

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

Date : 7 May 2021
Time : 2:30 p.m.
Venue : 5/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)

Ms Leonie Lee Principal Assistant Secretary for Food
and Health (Health)1
(for Secretary for Food and Health)

Miss Cathy Li Principal Assistant Secretary
(Constitutional and Mainland Affairs)5
(for Secretary for Constitutional and
Mainland Affairs)

Mr Gordon Leung Director of Social Welfare
Dr Thomas Chung Consultant Community Medicine
(Family and Student Health)
(ConCM(F&SH))
(for Director of Health)

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

Ms Melissa Kaye Pang 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
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	Secretary (Commission on Children) (Acting)
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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

Ms Terry Cheung

Chief Executive Officer (Commission on Children)

Office of the Government Economist/ Financial Secretary's Office (OGE/FSO)

Ms Reddy Ng

Principal Economist (3) (PE(3))

[For item 3 only]

Mr Benny Lui

Senior Economist (5B)

[For item 3 only]

Education Bureau (EDB)

Ms Cora Ho

Deputy Secretary for Education (6) (DSEd (6))

[For item 3 only]

Ms Tina Lam

Senior Education Officer (Home-school Cooperation) 2 (SEO(HSC)2)

[For item 4 only]

Social Welfare Department (SWD)

Ms Pang Kit-ling

Assistant Director (Family and Child Welfare) (AD(F&CW))

Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency (WFSFAA)

Mr Donald Ng

Head, Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency (Head, WFSFAA)

[For item 3 only]

Ms Alsa Choi

Senior Deputy Controller

[For item 3 only]

Members absent with apologies

Miss Bakar Fariha Salma Deiya

Ms Janus Cheng

Mr Dennis Ho Chi-kuen

Dr Wong Kwai-yau

CS welcomed Ms Melissa Pang for joining the meeting for the first time in her capacity as the Chairman of the Family Council.

Item 1: Confirmation of the Notes of the Ninth Meeting held on 28 January 2021

2. The draft notes of the ninth meeting were circulated to Members on 3 March 2021 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: Child Poverty Situation in Hong Kong in 2019 and the Relevant Support Measures [Paper No. 07/2021]

4. On CS' invitation, PE(3) of OGE/FSO briefed Members on the analysis of the overall and child poverty situations in Hong Kong in 2019. Following that, USED, Head, WFSFAA, AD(F&CW) of SWD, SLW and ConCM(F&SH) of Department of Health (DH) briefed Members on the major measures in support of needy children and families with children.

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

(a) Analysis of the poverty situation in Hong Kong

- (i) The poverty line was drawn up based on the monthly household income. It did not reflect the actual household spending on children and their living standard. A separate poverty line or a poverty indicator for children based on the monthly expenses spent on children should be prepared for better analysis of child poverty. As rehabilitation services for children could be a heavy financial burden for poor households, the poverty line for children should also take into account the expenses on children with special educational needs (SEN), if any.
- (ii) The poverty line set at 50% of the median household income by household size was considered too low in terms of the

relatively high income level of Hong Kong.

- (iii) The Government should set the target for reducing child poverty to facilitate the formulation of focused policies and measures. While the current poverty line analytical framework focused on understanding the local poverty situation only, the Government was suggested to set up an indicator on well-being to assess people's happiness and satisfaction.
- (iv) Under the COVID-19 pandemic, low-income families were particularly vulnerable as they struggled with challenges such as unemployment, lower and unstable income, and extra expenses on anti-epidemic supplies. The Government should enhance the support for needy families affected by the pandemic.
- (v) To facilitate an in-depth analysis of child poverty, the Hong Kong Poverty Situation Report (the Report) in future should take into account the data of the thematic report on children under the 2021 Population Census and those from the central databank on children in Hong Kong when available.
- (vi) On the analysis section, the Report should show the data of families with children of SEN, ethnic minorities (EM), single parents and parents unable to care for children (e.g. those in prison and in hospital). Besides, in addition to setting out factual observation, the Report should include a section on the way forward and future work plans.
- (vii) After taking into account all selected measures, there was an improvement in poverty rate in the past three years. It was necessary to evaluate and review the alleviation measures on a continued basis with the support of evidence-based statistics. Children from low-income families should be directly engaged to gauge their views. A Member asked about the comparison of poverty rate of Hong Kong with other countries/ regions.
- (viii) The Report could not reflect characteristics of the poverty situation of EM families in Hong Kong, including feminisation of poverty in the EM population caused by women's low education and unemployment; growing

violence against EM children and women and their hunger problem amid the pandemic; as well as the financial burden of caring for children with SEN to EM families in terms of actual expenses and time to take care of them.

(b) Support on education services

- (i) Children from low-income families had fewer opportunities to participate in extra-curricular activities under the pandemic because their parents could not afford the expenses owing to unemployment or underemployment. Although schools and non-governmental organisations organised extra-curricular activities free of charge/ at affordable fees, the number of places available was not sufficient to meet the demand.
- (ii) During the suspension of face-to-face classes under the pandemic, children with both parents working encountered difficulties in online learning as they lacked the technical support and guidance from parents.
- (iii) EDB should consider allowing children of low-income families with both parents working to stay after school, as the campus was a safe and proper place for the children to do homework and study.
- (iv) The Government should review the income thresholds of the three levels of fee remission of the Kindergarten and Child Care Centre Fee Remission Scheme (KCFRS). Specifically, the Government should try to address the anomaly whereby households earning similar income were receiving different levels of financial assistance simply because the household income slightly exceeded certain income limits.
- (v) Financial support could only alleviate the poverty problem in the short run. The Government should allocate resources to support young children in their key stages of development which were proven to be effective in reducing inter-generation poverty.

