

Notes of the First Meeting of the Commission on Children

Date : 28 June 2018
Time : 4:15 p.m.
**Venue : Training cum Lecture Room, 5/F, West Wing,
Central Government Offices**

Present

Chairperson

Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung	Chief Secretary for Administration (CS)
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Vice-chairperson

Dr Law Chi-kwong	Secretary for Labour and Welfare (SLW)
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Ex-officio Members

Mr Patrick Nip	Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs
Dr Christine Choi	Under Secretary for Education (for Secretary for Education)
Mr Jack Chan	Under Secretary for Home Affairs (for Secretary for Home Affairs)
Mr Fong Ngai	Deputy Secretary for Food and Health (Health) ³ (for Secretary for Food and Health)
Dr Constance Chan	Director of Health
Ms Carol Yip	Director of Social Welfare
Miss Janice Tse	Director of Home Affairs
Ms Chan Yuen-han	Chairperson of Women's Commission

Non-official Members

Mr Peter Au Yeung Wai-hong
Miss Bakar Fariha Salma Deiya
Miss Cheng Hui-kiu
Ms Kathy Chung Lai-kam
Dr Patrick Ip
Dr Sanly Kam Shau-wan
Mr Edwin Lee
Mrs Priscilla Lui Tsang Sun-kai
Ms Shalini Mahtani
Mr Kenny Ng Kwan-lim
Dr Halina Poon Suk-han
Ms Susan So Suk-yin
Ms Michelle Tam Chi-yun
Mr Gary Wong Chi-him
Dr Lilian Wong Hiu-lei
Ms Kathy Wong Kin-ho
Dr Wong Kwai-yau

Secretary

Mr Kenneth Cheng	Principal Assistant Secretary for Labour and Welfare (Welfare) 1
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In attendance

Chief Secretary for Administration's Private Office

Ms Candy Lau	Administrative Assistant to Chief Secretary for Administration
Ms Veronica Wong	Press Secretary to Chief Secretary for Administration
Ms Kathy Siu	Political Assistant to Chief Secretary for Administration

Labour and Welfare Bureau (LWB)

Ms Chang King-yiu	Permanent Secretary for Labour and Welfare
Miss Leonia Tai	Deputy Secretary for Labour and Welfare (Welfare)1 (DS(W)1)
Mr David Leung [For Item 2 only]	Commissioner for Rehabilitation (C for R)

Ms Vivian Ko	Principal Assistant Secretary for Labour and Welfare (Welfare)1 (designate)
Mr Eugene Wan	Assistant Secretary for Labour and Welfare (Welfare) 1A
Ms Rebecca Cheung	Assistant Secretary for Labour and Welfare (Welfare) 1C

Social Welfare Department (SWD)

Mr Kok Che-leung [For Item 2 only]	Assistant Director (Rehabilitation & Medical Social Services) (AD(RM))
Ms Pang Kit Ling [For Item 3 only]	Assistant Director (Family & Child Welfare) (AD(FCW))

Others

Dr Anna Hui [For Item 2 only]	Associate Professor of Department of Applied Social Sciences, The City University of Hong Kong (CityU)
Dr Angela Siu [For Item 2 only]	Associate Professor of Department of Educational Psychology, The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK)
Prof. Paul Yip [For Item 3 only]	Professor of Social Work and Social Administration, The University of Hong Kong (HKU)
Ms Cynthia Xiong [For Item 3 only]	Senior Research Assistant, The Hong Kong Jockey Club Centre for Suicide Research and Prevention, HKU

Members absent with apologies

Prof Daniel Shek Tan-lei	Chairperson of Family Council
Ms Janus Cheng	
Mr Chow Wai-chung	
Mr Dennis Ho Chi-kuen	
Dr Sandra Tsang Kit-man	

Introduction

CS welcomed all Members to the first meeting of the Commission on Children (the Commission) and invited Members to take a group photo to mark the inauguration of the Commission.

2. CS introduced the background of the establishment of the Commission -

- (a) as announced in the Chief Executive's 2017 Policy Address, the Government planned to set up the Commission to amalgamate the efforts made by relevant bureaux/departments and child concern groups, focusing on addressing children's issues as they grew;
 - (b) the Government established a Preparatory Committee chaired by the Chief Executive in 2017 (the Preparatory Committee), and conducted a series of public engagement activities between November 2017 and January 2018; and
 - (c) taking into account the views received from the public engagement activities, the Preparatory Committee advised the Government on the status, terms of reference, structure, membership and initial work plan of the Commission. In line with the advice of the Preparatory Committee, the Government established the Commission on 1 June 2018.
3. CS advised that the Commission adopted a Two-tier Reporting System for declaration of interest. Depending on the nature of the relevant discussion items, Members normally needed not be excluded from discussion after declaring the interest.

Item 1: Structure, Mode of Operation and Proposed Initial Work Plan of the Commission on Children [Paper No. 01/2018]

4. CS said that no Members had to declare interest for this item and invited DS(W)1/LWB to introduce the structure, mode of operation and proposed initial work plan of the Commission.

