

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

Date : 24 August 2023
Time : 3:00 p.m.
Venue : Conference Hall, West Wing,
Central Government Offices, Tamar

Present

Chairperson

Mr KK Chan Chief Secretary for Administration (CS)

Vice-chairperson

Mr Chris Sun Secretary for Labour and Welfare

Ex-officio Members

Dr Christine Choi	Secretary for Education
Miss Alice Mak	Secretary for Home and Youth Affairs
Mr Raistlin Lau	Under Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism (for Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism)
Dr Libby Lee	Under Secretary for Health (for Secretary for Health)
Mr Raymond Siu	Commissioner of Police (CP)
Miss Charmaine Lee	Director of Social Welfare
Dr Ronald Lam	Director for Health
Mr Te Chi Wang	Deputy Director of Home Affairs (2) (for Director of Home Affairs)
Ms Chan Yuen-han	Chairperson of Women's Commission

Non-official Members

Ms Karin Ann
Mr Peter Au Yeung Wai-hong
Mr Chan Kin-ping
Miss Anna May Chan Mei-lan
Mr Winson Chow Wai-chung
Ms Kathy Chung Lai-kam
Ms Heidi Hui Sim-kiu
Dr Patrick Ip
Dr Sanly Kam Shau-wan
Ms Joyce Lee Yuen-sum

Ms Shalini Mahtani
Mr Kenny Ng Kwan-lim
Ms Cindy Pun Siu-fung
Dr Sandra Tsang Kit-man
Dr Rizwan Ullah
Ms Donna Wong Chui-ling
Dr Lilian Wong Hiu-lei
Miss Koby Wong Lok-yin
Ms May Wong May-kwan

Secretary

Ms Jeanne Cheng Principal Assistant Secretary for
Labour and Welfare (Children)

In attendance

Chief Secretary for Administration's Private Office

Mr Sammy Leung Administrative Assistant to
Chief Secretary for Administration
Mr Nicky Ng Press Secretary to Chief Secretary for Administration
Ms Joyce Li Political Assistant to Chief Secretary for Administration

Labour and Welfare Bureau

Ms Alice Lau Permanent Secretary for Labour and Welfare
Ms Terry Cheung Chief Executive Officer (Children)

Department of Justice

Mr Vernon Loh Senior Assistant Solicitor General (Human Rights)
Mrs Annie Williams Senior Government Counsel

Health Bureau (HHB)

[For item 3 only]

Mr Derek Lee Principal Assistant Secretary for Health 3

Hong Kong Police Force (HKPF)

Ms Yolanda Yu Chief Superintendent of Police
(Crime Support)(Crime Wing)
Mr Stephen Liauw District Commander (Wan Chai District)
[For item 4 only]

Department of Health

Dr Patrick Chong Acting Consultant Community Medicine
(Family and Student Health)

Research Project Team from the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK)

[For item 3 only]

Professor Hung Se Fong	Honorary Clinical Professor, Department of Psychiatry, CUHK
Professor Sandra Chan	Clinical Professor, Department of Psychiatry, CUHK
Professor Patrick Leung	Research Professor, Department of Psychology, CUHK
Miss Samara Hussain	PhD Candidate, Department of Psychiatry, CUHK

Members absent with apologies

Ex-officio Members

Ms Melissa Kaye Pang Chairperson of Family Council

Non-official Members

Miss Kelly Cheng Hui-kiu

Dr Tang Chun-pan

Mr Gary Wong Chi-him

Item 1: Confirmation of the Notes of the Seventeenth Meeting held on 25 May 2023

The draft notes of the seventeenth meeting were circulated to Members on 31 July 2023 and no comment was received. The notes were confirmed without any amendment.

Item 2: Matters Arising

2. Two stakeholder engagement events under the “Walk with Kids” thematic campaign were held on 5 May and 22 June 2023 respectively in accordance with the public relations strategy and implementation plan endorsed at the sixteenth meeting on 16 March 2023. CS invited the meeting to view highlights of both events, and expressed appreciation to Members for their enthusiastic participation and support, as well as the bureaux/departments, including the HKPF, the Social Welfare

Department and the Education Bureau (EDB), for their concerted efforts in jointly organising the events. He encouraged all Members to actively take part in and support the coming stakeholder engagement events scheduled for the third and fourth quarters of 2023 for keeping up the promotion of the message on child protection.