(c) Support on health services

- (i) Although students identified with physical and/or psychosocial health problems by the Student Health Service would be referred to relevant services, the waiting time for follow-up was very long, especially for students with psychiatric problems such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). The Government should endeavour to shorten the waiting time to provide timely assistance to these students.
- (ii) Comprehensive Child Development Service (CCDS) was a well-established programme for supporting children from high risk families (e.g. teenage parents, parents with mental health problems or substance abuse) and families with other psychosocial needs (e.g. single parents lacking social support etc.) as well as children with special needs. Appropriate health and social services were provided to parents to support them in taking care of their children which helped reduce the risk of child abuse. In view of the effectiveness of the programme, more resources should be allocated to enhance the service. Responsible teams of the CCDS might share with Members their work and proposals on service enhancement in a future CoC meeting.
- (iii) Poverty greatly affected the nutrition and physical health of children, which could lead to long-term health problems as they grew up. A Member shared with the meeting the details of KeySteps@JC, a five-year project funded by The Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust which provided cross-disciplinary support to needy children in various aspects of their development. The Government should consider providing support and funding to the project so that its service could be extended to benefit more children.
- (iv) To improve the physical fitness of children in particular those from low-income families, EDB should encourage more schools to participate in the School Physical Fitness Award Scheme (SPFAS). As the data of the scheme was open to the public, parents could keep track of their children's physical fitness development. However, the data maintained by primary schools was not transferrable to secondary schools owing to privacy concern. EDB should

look into the issue and facilitate data transition.

(d) Support on social welfare services

- (i) Members welcomed the special time-limited arrangement of relaxing the working hour requirements of non-single-parent households of the Working Family Allowance (WFA) Scheme and were glad to note that the number of beneficiaries had increased over the past few years. As the financial needs for children had no relationship with the households' working hours, a Member suggested that the Government should consider delinking child allowance and the households' working hours.
- (ii) Working parents from low-income households had a great demand for child care, especially those with both parents working. A Member enquired about the measures taken by the Government to address the problem of insufficient child care service as pointed out in the Consultancy Study on the Long-term Development of Child Care Services.
- (iii) Noting that the Community Care Fund (CCF) had enhanced the After School Care Programme (ASCP) by relaxing the household income limit of the fee-waiving subsidy scheme for low-income families and increasing the academic expenses grant for students with SEN, a Member looked forward to more support measures for low-income working families and families with SEN children.
- (iv) Parents from low-income families were often under great stress. Support should be provided for them to reduce the risk of domestic violence.
- (v) A Member asked about the requirements for being a foster parent, in particular the requirement on family income.

(e) Support measures on housing services

- (i) The poor living environment of sub-divided accommodation adversely affected the physical and mental development of children. The Government should increase the supply of public rental housing (PRH) so that children and their low-income families would be able to move out of the tiny sub-

divided flats to PRH with better living conditions sooner.

- (ii) The Government should review the existing housing policy and give priority to families with children in PRH application. In the interim, support such as transitional housing or social housing should be given to the needy families with children on the PRH waiting list.
- (iii) A Member suggested providing housing allowance for low-income families so as to ease their financial burden and help them afford a better living place if possible.

(f) Others

- (i) Measures for safeguarding basic human rights, such as free education, health care services at affordable fees and subsidised housing, should not be considered as poverty alleviation measures.
- (ii) In formulating and implementing poverty alleviation policies, the Government should take into account the possible stigmatisation against recipients of the financial support. The Government should continue to promote a culture of mutual respect and pull together the efforts of various sectors of the community to help worse-off children and families.
- (iii) The Government should consider appointing a Commissioner for Children.

6. PE(3) made the following response –

- (a) To monitor regularly the poverty situation of Hong Kong, the poverty line as recommended by the first-term Commission on Poverty (CoP) was updated annually based on the data collected from the General Household Survey (GHS) by the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD). On the other hand, the Household Expenditure Survey (HES) was conducted every five years and its main purpose was for rebasing the Consumer Price Indices. In this regard, it would be difficult to set the poverty line based on household expenditure from the perspective of data availability. That said, the Government would analyse the expenditure patterns of the poor households in Hong Kong upon the completion of HES. In this connection, an information paper with detailed findings on

this topic using the data of the 2014/15 HES was uploaded to the website of CoP. The expenditure patterns of poor families with children would be updated with reference to the latest HES conducted in 2020.