5. CS advised that the Government attached great importance to the Commission which would, in accordance with its terms of reference, be

an on-going, action-oriented, responsive and high-level advisory body. The Commission would advise the Government on how best to provide overall steer, set policy directions, strategies and priorities and translate them into the Government policy agenda for implementation. The Commission would be provided with sufficient resources and manpower to perform its functions.

6. The following suggestions were made by individual Members –

- (a) The vision statement could be included in the main content of a formal paper, instead of being incorporated in an annex.
- (b) The vision spelt out in the terms of reference of the Commission was well-written. Specially, to secure the best interest of children and achieve the vision that “*Hong Kong is a place where all children’s rights, interests and well-being are respected and safeguarded, their voices are heard, and where all children enjoy healthy and happy growth and optimal development so as to achieve their fullest potentials*”, the Commission might need legal mandate and have a specific plan to become an independent statutory Commission eventually, under a dedicated Children’s Commissioner. This notwithstanding, it was accepted that a non-statutory Commission under CS was best placed to coordinate cross-bureau portfolios to achieve early benefits for children.
- (c) The operation of the Commission could become more transparent by making available the non-restrictive parts of the meeting minutes to the public, hence facilitating the participation of children and the community at large. The Commission also noted Members’ continued right to advocate matters on children’s rights outside the Commission on their personal and individual basis.
- (d) The establishment of more working groups should be considered to address different areas of concern or interests of children, e.g. children participation, improvement of children’s rights, researches into child protection policies or legislation.
- (e) Consideration should be given to allocating more resources for publicity and public education on the promotion of children’s rights and interests, and with an on-going and adequate budget for the Commission’s manpower, administration and research uses.

- (f) Consideration could be given to formulating short-term and long-term goals for specific issues, such as –
- (i) Equal rights and treatment for all children with or without special needs;
 - (ii) Sufficient play time and outdoor play areas for young children;
 - (iii) Establishment of a central data bank to enable Government offices and/or non-government stakeholders to collect and share useful data on children;
 - (iv) Inclusion of ethnic minority children, covering the learning of Chinese as a second language, etc.;
 - (v) Comprehensive education development of children to help children balance study, play and rest, as well as to achieve whole-person development;
 - (vi) Parent education and family support for children;
 - (vii) Residential child care services;
 - (viii) Protection of children against child abuse, and improvement to the child abuse prevention mechanism, particularly those involving serious and fatal cases;
 - (ix) Physical and mental health development of children; and
 - (x) Healthy and happy growth and optimal development of children.

7. In response, CS said that –

- (a) The Government would not rule out possible discussion in the future as on the statutory status of the Commission. In the interim, however, the Commission should take a pragmatic and realistic approach by focusing its efforts on addressing the many priority policies and issues as Members had identified and which would also require significant cross-bureau coordination and government resources. This was the very basis of the Chief Executive's decision to appoint CS to head the advisory Commission with a number of Directors of Bureaux and non-officials serving as standing Members of the Commission.

- (b) Since the discussion of the Commission and its working groups would involve policy formulation and resource needs, there would be a practical need for meetings to be held behind closed door. The Government accepted that members of the public might have an interest in following the Commission's work and would strive to enhance transparency by disseminating information relating to the Commission and its working groups through the Commission's website, press releases, etc. He had no objection to putting the non-restrictive parts of the meeting minutes onto the Commission's website.
- (c) The Commission would provide guidance to its working groups on the implementation of relevant initiatives within their respective purview in accordance with the child development strategies and priorities set by the Commission, while the working groups would report their work to the Commission. The Government was also open-minded towards the number of standing working groups to be set up, subject to a reasonable balance that would maintain the efficiency and effectiveness of the Commission's work. Furthermore, ad hoc task forces could be considered to discuss urgent matters as and when necessary.
- (d) Annual provisions of about \$6 million and \$3 million were budgeted for the Commission to conduct (i) research studies; and (ii) promotional programmes including related funding schemes respectively. The Government would seek additional resources for undertaking new initiatives as advised by the Commission.
- (e) The Government recognised the importance of the Commission's vision statement which should be set out clearly together with the Commission's terms of reference, structure and priority agenda, etc. once finalised. As proposed, the Commission would discuss "play time and play areas" at the next meeting.

Item 2: Regularisation of the Pilot Scheme on On-site Pre-school Rehabilitation Service (the Pilot Scheme) and Possible Enhancement
[Paper No. 02/2018]

8. Four Non-official Members, Mr Peter Au Yeung, Dr Sanly Kam, Ms Susan So and Dr Wong Kwai-yau declared interest for this item as

their organisations were service providers under the subject Pilot Scheme.

9. CS invited C for R of LWB, AD(RM) of SWD as well as the Consulting Team led by CityU (the Consulting Team) to brief Members, with a powerpoint presentation, on the progress of the Pilot Scheme, the preliminary observations of the evaluative study conducted by the Consulting Team, as well as the possible further enhancement of pre-school rehabilitation services.