Item 3: Results of the Hong Kong Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Epidemiologic Survey: Age 6 to 17 [Paper No. 13/2023]

3. On CS' invitation, Professor Sandra Chan briefed Members on the key results and recommendations of the Hong Kong Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Epidemiologic Survey: Age 6 to 17 (the Survey) conducted by the CUHK as commissioned by HHB.

4. Members were of the view that the data collected in the Survey were comprehensive and of useful reference. Their views and suggestions were summarised as follows –

(a) Mental Health Support Measures

- (i) The Survey revealed that Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) was the most prevalent mental health problem. It was suggested that more support should be provided for children with ADHD, particularly to facilitate their integration into mainstream education.
- (ii) Parents' emotional and mental health were interrelated with the mental health of their children. It was suggested that training on emotion management and positive parenting should be provided, and that family support should be enhanced.
- (iii) It was suggested to focus the prevention work, for example, by stepping up public education and professional training on mental health, introducing simple assessment tools, to enable early identification of children and adolescents with mental health problems by parents, social

workers and teachers for timely intervention.

- (iv) Apart from educational psychology and school social work services, consideration could be given to providing clinical psychological services for secondary schools to strengthen mental health support for adolescents.
- (v) A Member suggested that the existing services and platforms, such as the Understanding Adolescent Project, should be enhanced to assist children and adolescents in coping with the challenges they faced when growing up.
- (vi) Noting the possible emotional issues or sleeping disorder among inadequately housed children and their parents, a Member suggested providing more dedicated space in the community for the needy families to relieve the stress.
- (vii) Child abuse had a far-reaching impact on children's mental health. Special attention should be given to the potential mental health problems, such as suicide, self-harm and conduct disorder, when formulating welfare plans for child victims.

(b) Follow-up on Survey Results

- (i) It was suggested that the Government should announce the results and recommendations of the Survey to the relevant sectors (including the education and social welfare sectors) as soon as possible, and consider organising seminars to promote their awareness of and enhancement to related mental health support services.
- (ii) The Survey revealed that parents were often unable to recognise children's psychiatric disorders in a timely manner. Both adolescents and parents, particularly those from non-ethnic Chinese (NEC) families, did not actively seek help. Efforts should be made to ascertain the underlying reasons, such as whether it was relevant to the stigmatisation of psychiatric disorders.

(iii) The trends in the prevalence of psychiatric disorders among children and adolescents in Hong Kong were broadly similar to the findings of other similar international studies. To facilitate formulation of targeted preventive measures, it was necessary to identify the common risk factors or those factors unique to the local culture and social situation of Hong Kong.

(iv) A Member was concerned about whether children and adolescents diagnosed with psychiatric disorders in the research sample had been receiving or wait-listing for the relevant services.

(c) Survey Design

(i) A Member hoped the Government would conduct regular surveys on the mental health of children and adolescents to keep track of the trends and changes of their mental health in longer term.

(ii) The research data should cover respective impacts of different background and environmental factors on the mental health of children and adolescents. Such factors included financial condition, living environment, family background (especially the mental health condition of parents) and ethnic background.

(iii) As EDB had been providing funding to public schools to support students with special needs, including those with mental health needs, the research project team could consider making reference to the relevant data for research and survey purposes.

(iv) A Member suggested that the research project team could pay visits to service providers, such as schools and healthcare institutions, to understand their needs and challenges.

5. The CUHK research project team thanked Members for their views and suggestions, and made the following responses –

- (a) In collecting data for the Survey, the team had taken into consideration various background and environmental factors that might have an impact on the mental health of children and adolescents, including those of Members' concerns. These factors included living environment, family relationship (including child abuse), financial condition of families, peer relationship, etc. There was not a generalised conclusion of the causes of psychiatric disorder and suicide cases as each case was an interplay of multiple risk factors and conditions. As the mental health of every family member affected one another, the Survey recommended implementing family-friendly policy to strengthen the support to families.
- (b) Sleep disorder was one of the risk factors leading to mental health problems but it was often overlooked. The research project team suggested that it could serve as the entry point for an early intervention to enhance the mental health of children and adolescents.
- (c) Arrangement would be made to refer the confirmed cases among the research sample to the Hospital Authority if the diagnosed children and adolescents had not received relevant services. However, only some of the patients or their parents were willing to seek medical treatment. The research project team had advised those unwilling to seek medical treatment to get help from non-governmental organisations (NGOs).
- (d) The Survey collected mental health data from over 700 NEC children and adolescents across multiple races, with Pakistanis and Indians being the majority. In the light of the demographic statistics of Hong Kong, the NEC data were adjusted via random sampling for statistical analysis. The major obstacle faced by NEC respondents was language barrier. Cultural sensitivity in the delivery of mental health services in Hong Kong was also inadequate.