- (b) GHS was not able to provide breakdowns of data on EM families and persons with disabilities (PWDs) given its survey design and confined sample counts for estimating general socio-economic characteristics of domestic households. Nevertheless, EM data would be collected every five years from the Population Census / By-Census, and data of 2021 Population Census would be available next year. As for PWD-related statistics, data would be collected by a dedicated survey from time to time and one was conducted in 2020. The overall poverty situations of the disadvantaged groups in question would then be examined and updated in their corresponding standalone poverty reports after completion of data compilation by C&SD.
- (c) The change in local poverty situation alongside the worsening of economic and employment conditions owing to the COVID-19 pandemic would be duly reflected in the 2020 Report (to be published towards the end of 2021). Noting Members' concern on child poverty and poor households with children, the related sections in the 2020 Report would be strengthened as appropriate.
- (d) As for Members' suggestions to include a section on the way forward and future work plans, Members could refer to Chapter 4 of the Report (i.e. Policy Implications), which had already set out measures and plans on alleviating poverty and assisting the disadvantaged groups in Hong Kong, covering various policy areas of work contributed and updated by various bureaux/ departments (B/Ds) annually.
- (e) On a Member's enquiry regarding child poverty rates of other economies, the poverty rates of major advanced economies (such as some European countries) would lie within the range of some 10% to 20% in general taking into account recurrent cash policy intervention. Nevertheless, caution should be exercised as the updating cycle of poverty statistics could vary across these countries and hence these figures might not be strictly comparable to those of Hong Kong using 2019 as the latest annual timeframe.

7. CS supplemented that the poverty line analytical framework adopted in Hong Kong was similar to the framework used by the member countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. The poverty line analytical framework aimed at providing a quantitative reference to apprehend the local poverty situation and facilitating the formulation of the Government's poverty alleviation policies. The spending on social welfare, education and health sectors accounted for a very large share (about 60%) of the total recurrent government expenditure. It demonstrated the Government's effort and dedication in alleviating poverty in Hong Kong.

8. ConCM(F&SH) responded that CCDS, with Maternal and Child Health Centres as a platform, provided inter-disciplinary support to children and families with special needs (such as teenage pregnancy, maternal mental illnesses or drug addict mothers) through the collaboration of EDB, DH, HA and SWD. While CCDS had been effective in supporting its target users, the Government would explore room for further improvement in areas such as service referral and coordination.

9. In response to Members' views on the WFA Scheme, Head, WFSFAA said that the Scheme had been continuously enhanced in recent years by relaxing the eligibility criteria and substantially increasing the rates of allowances in view of the changing circumstances to provide greater support to the working households in need. As a result, there had been a significant increase in the number of beneficiaries of WFA and the total amount of payout. As part of the package of economic relief measures under the Government's Anti-epidemic Fund, WFSFAA had disbursed a one-off special allowance to eligible WFA households and Student Financial Assistance households.

10. DSEd(6) made the following response –

- (a) EDB would strengthen the promotion of SPFAS to encourage schools' participation. On a Member's suggestion of transferring data of SPFAS between primary schools and secondary schools, EDB would consider encouraging government schools to explore the feasibility.
- (b) EDB would constantly review and evaluate the effectiveness of its support measures for needy students (including programmes under CCF). Some CCF programmes had been regularised after evaluation.

- (c) EDB would strengthen the manpower support for students with SEN.
- (d) KCFRS and Grant for School-related Expenses for Kindergarten Students had been providing financial assistance to needy families with children receiving pre-primary education. Additional resources had been devoted to strengthen the support for pre-school education particularly from the current-term Government over the past few years.

11. AD(F&CW) provided the following information in response to Members' views –

- (a) Following the recommendations of the Consultancy Study on the Long-term Development of Child Care Services, the Government had implemented a host of measures to improve the child care services. Such measures included increasing the level of subsidy to child care centres (CCCs) and CCC places, relaxing the household income limit of KCFRS, enhancing manpower support in day care CCCs and residential CCCs, as well as providing psychological support in residential CCCs, etc.
- (b) SWD had worked in collaboration with B/Ds in delivering quality services under CCDS. SWD had proactively and closely followed up on cases referred by CCDS, and endeavoured to engage more needy families to receive the support services.
- (c) Regarding Members' concern on the study place for children living in crowded and poor environments, parents in need were encouraged to use the service of ASCP, and approach the numerous district service centres across the territory, such as Integrated Family Service Centres and Integrated Children and Youth Services Centres, for assistance.
- (d) In addition to regular support services and parent education, SWD offered a variety of support to parents/carers, in particular parents with SEN children such as support groups, activities, voluntary services, etc. which were effective in relieving the stress of parents.
- (e) To become foster parents, the families were required to have, among others, a stable financial condition and a safe and tidy living environment so as to safeguard the well-being of the foster children.

- (f) Some parents preferred taking care of their children on their own rather than relying on child care service. The availability of child care service was not the only factor that parents would consider when deciding whether or not to join the labour market.

12. SLW supplemented with the following information –

- (a) With respect to the after school care service, a pilot on after school care programme for pre-primary children, which was deferred from 2020 owing to the pandemic, was expected to be launched in 2021. Various initiatives on enhancing child care service were also in the pipeline.
- (b) To address the long waiting time for assessment for ADHD children, the Pilot Scheme on New Service Protocol for ADHD+ was launched in March 2021 with the aim of providing timely service and support to ADHD children at the community level.
- (c) The Transport and Housing Bureau (THB) was working on a new initiative of providing special living allowance for households which had been on the PRH waiting list for more than three years. The details of the allowance would soon be announced by THB. The Government was committed to increasing the supply of PRH units to relieve the housing problem. As a transitional measure, more social housing would be provided to cater for the needy families awaiting PRH.

