

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

Date : 25 May 2020
Time : 2:30 p.m.
**Venue : Conference Hall, 2/F, West Wing, Central Government
Offices**

Present

Chairperson

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

Vice-chairperson

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

Ex-officio Members

Dr Christine Choi Under Secretary for Education (USED)
(for Secretary for Education)

Mr Jack Chan Under Secretary for Home Affairs
(for Secretary for Home Affairs)

Dr Chui Tak-yi Under Secretary for Food and Health
(USFH)
(for Secretary for Food and Health)

Miss Rosanna Law Deputy Secretary for Constitutional and
Mainland Affairs (1)
(for Secretary for Constitutional and
Mainland Affairs)

Mr Gordon Leung Director of Social Welfare

Dr Constance Chan Director of Health (D of H)

Mr Howard Yam Assistant Director of Home Affairs (3)
(on behalf of Director of Home Affairs)

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 Cheng Hui-kiu
Mr Winson Chow Wai-chung
Ms Kathy Chung Lai-kam
Mr Dennis Ho Chi-kuen
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
Dr Sandra Tsang Kit-man
Mr Gary Wong Chi-him
Dr Lilian Wong Hiu-lei
Ms Kathy Wong Kin-ho

Secretary

Mr Andrew Tsang

Principal Assistant Secretary for Labour
and Welfare (Welfare)¹

In attendance

Chief Secretary for Administration's Private Office

Miss Carrie Chang

Administrative Assistant to Chief
Secretary for Administration

Mr Alex Chan

Press Secretary to Chief Secretary for
Administration

Ms Kathy Siu

Political Assistant to Chief Secretary for
Administration

Labour and Welfare Bureau

Ms Chang King-yiu

Permanent Secretary for Labour and
Welfare

Mr David Leung

Deputy Secretary for Labour and Welfare
(Welfare)¹

Miss Karen Shing

Assistant Secretary for Labour and Welfare (Welfare)1A

Ms Terry Cheung

Chief Executive Officer (Commission on Children)

Education Bureau (EDB)

Ms Kitty Ho

[For item 3 only]

Principal Inspector (Guidance & Discipline)

Ms Edith Tse

[For item 4 only]

Principal Education Officer (Curriculum Development)1

Ms Annie Leung

[For item 4 only]

Chief Curriculum Development Officer (Kindergarten and Primary)

Hong Kong Police Force (HKPF)

Mr See Kam-Sho

[For item 3 only]

Superintendent of Police (Crime Support) (Crime Wing)

Ms Moon Cheung

[For item 3 only]

Chief Inspector of Police, Family Conflict and Sexual Violence Policy Unit

Social Welfare Department (SWD)

Mrs Helen Kwok

[For item 3 only]

Assistant Director (Youth & Corrections)

Ms Phoebe Wong

[For item 3 only]

Chief Social Work Officer (Youth)

Ms Pang Kit-ling

[For item 4 only]

Assistant Director (Family & Child Welfare)

Department of Health (DH)

Dr Thomas Chung

Consultant Community Medicine (Family & Student Health)

Members absent with apologies

Ms Janus Cheng

Miss Bakar Fariha Salma Deiya

Dr Wong Kwai-yau

CS welcomed Members to the seventh meeting of the Commission on Children (CoC), which also marked the end of the current term of appointment. CS thanked Members for their valuable advice on the work of CoC in the past and continued support to the Government in the promotion of children's growth and development in Hong Kong.

Item 1: Confirmation of the Notes of the sixth Meeting held on 15 November 2019

2. The draft notes of the sixth meeting were circulated to Members on 11 March 2020 and no comment had been received. The notes were confirmed without any amendment.

Item 2: Matters arising

3. There were no matters arising from the last meeting.

Item 3: Juvenile Gangs

4. On CS' invitation, Assistant Director (Youth & Corrections) of SWD, Chief Inspector of Police, Family Conflict and Sexual Violence Policy Unit of HKPF and Principal Inspector (Guidance & Discipline) of EDB briefed Members on the recent trend of juvenile gangs and the measures taken to address the problem under their respective purview.

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

- (a) Analysis of the juvenile gang problem should be multi-dimensional with consideration given to a mixture of factors, such as family / local community profiles. The problem of juvenile crime had to be tackled through concerted effort among the Government, parents and different professions, including teachers and social workers. Consideration might be given to conducting more engagement sessions with children and youths to understand their feelings and needs. It was also important to re-establish the trust of the young generation in HKPF.
- (b) Further research / analysis on the root cause of the problem was needed in order to draw up targeted preventive measures.

