

**Notes of the
Fourth Meeting of the Commission on Children**

Date : 23 May 2019
Time : 3:00 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

Dr Christine Choi	Under Secretary for Education (USED) (for Secretary for Education)
Dr Chui Tak-yi	Under Secretary for Food and Health (USFH) (for Secretary for Food and Health)
Mr Jack Chan	Under Secretary for Home Affairs (for Secretary for Home Affairs)
Miss Rosanna Law	Deputy Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs (1) (for Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs)
Ms Pang Kit-ling	Assistant Director (Family & Child Welfare), Social Welfare Department (for Director of Social Welfare)
Mr Howard Yam	Assistant Director (3), Home Affairs Department (for Director of Home Affairs)

Dr Thomas Chung

Consultant Community Medicine
(Family and Student Health Services),
Department of Health
(for Director of Health)

Ms Chan Yuen-han

Chairperson of Women's Commission

Prof Daniel Shek Tan-lei

Chairperson of Family Council

Non-official Members

Mr Peter Au Yeung Wai-hong

Miss Bakar Fariha Salma Deiya

Miss Cheng Hui-kiu

Ms Janus Cheng

Mr Chow Wai-chung

Ms Kathy Chung Lai-kam

Mr Dennis Ho Chi-kuen

Dr Patrick Ip

Dr Sanly Kam Shau-wan

Mrs Priscilla Lui Tsang Sun-kai

Ms Shalini Mahtani

Mr Kenny Ng Kwan-lim

Dr Halina Poon Suk-han

Ms Susan So Suk-yin

Dr Sandra Tsang Kit-man

Mr Gary Wong Chi-him

Dr Lilian Wong Hiu-lei

Ms Kathy Wong Kin-ho

Secretary

Miss Karen Shing

Acting Principal Assistant Secretary
for Labour and Welfare (Welfare) 1

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

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 Joseph Yu	Chief Executive Officer (Commission on Children)
Mr Zeno Chow	Assistant Secretary for Labour and Welfare (Welfare) Special Duties

Education Bureau (EDB)

Dr Verena Lau	Principal Education Officer (Special Education) (PEO(SE))
Ms Kitty Ho	Principal Inspector (Guidance and Discipline)

Food and Health Bureau (FHB)

Mr Chris Fung	Principal Assistant Secretary for Food and Health (Health) 3
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Hospital Authority (HA)

Dr Sara Ho	Senior Manager (Integrated Programs)
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Member absent with apologies

Mr Edwin Lee
Ms Michelle Tam Chi-yun
Dr Wong Kwai-yau

Item 1: Confirmation of the Notes of the Third Meeting held on 22 February 2019

CS and Members confirmed the notes of the third meeting without any amendment.

Item 2: Matters arising

2. CS advised that (i) the revised plan reflecting Members' views on the arrangement of items for discussion by the Commission on Children (the Commission) and its four Working Groups (WGs); and (ii) the information paper on the planning, design and maintenance of children's playgrounds in public housing projects of Hong Kong Housing Authority had been circulated to Members before the meeting.

3. Noting Members' interests in discussing the work of the Commission, CS invited Members to offer their views in this regard. Members' views and suggestions were summarised as follows –

- (a) The Commission should focus on the more macro and holistic issues, such as the overarching policies on children, children impact assessment, key performance indicators (KPIs) on children in Hong Kong, establishment of a platform for community and children engagement (including a children summit in 2019) while specific issues be followed up by the respective WGs;
- (b) The transparency of the Commission's operation should be enhanced. It was suggested that a tea gathering with the media be organised to enhance public understanding of the Commission's work. Consideration might also be given to prepare an interim report to give an overview of the work of the Commission since its establishment and to provide an outlook for the coming year;
- (c) To monitor the progress made for items discussed by the Commission, a Member suggested that a list of follow-up actions be circulated after the meeting;
- (d) Bureaux/departments (B/Ds) should set out specific issues/questions for Members' advice in the discussion papers to facilitate a more conducive and focused discussion; and

- (e) Some Members noted that 2019 marked the 30th anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and suggested that the Commission could consider organising a forum/seminar in November 2019 to celebrate the Universal Children's Day.