13. In view of the time constraint, CS instructed that a written response to a Member's concerns about the poverty situation of the EM community should be given after the meeting.

[Post-meeting Note : The response from OGE was set out at Annex I.]

Item 4: Parent Education and Family Support for Parents and Children [Paper No. 08/2021]

14. On CS' invitation, USEd, SEO(HSC)2 of EDB and AD(F&CW) of SWD briefed Members on parent education and family support for parents and children provided by the Government.

15. Members' views and suggestions were summarised as follows –
- (a) The setup of Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) should not be the sole indicator of home-school cooperation. As some pre-school institutions were small in scale and had only limited resources, it would be hard for them to devote resources to set up PTAs. The Government should recognise their efforts in strengthening the connection and collaboration with parents through other means. A Member suggested involving ethnic minority (EM) parents in PTAs to enhance teachers' understanding of the culture of EM children.
 - (b) To help enhance the parenting skills and knowledge of parents to cope with the changing needs of their children in different educational stages, the Government should develop a framework for identifying focus areas of parent education.
 - (c) The Government should formulate policies on parent education and put in place a mechanism for assessing the effectiveness of the measures implemented in support of these policies.
 - (d) The Government should reinforce the function of CCDS as a preventive programme providing evidence-based support to target users. Parents requiring special support would be provided with preventive education and counselling service on parenting. While the service capacity of CCDS was limited, consideration should be given to supporting pilot programmes of NGOs with proven effectiveness in enhancing parent education.
 - (e) The Government should approach parent education from the human rights and legal perspectives, so that parents would teach their children to respect the rights of others and understand the legal aspects of child protection. Besides, the Government should develop evidence-based parent education, with holistic strategies in place to ensure its sustainability and improvements.
 - (f) Currently, some service units (e.g. children residential homes) would conduct parent education to service users to complement or tie in with their core services. School social workers had also worked in collaboration with schools to provide tailor-made preventive services to students and parents. The Government should acknowledge their efforts and support such parent education work.

- (g) While information on parent education was available in different websites and social media pages set up by the Government (e.g. Facebook and Instagram), a central platform would facilitate easier reference by parents. The Government should consider promoting these social media platforms with reference to the successful experiences of other Government B/Ds. Role models could also be engaged to share their parenting experiences. Collaboration with the business sector would be effective in promoting the formation of parent networks in the community.
- (h) Solid support should be provided to parents in need, including EM parents, working parents, parents with SEN children, and families in poverty. Education and counselling should also be offered to imprisoned parents and their family members. Specifically, parents should be offered assistance to identify and take care of their children with SEN at home under the pandemic. The Government should also strengthen the support for parents to alleviate their stress over their children's academic performance.
- (i) It was encouraging to see that home-school cooperation had been taking place in the EM community, with training conducted for EM parents and support groups formed among themselves. Nevertheless, support for the EM parents and children in need remained inadequate. For example, there were only two Early Education and Training Centres available for English-speaking service users with a long waiting list; divorced EM parents had no information on the support services available for them and their children; EM parents lacked awareness of cyber bullying and cyber crimes targeting children.
- (j) A local study revealed that while parents recognised the need to start sex education for their children early, they had wrong conceptions about child sexual abuse. EDB should provide parent education through schools to enhance parents' knowledge and understanding about sexual abuse. Owing to concerns about possible negative labelling, parents were reluctant to seek schools' assistance when their children have become victims of cyber sex crimes. Efforts should be made to build mutual trust and strengthen communication between parents and schools to facilitate early intervention. Information should be made available to raise parents' awareness on cyber crimes targeting children and means to seek help in case their children have fallen prey to such crimes.

16. Members also asked about –

- (a) the Government's philosophy of parent education as well as the focus and correlation of the three-tier support measures (i.e. preventive, support and remedial);
- (b) measures taken by the Government to enhance cross-departmental collaboration in parent education;
- (c) whether the provision of support service for divorced/separated parents by the Specialised Co-parenting Support Centres was on a referral basis and how high-risk cases could be identified through the said service;
- (d) the scope of application of the Manual of Parenting Capacity Assessment Framework; and
- (e) the latest development of the Positive Parenting Programme introduced for enhancing parents' positive parenting skills, knowledge, attitudes and values.

17. In view of the time constraint, CS instructed that the relevant B/Ds should give written response to Members' views after the meeting.

[Post-meeting Note : The response from B/Ds was set out at Annex II.]

Item 5: Progress Reports of the Working Groups [Paper No. 09 – 12/2021]

18. The meeting noted the progress reports of the Working Group (WG) on Children with Specific Needs [Paper No. 09/02021], WG on Promotion of Children's Rights and Development, Education and Publicity [Paper No. 10/2021], WG on Research and Public Engagement [Paper No. 11/2021] and WG on Children Protection [Paper No. 12/2021].