- (c) Noting that some 4 000 juveniles and young persons were arrested in 2019, a Member requested breakdown of the figure by race, gender and special education needs of the arrestees. The information might be useful in forecasting the trends of children issues and facilitating policy formulation. HKPF explained that they did not collect information on whether the arrestees had any learning problem or disability, and undertook to provide breakdown on the number of juveniles and young persons arrested by gender and whether they were non-ethnic Chinese.

[Post-meeting note: Breakdown of figures prepared by HKPF were circulated to Members for information on 1 and 11 June 2020.]

- (d) On the approach for addressing the problem of juvenile crimes, a Member said that there should be clear differentiation between youth gang and arrestees associated with protests as their background and reason for arrest might be different.
- (e) The Government's tremendous resources and efforts in providing quality education and welfare services to children were appreciated. Value education for children should start at preschool age to equip them with the skill and knowledge necessary for making judgement and decision making.
- (f) The Government should provide prompt responses and introduce targeted measures on the issues arising from the increased crime rate.

6. In response to Members' views, HKPF, SWD and EDB made the following response –

- (a) Superintendent of Police (Crime Support) (Crime Wing) said that HKPF was committed to restoring social order and rebuilding public confidence as soon as possible. Engagement with stakeholders (including schools, school sponsoring bodies, parent associations, etc.) had been carried out from December 2019 to April 2020 to help them better understand the work of HKPF.
- (b) Assistant Director (Youth & Corrections) elaborated the liaison role of SWD between frontline social workers and HKPF. SWD worked closely with HKPF in providing preventive and supportive services to children and youths involved in juvenile crimes through services such as Community Support Service Scheme and Youth Outreaching Service. SWD also provided School Social Work Service in secondary schools to help address the needs and problems of juvenile

gangs and youth-at-risk.

- (c) Principal Inspector (Guidance & Discipline) said that EDB and schools were determined to join hands with HKPF to enhance children's self-discipline, self-confidence, team spirit and resilience by, for example, co-organising training camps and development programmes for secondary school students.

7. A Member said that discussion papers should be issued to Members at least a week before the meeting, especially those covering priority items. The discussion papers should briefly set out the Government's work and include comprehensive and in-depth statistics on the subject to facilitate quality deliberation and discussion. Members should be asked to give advice on specific questions instead of general views on addressing the issues.

8. Referring to some Members' remarks relating to the social incidents, CS said that although the increase in the number of juvenile and young persons arrested in 2019 was primarily attributed to crimes associated with protests, the intention of the discussion paper was to solicit Members' views on the problem of juvenile gangs involving physical assault and bullying behavior. SLW added that noting the recent increase in the number of juveniles and young persons arrested for criminal offenses in the first quarter of 2020, such as robbery and burglary which were not related to public order events, the Government would look into the trend of relevant crime figures to devise strategies and measures for addressing the problem.

Item 4: Children Issues Arising from COVID-19 Pandemic

9. On CS' invitation, USFH, Consultant Community Medicine (Family & Student Health) of DH, Assistant Director (Family & Child Welfare) of SWD and Principal Education Officer (Curriculum Development)¹ of EDB briefed Members on the support measures for children taken by the Government during the pandemic.

10. Members appreciated the Government's efforts in taking prompt actions to provide necessary support to children and their families, maintaining close communication with the stakeholders and providing aids to non-governmental organisations (NGOs) during the pandemic. Members' views and suggestions were summarised as follows –

- (a) Prolonged home stay affected the learning and physical and mental health of children. The closure of recreational facilities and insufficient play space during the pandemic prevented children from enjoying outdoor time. Children with special education needs, such

as hyperactivity disorders, autism spectrum disorders, learning difficulties and children from underprivileged and Ethnic Minorities (EM) families were the most vulnerable groups. Besides, basic necessities for children, such as food, children masks and books were insufficient in the EM community during the initial period of the outbreak.

