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\$130m 'cure' for juvenile delinquency

More than \$130 million should be spent in the next five years to try to reduce delinquency.

A Green Paper published yesterday wants services

'Wider policy needed'

The Green Paper drew a lukewarm response yesterday from social workers who complained it was not comprehensive enough.

They said it was impractical to draw up a plan to help one group of young people without spelling out a wider policy for all young people.

"The Government is putting the cart before the horse," the acting General Secretary of the Boys' and Girls' Clubs Association, Mrs Chan Wong Shui, said.

Mrs Chan said the Government has yet to clearly outline its overall policy for young people and by singling out one group for intensive services. It is difficult for social workers to relate the proposals to the other basic services for young people.

The Director of the Council of Social Service, Mr Hui Yin-fat, said: "It only deals with young people who are vulnerable to delinquent influence."

"What plans does the Government have for normal youths?" he asked.

expanded in three areas - the school; places where young people are likely to frequent; and the family.

It recommends that a direct school social service should be made available to a third of the primary pupils by the end of next year and to all pupils by 1980.

In the secondary sector 60 per cent of the pupils will be covered by next year increasing to complete coverage by 1981.

The Green Paper also recommends that a comprehensive family life education programme be provided as soon as possible.

"Research has confirmed that broken families, inadequate parental care and attention, inappropriate methods of enforcing discipline and strained relationships among family members can have serious consequences on the development of young people," the paper said.

And family life education is considered "an important tool in promoting understanding and strengthening family unity, especially in days of rapid social change."

With large-scale expansion in existing programmes the plan estimates that between the next financial year and 1982 or 1983, an additional 155 professional social workers, 58 trained non-graduate social workers and 230 student guidance officers

will be needed.

"Personal social work among young people aims at providing guidance and help specifically to young people who experience problems in their personal development, and to reduce the chance of them turning delinquent," the Assistant Director of Social Welfare, Miss Annie Chan, said yesterday.

Miss Chan said there were no indications of the most vulnerable age.

An age range of six to 20 was considered appropriate since children under six were generally living in a protected environment while those more than 20 were more mature and emotionally stable.

"Efforts have been made by the Government in providing and expanding recreational activities and facilities for young people."

"It is estimated about a third of young people between six and 20 are taking part in some form of organised youth or recreational activities and it is hoped to increase this proportion in future."

Despite this, Miss Chan said, there would always be a proportion of young people whose individual needs and problems could not be fully met by the basic social services.

It is towards this group the Green Paper recommendations are directed.

"The proposals in the Green Paper, if approved, will require an estimated expenditure of \$20.2 million in the next financial year, rising annually to \$30.5 million in 1982 or 1983," she said.

On family life education, the Green Paper said the methods used to promote unity and understanding include lectures, group discussions, seminars, workshops, personal and group counselling, exhibitions, role-playing and family outings and camps.

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The voluntary agencies have been promoting this programme for more than 10 years and the Social Welfare Department has emphasised this activity since late 1975.

More social workers will be recruited to mount publicity programmes from next year.

On the problem of triad influence, the Green Paper said a working party appointed by the Fight Violent Crime Committee is examining the issue and recommendations are expected soon.

The Green Paper also calls

for the appointment of an experienced social worker to the panel of film censors.

Other measures recommended include:

- Improving the quality of service provided by the police discretionary scheme by giving basic social work training to selected policemen.

- Expansion of adventure training and camping programmes.

- Enlisting more volunteers to assist and guide young people with problems.

- A planned expansion of study room facilities in the more crowded areas.

- Reviewing employment services to improve job opportunities for young people at risk.