Item 6: Any Other Business

19. In connection with the recent court case concerning the death of a five-year old victim of child abuse in 2018, CS said that the Government was highly concerned about the issue of child protection. The Law Reform Commission (LRC) released a consultation paper in 2019 proposing a new

offence of failure to protect the child from death or serious harm. The Government would seriously consider the final report and recommendations to be announced by LRC and would take appropriate follow-up action.

20. Members noted that the next meeting was scheduled for 6 August 2021. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 5:30 p.m.

**Commission on Children Secretariat
July 2021**

Item 3 : Child Poverty Situation in Hong Kong in 2019 and the Relevant Support Measures

Responses from Office of the Government Economist

(a) Feminisation of poverty in the ethnic minority (EM) population caused by women's low education and unemployment

- (i) Besides monitoring the overall poverty situation, the Government published dedicated reports which covered detailed analyses of the EM poverty situation from time to time. According to the Hong Kong Poverty Situation Report on EMs (with 2016 being the latest issue), the post-intervention (recurrent cash) poverty rate of EM was 17.6%, which was higher than the overall population (14.7%). The poverty rate of EM females was 19.1%, while that for EM males was 16.0%. The full Hong Kong Poverty Situation Report on EMs 2016 could be accessed via the following link: <https://www.povertyrelief.gov.hk/pdf/Hong%20Kong%20Poverty%20Situation%20Report%20on%20Ethnic%20Minorities%202016.pdf>.
- (ii) It was further observed that EMs were mostly young with larger household size. A higher dependency ratio made working EMs more difficult to get out of poverty. Also, some could only participate in lower-skilled jobs due to their lower education attainment and the language barriers, thereby leading to higher poverty risks.
- (iii) The Government will continue to closely monitor the situation. As the data profile of EMs can only be collected via Population By-Census/Census carried out alternately every five years, the poverty situation report on EM will be updated upon the completion of the 2021 Population Census by the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD).

(b) Growing violence against EM children and women and their hunger problem amid the pandemic

- (i) Latest literature and researches generally point to a notable deterioration in global poverty situation amid the COVID-19 with the grassroots being more hard-hit by the pandemic. An update for the overall situation will be published in the 2020 Hong Kong Poverty Situation Report towards the end of this year and the Poverty Situation Report for EM will be updated when the dataset from the 2021 Population Census becomes available. It should be noted that the poverty line analytical framework and its related analyses are based on household survey data compiled by C&SD, which do not cover social statistics at micro level, e.g. those regarding violence incidences and hunger. The annual poverty analysis assesses the poverty situation of the local population with the sole criterion of household income. It could not be relied upon to evaluate the extent and magnitude of specific social or family issues.
- (ii) The Social Welfare Department (SWD) is presently maintaining a database on reported cases of child protection and spouse/cohabitant battering and sexual violence, which covers figures by ethnicity. The annual report for those reported cases could be accessed via the following link: https://www.swd.gov.hk/vs/index_e.html#s3.

(c) Financial burden of children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) to EM families in terms of actual expenses and time to take care of them.

With household income as the sole criterion of assessing the poverty situation, the poverty analysis could not help gauge the financial burden of families with different socio-demographic characteristics. The proposed item straddles over three entirely different data topics: (i) part of the data for SEN children were collected in the ad hoc Special Topic Enquiry on persons with disabilities and chronic diseases (last two survey periods were 2013 and 2020, the latter to be published in the second half of 2021); (ii) data for EM will be collected during the Population By-Census/Census (conducted every five years); and (iii) expenditure patterns of households will only be obtained via the Household Expenditure Survey (conducted every five years). Given the practical difficulties faced by C&SD in collecting data for these specific topics (such as underreporting, smaller sample size, sensitivity of information, etc.), additional time and manpower resources are needed

to ensure data quality for publication. Hence, it is more suitable to compile the respective datasets separately based on results of dedicated surveys from time to time. Therefore, it is currently not possible to cross-tabulate data on SEN children in EM families, as well as expenditure of households with SEN.

(d) The Government was suggested to set up an indicator on well-being to assess people's happiness and satisfaction. Children from low-income families should also be directly engaged to gauge their views.

- (i) The first-term Commission on Poverty (CoP) in 2012, by making reference to both international and local practices, adopted the concept of “relative poverty” to set the official poverty line at 50% of the median household income (before policy intervention) by household size.
- (ii) While the first-term CoP noted there were various ways of defining and measuring poverty, Members agreed that the poverty line should be readily measurable and internationally comparable, with regular data availability so that it would be cost effective to compile the poverty indicators for regular monitoring. The existing poverty line and its analytical framework are simple and easy-to-understand, providing objective quantitative analysis for the poverty situation in Hong Kong as an analytical tool to monitor and understand the poverty situation, formulate poverty alleviation policies and assess policy effectiveness in an ongoing manner. The poverty line framework is consistent with the international practice of those developed economies and has gained wide acceptance in the local community in recent years, with academics, think tanks and welfare organisations using the data from the poverty line analysis in their studies. The CoP does not have plan to set up another analytical framework at the moment.
- (iii) Nonetheless, the Government and CoP will keep the application of the analytical framework of the poverty line under review and suitably explore from time to time feasible enhancement measures to improve the dimensions of analysis and data collection.

