

DH actively follows up on Ombudsman's recommendations

The Department of Health is following up on the recommendations by the Office of the Ombudsman in its direct investigation report released today (March 12) on the follow-up mechanism regarding psychological health assessment of school children. Measures have been put in place to improve the mechanism for the benefit of students' psychological health.

A spokesman for the DH said, "We thank the Office for undertaking the review and appreciate its observations on the follow-up mechanism. In response to the recommendations, a number of measures have been implemented to more closely follow up and better serve students who are assessed to have psychological health problems."

The Student Health Service (SHS) of the DH provides health promotion and disease prevention services including annual health assessment and psychological health assessment for enrolled primary and secondary school children at 12 Student Health Service Centres (SHSCs). Students found to have psychosocial problems will be referred to the Special Assessment Centres (SACs), specialist clinics of the Hospital Authority (HA), school social workers or other appropriate organisations for further management.

"To enhance the attendance rate and communication, the SHS is planning to send SMS messages to parents, tentatively from mid-2019, to remind them of their children's upcoming assessments and to advise those who failed to attend to make new appointments. With effect from the 2019/20 school year, the DH will also provide schools and the Education Bureau with information on aggregate attendance rates of annual health assessment of students," the spokesman said.

"The computer system of the SHS will also be upgraded to allow for uploading of individual reports on Personal Health Assessment Results and Recommendations for checking by parents and students. The DH is also exploring the possibility of enabling parents to conduct online enrolment and scheduling or re-scheduling appointments for annual health assessment," the spokesman added.

Regarding the following up of referred cases, the DH launched a pilot scheme in four SHSCs last year to proactively contact the cases referred to the psychiatry service of the HA to understand the school children's circumstances. The scheme will be rolled out to all centres starting from the 2019/20 school year to enhance follow-up of referred cases.

"The attendance rates of the health assessment services have been rising in the past seven years, and the DH has all along been striving to enhance its services and improve the attendance rate in that regard. The DH will continue to seriously examine improvement measures for enhancing its

services, including the recommendations by the Ombudsman," the spokesman said.