

SWD's statement on protest

In response to a protest today (August 30) at the Social Welfare Department (SWD) headquarters at Wu Chung House, Wan Chai, the SWD issued the following statement:

The SWD has indicated earlier that the Director of Social Welfare is ready to have a candid and serious discussion with social workers of the welfare sector, and a conference room has already been arranged for meeting the representatives of the protesters. However, the protesters declined the arrangements, and a group of protesters including those with masks and helmets blocked the entrances to multiple floors of the SWD headquarters, causing obstruction to colleagues. A spokesman for the SWD expressed regret over these acts.

In fact, in response to the demands for welfare services caused by the recent social disputes, the SWD has maintained continued communication with the sector and has implemented various ad hoc special measures, which include:

1. Exercising flexibility for youth service units and family service units' attainment of output standards so that social workers can provide flexible services for affected teenagers;
2. Setting up of 24-hour hotlines by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to provide emotional support for needy young persons;
3. Advancement of the implementation of the "two social workers for each secondary school" measure during the summer holiday for counselling students with emotional distress;
4. Provision of cross-district overnight outreach services by an NGO to render immediate services to students and youngsters in need;
5. Extension of a range of youth services to persons aged up to 29; and
6. Youth service units of NGOs may refer emotionally distressed youth to the SWD Clinical Psychology Units for clinical psychological service.

The spokesman stressed that the department stands ready to have rational discussions with the sector (including front-line social workers) on related issues and appealed to protesters not to affect the normal operation of the department.