Item 4: Parent Education and Family Support for Parents and Children

Responses from Education Bureau (EDB), Social Welfare Department (SWD) and Food and Health Bureau/Department of Health (FHB/DH)

- (a) *The Government should recognise the efforts of pre-school institutions in strengthening the connection and collaboration with parents through means other than Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs). Ethnic minority (EM) parents should be involved in PTAs.*

EDB

- (i) PTA is set up to promote the connection and communication between parents and school and to establish a partnership between them. It also provides a channel for parents and the school to exchange views on school development. Starting from the 2019/20 school year, the Government has increased the provision of Home-School Co-operation (HSC) Grants to encourage more schools to set up PTAs and organise more home-school co-operation and parent education activities. Schools without a PTA can apply for HSC Grants to organise the aforesaid activities.
- (ii) Any parent or guardian of a school student may apply to become a PTA parent member and participate in home-school co-operation activities or parent education programmes organised by the school/PTA.
- (iii) EDB noted that schools have been promoting collaboration and parent education through various means or channels according to their school-based situations and needs. Their efforts are well-recognised.
- (b) *The Government should develop a framework for identifying focus areas of parent education to help enhance the parenting skills and knowledge of parents.*

EDB

- (i) EDB has rolled out a parent education framework at kindergarten (KG) stage in the 2018/19 school year. KGs are encouraged to draw reference from this framework in organising school-based or joint school parent education programmes. The framework focuses on “Roles of parents with children of KG age”, covering

three major domains and eight themes relating to children's development and learning.

- (ii) To take forward the recommendation of the Task Force on Home-School Co-operation and Parent Education (Task Force), EDB will commission tertiary institutions to develop a curriculum framework on parent education (curriculum framework) in phases for parents with children at kindergarten, primary, and secondary levels. It is anticipated that the curriculum framework will be launched progressively starting from the third quarter of 2021.

SWD

- (iii) The Integrated Family Service Centres (IFSCs)/Integrated Services Centres (ISCs) are easily accessible in the locality for providing support to needy families in the community. Social workers of IFSCs/ISCs have been taking proactive means to set up multi-disciplinary mechanisms for reaching out to needy families and connecting them with respective community support services.
 - (iv) To enhance inter-disciplinary communication and collaboration, a standardised assessment framework, namely the Manual of Parenting Capacity Assessment Framework (for the 0-36 months old) were developed by a task group formed by HA, DH and SWD during 2014-2019, for use by professionals when making assessment on child care and parenting capacity of the parents/carers.
 - (v) Please also see (c)(iv) below.
- (c) *The Government should formulate policies on parent education, and put in place a mechanism for assessing the effectiveness of the measures implemented in support of these policies.*

EDB

- (i) Parent education is promoted collaboratively by different Government bureaux and departments (B/Ds) with focus and context appropriate to their policy portfolios. As parents are the key stakeholders in the school education process, EDB has all along been promoting parent education by supporting home-school co-operation and forging home-school partnership through KGs, primary and secondary schools to facilitate students' effective learning and healthy development.

- (ii) EDB has increased the subsidy for PTAs of schools and Federations of PTAs (FPTAs) to organise home-school co-operation and parent education activities starting from the 2019/2020 school year. In the 2020/21 school year, a total of 1 654 schools have applied for the HSC Grants and approval has been granted for subsidising around 3 600 activities. PTAs of schools and FPTAs are required to submit an assessment report to EDB upon completion of each activity for evaluation purpose.
- (iii) EDB has been taking forward the recommendations of the Task Force and will continue to review the effectiveness of the measures implemented through various means, including collecting feedback from schools and parents and examine if the policy objectives have been achieved.

SWD

- (iv) The Working Group on the Publicity Campaign on Strengthening Families and Combating Violence, comprising representatives from SWD, the Information Services Department and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), has been formed to map out strategies and put forward measures to enhance territory-wide publicity and public education in relation to strengthening family relationship and prevention of domestic violence. The Working Group also evaluates the effectiveness of the publicity campaign at the central and district levels.
- (d) *The function of the Comprehensive Child Development Services (CCDS) should be reinforced as a preventive programme. Consideration should be given to supporting pilot programmes of NGOs with proven effectiveness in enhancing parent education.*

EDB

- (i) Under CCDS, if kindergarten teachers detect any persistent physical, developmental, behavioural or significant family issues with children, they can refer them directly to the Maternal and Child Health Centres (MCHCs) and IFSCs /ISCs in the respective district for assessment. EDB will continue to promote the referral mechanism to kindergarten teachers and equip them with the related skills and knowledge on early identification and support for students with diverse needs in KGs.

SWD

- (ii) SWD has made continuous efforts to strengthen the collaboration platform on CCDS at district level. Through the platform, the relevant stakeholders could design effective ways on strengthening the CCDS mechanism and enhancing the preventive work on child protection at district level.
- (iii) SWD welcomes NGOs with proven effectiveness to run pilot programmes on enhancing parent education with community funding.