4. On a proposal to consider a children summit in November 2019, CS said that this might be included as one of the themes among the series of summits to be chaired by the Chief Executive (CE) in 2020. CE would invite the Commission's views on the best timing for arranging a possible children summit in 2020 and the specific topic(s) to be covered in the summit. In the interim, CS said that a public forum/seminar of a smaller scale to engage with the stakeholders and a half-day brainstorming session with Members on the work of the Commission might be considered before the possible summit. CS said that the smaller-scale forum/seminar could be considered for November 2019. Consideration would be given to exploring the feasibility of collaborating with relevant non-governmental organisations such as Hong Kong Committee on Children's Rights in organising the forum/seminar. On the brainstorming session, some Members proposed that this should be arranged early for more in-depth discussion on the Commission's overall strategy and work priority. The Secretariat would follow up on the matter.

5. SLW supplemented that –

- (a) On Members' suggestion of discussing "overarching children policy", SLW considered that the term was subject to different interpretations. For instance, it could be referring to the functional aspects of child care, protection and development; policy objectives, measures and targets related to children's health, welfare and education; institutional structure; or simply a document spelling out broad policy principles related to child. Some policy instruments such as children-related indices would need to be put in place before any meaningful discussion could take place. In this regard, it was planned that the WG on Research and Public Engagement would discuss the study on development of children-related indices at its meeting scheduled for November 2019;
- (b) For the proposed children impact assessment and KPIs on children, different B/Ds were doing various impact assessments including family, gender, environment, sustainability, etc. in the course of policy formulation. The study on children-related indices might help prepare for any meaningful children impact assessment, if needed;

- (c) The Commission might further discuss the appropriate timing to issue any interim report on the Commission's work having regard to the progress made in due course; and
- (d) The staffing proposal for the Secretariat (involving the creation of a directorate post to lead the Secretariat) was yet to be considered and approved by the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council while other posts of the Secretariat had yet to be filled. Despite the shortage of manpower, the Secretariat would strive to take forward the Commission's work as shown in the revised plan.

Item 3: Prevention of Student Suicide
[Paper No. 06/2019]

Item 4: Mental Health of Children and Adolescents
[Paper No. 07/2019]

Item 5: Provision of School Social Work Service at Primary Schools and Pre-primary Institutions
[Paper No. 08/2019]

6. Noting that the three agenda items (i.e. Items 3, 4 and 5) were of similar nature, CS suggested and Members agreed to a combined discussion. At CS' invitation, PEO(SE) briefed Members on the measures for preventing student suicide and promoting mental health by the Government.

7. Members' views and suggestions were summarised as follows –

- (a) There were multiple factors affecting the mental health of children, such as urban planning, healthcare, impact of social media, play space, education and examination system, etc. While the current and proposed measures mentioned in the papers were needed to handle issues arising from suppressed emotions, the Government was expected to take into account the above factors to devise policies, strategies and specific measures to prevent children and adolescent suicides and promote their mental well-being at different developmental stages. Systematic evaluations should also be conducted. Reference might also be made to the relevant statistics and data (e.g. suicide rate) which could form the basis for the formulation of effective policies and measures;

(b) Regarding the training and public education aspects of mental health –

- (i) The Government might consider strengthening training on mental health for serving teachers and pre-service teachers to enhance their professional knowledge and skills to identify and support students with mental health needs. There should also be adequate training on mental health for other professions, such as medical students, social workers, etc.;
- (ii) Noting the positive impact of physical activity on mental health of children, the Government might strengthen activity-based programmes and encourage children to take part in more physical activities. In relation to this, there should be larger space in schools and more outdoor play areas for children;
- (iii) It was imperative to provide adequate training on cultural sensitivity to the professionals and staff offering help to the ethnic minorities (EM) children;
- (iv) The public used to have stigma towards people with mental health disorder. Those who were suffering from the disorder also had self-perceived stigma. The Government should cultivate positive attitude and foster a mental health-friendly society in Hong Kong;
- (v) The measures and promotion strategy should be formulated from the family perspective and focus on the positive aspect of mental well-being, instead of putting too much emphasis on the mental health problems; and
- (vi) There was a concern on the inadequate places in the master training programmes of educational psychologists;

(c) Regarding education matters in Hong Kong –

- (i) The education system in Hong Kong was examination-oriented and overly emphasised academic performance, leading to tremendous stress on both parents and children. The Government might consider implementing policies/measures from the positive youth development perspective to enhance students' resilience, foster their positive values and attitudes.

