. We will consider more research to correlate personality traits with patterns of behaviour in different gender groups. <li data-bbox="528 958 1355 1720">2. According to the Central Suicide Information System, of the 155 elderly suicide cases recorded in the first 11 months of 2003, 3 of these cases (i.e. 2% of the total) have attempted suicide in the past 12 months. To facilitate early detection of elders with depression and suicidal risks so as to render timely intervention to them, the Elderly Suicide Prevention Programme launched by the Hospital Authority in 2002 aim to provide psychogeriatric treatment to elderly patients in seven fast-track clinics, with support from the community in reaching out to those vulnerable elders. The Health, Welfare and Food Bureau will keep under review the effectiveness of the services provided and identify possible areas for improvement.
Inter-departmental co-ordination against elder abuse	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="528 1720 1355 2018">3. The Procedural Guidelines for Handling Elder Abuse Cases, which is a multi-disciplinary protocol adopted for handling elder abuse cases since March 2004, sets out conditions and examples to facilitate frontline workers to identify and handle elder abuse cases. Apart from non-Government organizations (NGOs), 5

	<p>Government departments, including the Housing Department, are also covered in the Procedural Guidelines.</p> <p>4. While all professionals working with elders have a role to play in the prevention and handling of elder abuse cases, a “case manager approach” as stipulated in the Procedural Guidelines is adopted. Social workers usually act as the case manager responsible for conducting investigation, providing counselling and arranging support services while staff of other disciplines identify suspected elder abuse cases, make referrals to the social workers and provide them with different support services (e.g. medical treatment, housing assistance, financial assistance, etc.) as needed. Social workers will liaise with related professionals in the helping process and co-ordinate the service provision. Multi-disciplinary case conferences may also be conducted on certain cases to facilitate the professionals involved to formulate appropriate welfare plans for the elders.</p> <p>5. Apart from co-ordination at the operational level, the Working Group on Elder Abuse which is convened by the Social Welfare Department (SWD) and attended by representatives from different Government departments and NGOs is set up to examine elder abuse issues.</p>
<p>Effectiveness of Integrated Family Services Centres (IFSCs) in providing services to vulnerable elders</p>	<p>6. In the Evaluative Study of the Pilot Projects on IFSCs conducted by the University of Hong Kong, IFSC was found to be a more desirable mode of service delivery than the traditional Family Services Centre (FSC). The positive outcomes include improved accessibility, reaching out to at-risk families, provision of integrated services, improved partnership with community organizations and enhanced user participation and satisfaction. IFSCs serve, among others, vulnerable elders who may either be outreached or referred for service by various</p>

sources. Sometimes the elders also self-approach the IFSCs for service. As reflected from the user information, 22% of the new users of the IFSC Pilot Projects are persons aged 60 or above, implying that the services of IFSCs have been used by the elders. Services provided include counselling, support groups, referrals for community support services, long-term care services and practical assistance. Support for their carers is also rendered if required. More than 90% of the service users, of whom some may be vulnerable elders or their family members, have indicated satisfaction to the IFSC services and perceived improvement in their problems.

7. With the positive outcomes of the IFSC model and the support of the welfare sector, SWD will re-engineer all FSCs into IFSCs by phases in 2004-05 through pooling of resources. There will be a total of 61 IFSCs covering the whole territory after re-engineering. Apart from IFSCs, other elderly service units, e.g. District Elderly Community Centres, Neighbourhood Elderly Centres, also serve the vulnerable elders including those with suicidal risk and risk of elder abuse.