FHB/DH

- (iv) MCHCs of Family Health Service (FHS) play a key role in the identification of at-risk families. Under CCDS, needy children and families are referred to appropriate health and social services for further support. MCHCs work closely with its working partners, including NGOs which provide support programme for specific target groups in the community. Service partners communicate the needs of their clients and make referral via well-established channels. FHS also provides professional support to NGOs (e.g. those working on teen parents, substance abuse parents) to develop and pilot specific parenting programme as well as training of their staff.
- (e) *The Government should approach parent education from the human rights and legal perspectives. Evidence-based parent education with holistic strategies should be developed.*

EDB

- (i) The cultivation of positive values and attitudes in students has been a key learning goal of primary and secondary education. EDB is developing some promotional materials, e.g. leaflet and animation, on how to create a holistic atmosphere in family, school and society to foster the development of positive values.

SWD

- (ii) SWD has rolled out a series of territory-wide publicity and district-based programmes on “Strengthening Families and Combating Violence” for child protection and prevention of domestic violence. A series of television and radio Announcements of Public Interest (API), and promotional publicity in various media are also launched to raise the public’s awareness on child protection issues.

- (f) *The Government should acknowledge the efforts of children service units (e.g. children residential homes) on conducting parent education and schools on providing tailor-made preventive services to students and parents.*

EDB

- (i) Under the Whole School Approach to Guidance and Discipline as advocated by EDB, teachers work in collaboration with school social workers, student guidance personnel and other professional staff to provide remedial, preventive and developmental guidance services to students and parents. EDB officers conduct school visits from time to time, during which they will acknowledge the efforts of schools and social workers on parent education and provide advice to schools on their support to parents.

SWD

- (ii) As stipulated in the Funding and Service Agreements of residential child care services (RCCS), the services to be provided by the service operators includes education and activities in addressing the needs of the parents and the residents as well as promoting parent-child relationship. The efforts of the RCCS units are fully acknowledged.
- (g) *The Government should establish a central platform of parent education, engage role models to share their parenting experiences, and collaborate with the business sector in promoting the formation of parent networks in the community.*

EDB

- (i) EDB has been promoting parent education through the one-stop website “Smart Parent Net” which provides parents a variety of information on parent education, including featured videos, advice from experts and academics, experience sharing by parents/principals, etc. on various parenting topics. PTAs and district-based FPTAs also have established a communication network to strengthen home-school co-operation connection between parents and schools, and further promote parent education through organising talks and activities.

SWD

- (ii) In 2020-21, SWD has developed a Facebook Fanpage and Instagram for promoting family relationship, prevention of child

abuse and domestic violence with collaboration network with the social media platforms of other B/Ds and organisations for wider sharing and publicity effects.

- (h) *The Government should provide support for parents in need including EM parents, working parents, parents with SEN children (especially under the pandemic), families in poverty, etc.*

EDB

- (i) Amidst the threat of the epidemic, EDB has maintained communication with schools and special educational needs coordinators (SENCO) to support students with SEN. SENCOs have been reminded to keep close contact with parents of students with SEN and advise them to co-operate with schools in the support for their children. SENCOs also have worked in collaboration with professionals such as school-based educational psychologists, school-based speech therapists and school social workers to render targeted support for individual students with SEN and their parents.
- (ii) To support learning at home under the pandemic, EDB has specifically launched the “Catering for Students with Special Educational Needs – Joyful Online Learning at Home” series on EDB’s website since August 2020 to help parents guide their children to pick up the skills in learning and social adaptation. Besides, a series of short psychoeducational videos of “Suspending Classes without Suspending Love in the Epidemic” for parents are uploaded to the “EDB YouTube Channel” and “Smart Parent Net”, providing information on the possible emotional reactions of children during class suspension and ways to help them stay positive.
- (iii) EDB has launched the territory-wide “Positive Parent Campaign” to promote positive mindset among parents in nurturing their children, with a view to gradually changing the present culture of excessive competition among some parents and helping their children learn effectively and grow happily.

SWD

- (iv) The 65 IFSCs and two ISCs in the territory provide support services to vulnerable or at-risk families, including families with childcare difficulties and different ethnic origins, through counselling, therapeutic and support groups, and referring the needy families to appropriate childcare support services.

- (v) In March 2020, SWD commissioned NGOs to set up 3 outreaching teams (OTEM) with employment of at least 3 EM staff to proactively reach out to EMs and connect those in need with mainstream welfare services. If EM parents encounter difficulties in caring for or disciplining their children, the social workers/workers of the OTEM would refer the families to the concerned IFSCs/ISCs or School Social Work services for counselling services.
- (vi) Agency-based Enhancement of Clinical Psychological Support Services for Children under Foster Care has been implemented since October 2020. Apart from providing timely assessment and stop-gap intervention for foster children and youth who have been wait-listed for long-term clinical psychological services, the services are also extended to parents and foster parents in handling children with special needs.
- (vii) SWD has provided additional resources for CEASE Crisis Centre of the Tung Wah Group of Hospitals since January 2020 to raise the awareness of EMs towards domestic and sexual violence through public education programmes, and to encourage the victims to seek help. EM staff employed for this programme have been liaising with the relevant stakeholders in the community to promote the service. The APIs in five EM languages are also broadcast through radio channels to strengthen the promotion on prevention of child maltreatment and combating domestic violence.
- (i) *Enhanced support should be provided to EM parents and children, for example, to inform divorced parents of the support services available and to raise parents' awareness of cyber bullying and cyber crimes targeting children.*

EDB

- (i) Starting from the 2020/21 school year, EDB provides a series of parent education programmes, including talks cum exhibitions and community activities, for parents of non-Chinese speaking students so as to help them support their children's learning and encourage their children to learn the Chinese language. The programmes also enhance their understanding of the multiple pathways available to their children.