10. Members' views were summarised as follows –

- (a) The environmental constraints (i.e. lack of space) in participating kindergartens under the Pilot Scheme would adversely affect the effectiveness of the On-site Pre-school Rehabilitation Services (OPRS). While the proposal to provide mobile training centres using vehicles might help overcome the environmental constraints, related operational problems (such as the long distance between the vehicle parking location and the school which would give rise to manpower and insurance issues for transferring students from the school to the vehicle) had to be resolved to ensure smooth operation. The Government might consider providing additional resources to pre-primary institutions in sorting out the environmental constraints in the long run. While it was not easy to find premises at welfare rent in public housing estates for accommodating the OPRS team with over ten staff, the Government might consider providing support to NGOs for renting premises in commercial buildings at market rent as an interim arrangement.
- (b) It was a positive development that the Education Bureau and the SWD had worked out a data transfer arrangement between pre-school rehabilitation units and primary schools, so that those children identified under the pre-school rehabilitation services would continue to receive special attention and appropriate services when they proceeded to primary school.
- (c) Early support for children at a less intensive level (i.e. Tier 1 support) could help solve their mild development needs and prevent some of them from deteriorating to become Tier 2 children. On the other hand, if Tier 2 children could be transferred to receive Tier 1 support after receiving training, it could release resources for helping other more needy children. Consideration could be given to expediting the provision of Tier 1 support. More social work service at the pre-primary

institutions was also suggested, e.g. providing extra social workers in special child care centres to support parents.

- (d) The crux of OPRS was the provision of support at the venues of kindergartens or kindergarten-cum-child care centres so as to enable the concerned children to receive treatment at a real school environment. It was also important to include centre-based training to children in need of specialised training and therapist treatment with the aid of therapeutic facilities/equipment which would only be available in pre-school rehabilitation centres.
- (e) There could be more publicity work to encourage parents' participation.
- (f) The Government could consider providing more resources to address the short supply of pre-school rehabilitation services, with an objective of achieving the target of "zero waiting time" sooner.
- (g) Consideration could be given to having more cultural training for staff of schools and hospitals so as to facilitate assistance to ethnic minority children.

11. Members sought the Consulting Team's clarification on (a) whether there was any control group (i.e. those without receiving the service) included in the study so that a comparison could be made between the experimental group and the control group to ensure that the differences between the pre-study and post-study conditions were direct results of the services provided to the experimental group; and (b) whether ethnic minority children were involved in the study.

12. The Consulting Team made the following response –

- (a) while no control group was included in the study, the age factor was controlled in the statistical analyses of the longitudinal study to mitigate the effect of maturity due to age; and
- (b) one service team was designated to serve children from non-Chinese speaking groups, though no child from ethnic minority groups was included in the longitudinal study.

13. CS said that the Government would take into account Members' views raised at the meeting when proceeding to finalise the report on the evaluative study on the Pilot Scheme.

[CS left the meeting at 6:15 p.m. and SLW took over to chair the meeting at this juncture.]

Item 3: Consultancy Study on the Long-term Development of Child Care Services
[Paper No. 03/2018]

14. Four Non-official Members, Mr Peter Au Yeung, Dr Sanly Kam, Ms Susan So and Dr Wong Kwai-yau declared interest for this item as their organisations were service providers of relevant child care services.

15. SLW invited AD(FCW) of SWD and Professor Paul Yip of HKU to brief Members, with a powerpoint presentation, on the progress of the consultancy study and its observations/findings.

16. Members' suggestions were summarised as follows –

- (a) It was a global trend to adopt the concept of care and development and a child-centered approach for the delivery of child care services.
- (b) The consultancy study could consider re-positioning the existing child care services and stock-taking the challenges that made “care and development” unable to take place in Hong Kong. Besides, with the global trend towards “care and development”, the quality of child carers would need to be enhanced, e.g. more manpower resources and higher education training could be provided for child carers.
- (c) The classification of families with helpers/relatives/grandparents as low priority group for child care services in the consultancy study might have overlooked the issues that (i) foreign domestic helpers might not be the most suitable persons to provide “care and development” service to address the developmental needs of children under their care, and (ii) grandparents might not have enough energy to take care of the children.

- (d) In categorising the priority of families for receiving child care services, the consultancy study could focus more on the quality of child carers (i.e. whether the carers could provide sufficient care to children and help children's development), instead of focusing on whether the families could arrange any carers to take care of children irrespective of their child care skills/knowledge.
- (e) The consultancy study could (i) analyse how the supply of child care services could meet the demand in the community; and (ii) examine the funding mode for providing child care services.
- (f) Consideration could be given to providing a family-friendly working environment in the long run so as to provide more support for parents in taking care of their children.

17. SLW invited Professor Paul Yip of HKU to take note of Members' comments in finalising the final report of the consultancy study.

Item 4: Any Other Business

18. SLW informed the meeting that a press statement with the group photo taken at the beginning of the meeting would be issued right after the meeting to inform the public of the first meeting of the Commission.

19. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 7:00 p.m.

**Commission on Children Secretariat
August 2018**