

Well-being of Hong Kong Citizens under Emerging Public Policy Agendas

Public Health and Well-being

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Strengthening Public Health System as a Central Pillar of Sustainable and Resilient Societal Development

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Hong Kong's Mental Health & Loneliness Data

1 in 5

Hongkongers feel lonely

Worse than WHO global average
520,000 self-isolating

326

calls per day to 18111

Mental Health Support Hotline
229,773 calls in under 2 years

32/40

recommendations done

From 2017 Mental Health Review
Report — nearly a decade on

Crisis Negotiation & Peer Counselling in Public Health

Crisis Negotiation

- Active listening & emotion labelling prevent escalation
- Skills siloed in law enforcement — not comprehensively taught to social workers, nurses or GPs
- ACMH Stepped Care Model needs de-escalation competency, not just diagnosis
- These tools belong across the entire public health workforce

Peer Counselling

- Person-centred counselling builds sustained coping — not just crisis containment
- Low-cost, accessible and scalable — ideal for District Health Centres and ICCMWs
- Fits the Healthy Mind Pilot Project model operating across DHCs now

Ministers for Loneliness: UK (2018) & Japan (2021)

United Kingdom

World's first Minister for Loneliness — 2018

- PM Theresa May appointed Tracey Crouch; current holder: Stephanie Peacock (2025)
- Published first national strategy "A Connected Society"
- NHS social prescribing: GPs refer lonely patients to community activities
- Over £20M invested in community connection initiatives
- **Lesson: Political will works — but 47% of UK adults still lonely in 2025**

Japan

Second country — Minister appointed 2021

- Appointed after pandemic-linked rise in suicides, especially among women
- World's first Loneliness & Isolation Act enacted in 2023
- 21,856 "solitary deaths" in 2024 — died alone, undiscovered 8+ days
- 39.3% of citizens report loneliness — unchanged since the law's passage
- **Lesson: A law alone is not enough — measuring impact remains unsolved**

Seoul Mind Convenience Stores vs. HK Community Living Room

60,000

visits in 10 months
12x the original target

91.3%

user satisfaction
Loneliness score improved

25

districts by 2026
From 4 pilot locations

	HK Community Living Room	Seoul Mind Convenience Store
Target group	Subdivided unit (劏房) families with children	Anyone experiencing loneliness — all ages
Primary focus	Material deprivation & housing poverty	Emotional deprivation & mental wellness
Mental health	Incidental — referrals available	Central — peer counsellors on-site
Entry	Income & residency criteria required	None — walk in freely
Scale	Pilot in specific districts	Expanding to all 25 districts

Build on What Hong Kong Already Has

1

Add a mental wellness layer to Community Living Rooms & ICCMWs — peer counsellors, not just referral slips

2

Anti-stigma rebranding — a name as accessible as walking into a 7-Eleven

3

Appoint a ministerial or policy lead for loneliness — following the UK and Japan model

4

Open formal pathways for non-clinical practitioners (negotiators, counsellors, first responders) to contribute to the mental health workforce

“ We have the data. We have the frameworks.
We have the will.
Now let us have the courage —
because the people who need us
are counting on us.

Dr. Gilbert Wong | 3 July 2026