It was also necessary to educate parents and offer them support on parenting skills and stress management;

- (ii) The curriculum for school subjects should be designed in such a way to cater for the diverse needs of students, such as the students with special educational needs (SEN); and
- (iii) A Member shared that some schools had written examination for Physical Education (PE). Such practice should be discouraged as far as possible;

(d) On prevention of student suicide –

- (i) The Government should examine the factors affecting the mental well-being of parents and children, conduct detailed analysis on the suicide cases and formulate strategies in addressing the problems. The experiences of those who had attempted suicide would be useful references in analysing the risk factors. We should also listen to the views of children to identify their sources of stress;
- (ii) The Government might consider implementing the policy of one school nurse for each school to enhance the support services provided to schools. Through close contact with students, school nurses could offer support and help identify students with mental health needs. On the other hand, grassroots children with mental health needs were unwilling to seek help. Outreaching nurse services would be effective in reaching out to these children, and making referrals for them to receive proper services and treatment;
- (iii) The measures formulated to support children with mental health needs should be age specific. Early identification of their needs should be promoted through different means, including educating the parents to be alert on the symptoms of mental health disorder of their children. Early treatment through collaborative effort of professionals from different disciplines, including teachers, social workers, educational psychologists, healthcare and medical workers was very important. Making reference to the youth mentoring scheme of the Commission on Poverty, the Government might consider organising a similar programme to support children with mental health needs;

- (iv) The territory-wide mental health prevalence surveys on children and adolescents launched by the Advisory Committee on Mental Health earlier this year should not only gather data from schools, but also from other domains such as EM groups and children residential institutions. It should also cover survey on the mental health of kindergarten children. If possible, FHB might share the result of the survey with Members. The Government might also consider conducting similar survey on a regular basis; and
- (v) A Member had separately submitted her views (**Annex**) on the provision of school social work service at primary schools and pre-primary institutions.

8. In response, USED said that –

- (a) Under school-based management, and with reference to central curriculum framework, schools had the autonomy to design their school-based teaching materials for meeting the needs of students. Regarding written examination for PE, EDB's understanding was that it was uncommon. Yet, some schools might have prepared learning and teaching materials to enrich students' PE-related knowledge;
- (b) To help schools support students with SEN and mental health needs, including non-Chinese speaking students, EDB provided training to both serving and pre-service teachers, and professional support, including school social work service and school-based educational psychology service;
- (c) While EDB acknowledged that it was not easy to change the high expectation of some parents and society on children's academic performance, the Curriculum Development Council would review from time to time the curriculum of primary and secondary schools to meet the developmental needs of students and society. Besides, the Task Force on Review of School Curriculum established under EDB since 2017 had been discussing issues of the primary and secondary curricula, and exploring ways to optimise the school curriculum so as to create space and opportunities for students' whole-person development, etc. The Task Force would extensively engage key stakeholders to collect their views and suggestions in due course;

- (d) EDB had also implemented a series of enhancement measures to support students with diverse needs including increasing the learning support grant rate for Tier-3 support, strengthening life planning, etc. On parent education, the Task Force on Home-school Co-operation and Parent Education examined the current practices of home-school co-operation and parent education in Hong Kong and other regions, and proposed long-term development directions, promotion strategies and specific recommendations; and
- (e) Causes of each suicide case were complex and unique. There was no “one-size-fits-all” approach to solve all the problems. We would need to foster the culture of respecting and valuing life, as well as to create a conducive environment for children’s healthy and happy development. EDB would make the best efforts to promote healthy lifestyles among students including their mental health and positive values through the collaborative efforts of various B/Ds, in particular through the enhanced communication and collaboration among healthcare, education and social welfare disciplines.

9. USFH said that the Government set up the Review Committee on Mental Health in 2013 to review relevant policies and services on mental health. The Joyful@HK campaign launched in 2016 was initiated at the suggestion of the Review Committee aiming at increasing public engagement in promoting mental well-being and enhancing their knowledge and understanding about mental health. The Mental Health Review Report (Review Report) published in April 2017 had put forward 40 recommendations on how mental health services could be enhanced in Hong Kong. As one of the key recommendations of the Review Report, the Advisory Committee on Mental Health (Advisory Committee) was set up in December 2017 to advise the Government on mental health policies, to assist the Government in developing policies, strategies and measures to enhance mental health services in Hong Kong, and to follow up on and monitor the implementation of the recommendations of the Review Report. Based on the advice of the Advisory Committee, the Department of Health would launch a mental health promotion and public education initiative in the second half of 2019 with a view to reducing the stigma towards persons with mental health needs, with the ultimate target of building a mental health-friendly community in Hong Kong.