- (b) As parents might experience stress or emotional troubles with taking care of their young children due to the prolonged class suspension, there might be a higher risk of child abuse.
- (c) With no or limited internet access and hardware support, children of some underprivileged and EM families were not well-equipped to conduct e-learning at home. Some parents' low level of digital literacy made it difficult for them to give guidance to their children in online learning. A Member suggested that a standard on data usage for children of different ages / age groups could be explored to facilitate e-learning. The Government could consider subsidising the shortfall / deficiency in data plan so as to facilitate e-learning for all children. IT support should be provided to NGOs to further develop and enhance their online services.
- (d) A review on e-learning should be conducted to consolidate the recent experience and identify good practices and areas for improvement.
- (e) Health care services available to children were affected as a result of the infection control measures. Rescheduling of appointment should be arranged for parents and their children as early as possible in order not to delay the assessment and treatment of needy children. Play service and patient support service at hospitals for inpatient children and their families should be resumed as soon as practicable.
- (f) In case a child was diagnosed or suspected to be infected with COVID-19, compassionate visiting or accompanying arrangement should be made depending on the condition of individual cases. It was suggested that guidelines on dealing with paediatric cases, in particular those involving parent / child separation during quarantine, should be drawn up for frontline health care professionals to ensure greater transparency and consistency in implementation. Such guidelines should be accessible by the public.
- (g) On class resumption for kindergartens (KGs), there was concern that kindergartens might not have sufficient time to provide support to K3 children to facilitate the interface between kindergartens and primary schools due to the pandemic. EDB should consider ways to assist

K3 students entering primary schools and their parents. As there was a risk of recurrence of the pandemic in future, it was important for schools to get prepared for distance learning or other options for teaching and learning. The Centre for Health Protection should issue relevant guidelines to schools for reference.

- (h) The Government should provide financial assistance to those affected by the pandemic, including children with special needs and after-school care service operators.

11. In response to Members' views, USFH said that as COVID-19 was a highly communicable disease, stringent anti-epidemic measures had to be put in place to protect public health. Quarantine arrangement for inbound travellers had been in place, subject to the evolving COVID-19 situation overseas. He undertook to convey Members' views on compassionate visiting, accompanying arrangement and the advice to HA on taking the practice in other countries for reference.

12. D of H supplemented with the following responses –

- (a) DH had implemented the quarantine measures centrally, with the well-being of children being the prime concern. Currently, all inbound travellers at the Hong Kong International Airport were subject to mandatory COVID-19 testing at the Temporary Specimen Collection Centre and were required to wait for the test result. Exemption would be granted to children with genuine need on a case-by-case basis so that they could go to the place of quarantine as soon as possible without waiting for the test results.
- (b) Special arrangements were made for children in need, such as provision of cots, diapers, baby food and formula milk as needed. DH would consider arranging the family which need to stay in the Quarantine Centre to stay in the same unit as far as practicable. In case parents accompanied the child in Quarantine Centre were diagnosed with COVID-19 and hospitalised, carers such as relatives or domestic helpers would be permitted to take care of the children at the Quarantine Centre under exceptional circumstances. Assistance from SWD would also be sought as necessary. As all of the above measures were centrally administered by DH, all of their frontline staff were well aware of the arrangement to ensure consistency.
- (c) The Child Assessment Centres maintained assessment services during the class suspension period to ensure children with special needs were able to receive timely assessment. As some parents did not attend the assessment with their children during the pandemic,

rescheduling of appointments was being arranged. Advice on how to equip parents and children physically and mentally to fight the virus together was provided online.

- (d) In case there were students or parents diagnosed with COVID-19 after resumption of class, DH was working closely with EDB in drawing up the relevant guidelines, which included different scenarios involving contact tracing and suspension of classes.

13. Consultant Community Medicine (Family & Student Health) responded that DH would continue to update and disseminate health information as and when necessary. DH would also exercise flexibility and discretion in carrying out the quarantine and isolation measures to cater for children in need.

14. USED made the following remarks in response to Members' comments –

- (a) EDB adopted “child-centredness” as the core value and upheld the essential principle of understanding and respecting the unique developmental patterns of every child in formulating school curriculum. By creating a friendly, respectful and accepting learning atmosphere, students were encouraged to explore and express freely. Their voices and needs were observed through daily activities and interactions with their teachers and peers.
- (b) EDB had been working with the education sector, as well as collecting good practices and feedback from schools on using their existing resources in implementing e-learning and would consider conceptualising the school-based anti-pandemic experience for dissemination.
- (c) On the preparation of class resumption and related guidelines, EDB would work closely with DH and provide appropriate assistance to schools. On the arrangement for class resumption for KG classes, due regard would be given to children from the aspects of learning and caring respectively. EDB would work closely with school principals and frontline teachers and monitor the class resumption of K3.
- (d) With regard to the difficulties faced by K3 students and the effects of prolonged class suspension, EDB would keep close contact with school principals and frontline teachers to see if any assistance could be rendered after class resumption.