- (ii) EDB provides a framework on “Information Literacy for Hong Kong Students” for schools to nurture their students’ ability and attitude to use information and communication technology effectively and ethically, including guarding against the dangers on the internet and refusing to engage in any improper acts like cyber-bullying. Seminars are organised to help parents develop proper attitudes of their children in using information technology in daily life and study. A telephone hotline has been set up to provide individual support for parents, teachers and students in need.
- (iii) Schools can make use of the English version of “Co-creating a Harmonious School Stop Bullying” resource package available on EDB’s website to raise EM parents’ awareness of school bullying, including cyber bullying.

SWD

- (iv) To strengthen the welfare support to the EM parents and children in need, OTEM proactively reach out to EMs, connect those in need with mainstream welfare services, and conduct groups and programmes for them. Besides, OTEM provided training to front-line workers of mainstream welfare services to enhance the sensitivity of the culture of EMs.
- (v) From the 2019/20 school year, SWD has been providing a tiered subsidy to Special Child Care Centres and Early Education and Training Centres with EM children enrolled per school year for implementing measures catering to these children with special needs and their parents/carers.
- (j) *Parents’ understanding about sexual abuse should be enhanced. Mutual trust and communication between parents and schools should be strengthened to facilitate early intervention of cyber sex crimes involving children. Information should be made available to raise parents’ awareness of cyber crimes and the means to seek help.*

EDB

- (i) Schools are encouraged to make good use of the learning and teaching resources provided by EDB to strengthen parent education on protecting their children against sexual assaults or cyber sex crimes.
- (ii) Starting from the 2018/19 school year, EDB has implemented, in light of their school-based circumstances, the policy of “one school

social worker for each school” in public sector primary schools, which enables schools to strengthen the communication with parents, and facilitates early identification and intervention of students’ problems.

- (k) *Government’s philosophy of parent education, the focus and correlation of the three-tier support measures (i.e. preventive, support and remedial)*

EDB

Parent education is currently promoted through home-school co-operation and parent education activities. EDB has also launched the territory-wide “Positive Parent Campaign” to promote positive parent education.

- (l) *Cross-departmental collaboration in parent education*

EDB

- (i) EDB has been working in collaboration with other government B/Ds to provide education to parents of different backgrounds and needs. There is also an extensive sharing of information on parent education among the B/Ds. Information such as videos, articles and activities on parent education of other B/Ds is available in the “Smart Parent Net” website for parent’s easy access. More cross-departmental collaboration in promoting parent education will be explored.

SWD

- (ii) SWD has close collaboration with relevant government departments on child protection and prevention of domestic violence at central and district levels such as the Committee on Child Abuse, Working Group on Combating Intimate Partner Violence and Adult Sexual Violence, Working Group on Publicity Campaign on Strengthening Families and Combating Violence, District Coordinating Committee on Family and Child Welfare Services, District Liaison Group on Family Violence, etc. which are well established platforms to enhance cross-departmental and multi-disciplinary collaboration on subjects of common concern including parent education.

- (m) *Access to Specialised Co-parenting Support Centres (SCSCs) and identification of high-risk cases*

SWD

Divorced/separated parents can obtain the support services from SCSCs either by referral or self-approach. SCSCs provide intake service to assess the needs of divorced families. High risk cases in need of other support services will be referred to IFSCs/ISCs or Family and Child Protective Services Units (FCPSUs) as appropriate for follow up and cross service collaboration.

- (n) *Scope of application of the Manual of Parenting Capacity Assessment Framework*

SWD

The Manual is used by professionals when making assessment on child care and parenting capacity of the parents/carers. It can be applied by social workers in all casework settings including IFSCs/ISCs, FCPSUs, Counselling Centre for Psychotropic Substance Abusers and Pre-primary Institutions, etc. Please also refer to (b)(iv) above.

- (o) *Latest development of the Positive Parenting Programme*

FHB/DH

FHS continues to enhance and update its existing parenting resources to promote positive parenting skills and knowledge. A series of 6 leaflets and 3 video clips on social emotional development as well as emotion coaching for young children have been developed. These resources have become available for clients attending MCHCs and uploaded to FHS websites in June 2021. In view of the COVID-19 pandemic, all workshops/ support groups including the positive parenting programme (Triple P groups) in MCHCs were suspended in 2020. Clients were directed to seek health information from FHS website which has been enriched with health advices on physical and psychological well-being of children and parents, e.g. tips for parents on engaging children to continue learning and doing activities at home during school closure, working from home with children and use of screen time. A series of on-line public talks on parenting were conducted regularly to enhance the accessibility to parenting support. FHS will continue to monitor the pandemic situation and resume the face-to face parenting workshops and groups when feasible. FHS is also reviewing other evidence-based parenting programme which

promote parent-child attachment and social emotional coaching for young children, e.g. Circle of Security, Tuning into Kids etc., and exploring the feasibility of adopting/ adapting these programmes for use in MCHC setting.