10. PAS(H)3 said that, as the Secretary to the Advisory Committee, he would pass the views of Members to the Advisory Committee for reference. He further added that the Advisory Committee attached great importance to the mental well-being of children. For the upcoming large-scale mental

health promotion and public education initiative, they would use soft-selling approach and unconventional methods to reach out to the target groups. Moreover, the territory-wide mental health prevalence surveys, which had been launched earlier this year, would collect the data and find out the causes of mental health disorders and healing factors, etc. of each specific age group including the EM communities. The Advisory Committee would also kick start a one-stop service portal which would put together all relevant mental health information for easy reference by the public.

Item 6 : Reports of the Working Group on Research and Public Engagement and the Working Group on Promotion of Children's Rights and Development, Education and Publicity [Paper No. 09/2019]

11. At CS' invitation, DS(W)1 briefed Members on the progress reports of the two WG. After deliberation, Members endorsed the proposed public engagement plan on child development-related matters and the implementation details of the publicity plan for promoting children-related matters.

12. In response to a Member's enquiry, DS(W)1 said that a dedicated Commission website, which would provide the public with information on the Commission and its various work and activities, would be launched shortly. The dedicated website would help enhance the Commission's image and transparency in its work.

[Post-meeting note: The dedicated Commission website was launched on 31 May 2019.]

Item 7: Any Other Business

13. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 6:15 p.m.

**Commission on Children Secretariat
August 2019**

**Comments on the Paper on Provision of School Social Work Service
at Primary Schools and Pre-primary Institutions**

1. I welcome the government to embrace the rights of children and has taken bold steps to protect children from all forms of abuses and family violence and takes preventive and protective measures to enhance prevention, early identification, investigation and treatment of victims.
2. I agree that provision of quality school social work services for all children under 18 years old is an important measures for prevention, early identification and follow up. However, child protection is a complex system and we as CoC members look forward to a comprehensive review to identify issues for further enhancement.
3. Pilot Scheme on Social Work Service for Pre-primary Institutions
 - I understand that the scheme also covers children in standalone day creches, but the paper is not very clear about it
 - In the first and second round of proposal invitation, SWD has set the 1 social work team with 8 social workers, serving not less than 3,040 children and at the same time requires the social worker to child ratio to be 1 to 400 and serving 2 PPIs with no less than 2 days.
 - I fully appreciate that SWD has committed the 1 to 400 social worker to child ratio and pledge no matter the PPI is big or small will receive no less than 2 days of service per week. However, as most KGs and KG cum CCC are very small, so towards the end of the bidding process, one team serving 3,040 children would be impossible. To achieve the goal of full coverage, would SWD sacrifice the interest of children in small kindergartens or day creches and do not give each PPI 2 days of service as the others? Or NGO would be given the impossible mission to ask 1 social worker to serve 4 – 5 PPIs and sacrifice the service quality?
 - I understand that the service output standard has taken reference to school social work of secondary schools. Yet the service target, needs and work approaches are very different. Very obviously more time is needed to build children's sense of safety and to understand the needs and situation of young children when their capacity to express themselves is very limited. How would SWD adjust the output standard into one that really tailored-made for young children's needs?
 - Social workers serving PPI with ethnic minority children and parent users may have difficulties to understand EM family needs fully, how can SWD supports and ensure EM families benefit from the service fully?

4. Social Work Service at Primary Schools

- I greatly appreciate EDB took a bold step to push forward social work service at primary schools and am happy that about half of public sector primary schools have joined
- I understand that at present public sector primary school may choose to employ own graduate social workers. Are there any requirement to ensure that the social worker has proper and adequate professional supervision and support to fulfil his/ her role in child protection and children and parent support? If the school choose to hire supervision service from NGO in the market, how can EDB ensure they collaborate well to ensure service quality?
- I suggest when EDB collect data about the service, please collect feedback from school, as well as NGO providers, parents and social workers too to have a comprehensive picture.