- (e) EDB had disbursed a grant to all public sector schools and KGs joining the Kindergarten Education Scheme for KGs to procure different types of books, and optimise the use of grant to address the diverse reading needs of students.

15. AD (Family & Child Welfare) responded that SWD provided supportive services to individuals and families in need, with the well-being of children being the prime concern. Frontline social workers stationed in pre-school institutions, primary and secondary schools were encouraged to proactively reach out to students during the pandemic with a view to identifying children in need. Also, SWD had commissioned NGOs to operate eight Short-term Food Assistance Service Projects across the whole territory to help the needy individuals and families.

16. In response to Members' enquiry, AD (Family & Child Welfare) said that there was a slight decrease in the number of child abuse and domestic violence cases in the first quarter of 2020 when compared with the same period in 2019.

Item 5: Evaluation of Commission on Children's Work in the Past 2 Years

17. The meeting noted CoC's major tasks accomplished in the past two years in four major areas : deliberating important children-related policies and programmes at CoC and Working Group (WG) meetings which contributed to policy formulation and regularisation / enhancement of programmes for further promoting children's well-being; commissioning a consultancy study to explore the feasibility and implementation framework of developing a central databank on children with a view to collecting and sharing useful data for reference in formulating policy directions and enhancing services for the well-being of children in future; implementing a series of publicity initiatives and a large-scale engagement session to promote the importance of children's well-being and collate stakeholders' views in taking forward CoC's work in future; launching a funding scheme to encourage NGOs, schools, child concern groups to organise promotional and educational projects for children's well-being and development, with children participation as the key feature.

18. On CS' invitation, some non-official Members offered their views and suggestions on the work of CoC –

- (a) Consideration should be given to focusing on fewer topics so as to allow sufficient lead time for preparation of more comprehensive papers and to engender more in-depth discussion. Follow-up actions should also be set out clearly to monitor the progress made

for the items discussed by CoC.

- (b) CoC should formulate strategy to promote its work and enhance communication with the public. For instance, the beneficiaries of CoC's funding scheme should be strategically engaged with a view to working collectively to raise public awareness on the work of CoC.
- (c) WG on Children's Rights and Development, Education and Publicity should handle the work on 'public engagement' while WG on Research and Public Engagement should be tasked to explore a holistic children policy in addition to research work.
- (d) The work of WG on Children Protection should commence as soon as possible, preferably in the third quarter of 2020.

19. CS thanked Members for their comments and suggestions. While CoC's work had been disrupted by the social unrest and pandemic over the past year, the secretariat had been trying its best endeavour to assist CoC in taking forward its work agenda, as shown by the major tasks accomplished in the past two years in four major areas. CS said that the Government would strive to seek approval from the Finance Committee (FC) of the Legislative Council (LegCo) on the proposal of creating a directorate post early to lead CoC's secretariat.

[CS left the meeting at this juncture owing to another official commitment and SLW took over to chair the meeting.]

20. SLW advised that the staffing proposal would be included in the agenda of FC from the meeting on 29 May 2020 onwards. Having regard to the long queue of discussion items, it was unlikely that the Government would be able to secure FC's approval in the current term of LegCo which would end in July 2020. The Government would commence the work of WG on Children Protection as soon as the creation of the directorate post was approved by the new term of LegCo, hopefully in the fourth quarter of 2020. SLW concluded that while the Government respected Members' suggestions of urgent issues for inclusion into the ongoing CoC's agenda, it was hoped that CoC would also continue to accord high priority to the outstanding items entrusted by the Preparatory Committee at future meetings. In response to Members' enquiry on their proposal to redefine the work of certain WGs, SLW suggested that Members to discuss any suggestion with the Convenors concerned first. The secretariat would facilitate by channelling the consensus reached back to CoC for consideration and endorsement.

Item 6: Any Other Business

21. The meeting noted that the secretariat had circulated a Member's research paper on the social incidents to all Members for reference. It was also noted that the next meeting was scheduled for 14 August 2020.

22. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 6:10 p.m.

**Commission on Children Secretariat
July 2020**