- (e) Subject to the endorsement of the Survey report by HHB and the Advisory Committee on Mental Health, the research project team would publish the results and recommendations and share the details with the relevant sectors.

6. CS said that the results and recommendations of the Survey provided useful references for the Government in formulating the relevant policies. He also thanked the CUHK research project team for their attendance and presentation at the meeting.

Item 4: Briefing by the Police on the Observational Insights from Interviewing the Children and Young Persons in Recent Years

7. On CS' invitation, the CP and the District Commander (Wan Chai District) shared their observational insights from interviews in recent years with the children and young persons involved, and the activities organised by the Police for fostering positive values among them.

8. Members thanked HKPF's efforts for its support and follow-up on the children and young persons involved in the violent riots. Their views and suggestions were summarised as follows –

- (a) Some of these children and young persons suffered from emotional or stress problems, and even chose to go into hiding or withdrawal. The community should provide them with support, including organising more activities to help them reintegrate into schools or society and develop positive values. On the other hand, the young persons with special educational needs or those not regarded as elites did not usually receive recommendations or be selected to participate in various types of activities and programmes. The community should provide more chances for participation in order to help them build confidence and unleash potential, lead an active life and made it less likely for going astray.

- (b) The mental health development of children and young persons was worthy of attention. There was a suggestion to understand the relationship between their participation in the incidents and their mental health conditions or special educational needs. For example, ADHD patients might commit crimes on impulse. Apart from imprisonment, consideration could be given to make other appropriate punishment arrangements for the juveniles with mental health problems to help them rehabilitate in future.
- (c) Some of these children and young persons had poor or even broken family relationship. Efforts should be stepped up to facilitate their communication and improvement of relationship with their families. On the other hand, it was suggested that the Police should strengthen liaison with schools and build up a platform at schools for instilling proper and law-abiding values among students through relaxing and fun interactions.
- (d) HKPF could work closely with the Correctional Services Department (CSD) to enhance the support for rehabilitation of discharged prisoners. For example, consideration could be given to issuing certificates of participation to those who had taken part in activities organised by HKPF/CSD for their employers' reference when they rejoined the workforce.
- (e) Some of these children and young persons had prejudice and misunderstanding about the Government. Efforts should be made in establishing communication platforms and channels to reach out to them, particularly those who had left schools, for developing a relationship with mutual trust. The incident should come to an end early allowing the affected young persons to return to the right track.
- (f) The Government could consider co-operating with NGOs and the business sector to mobilise multi-sectoral participation in promoting children and youth works for jointly building a caring and inclusive community.

9. CP stated that a number of these children and young persons came from problematic families and, according to the Police's observations, some might have signs of mental health problems. The Police considered it necessary to strengthen communication with young persons for alleviating their misunderstanding about the Police and enhancing their understanding of the importance of law-abiding. Enhancing initiatives for parents would also be needed. The Police had set up several working groups to meet regularly with school sponsoring bodies, associations of school heads in 18 districts and parent-teacher associations respectively, and to share information among schools, teachers, parents and other stakeholders through working group meetings and instant messaging group communication, thereby making concerted efforts to prevent juvenile crimes. Besides, HKPF would continue to work with various sectors in the community to promote youth work and help juvenile delinquents returning to the right track.

10. CS said that the violent riots and the Hong Kong version of "colour revolution" in recent years had seriously undermined the international image and breached public peace of Hong Kong. Despite Hong Kong had started a new journey and was proceeding from chaos to order as well as advancing from stability to prosperity, the root causes for chaos had yet to be eliminated and the risks to national security still remained. Among which, children and young persons were more easily misled resulting very far-reaching consequences if they went astray incidentally. Therefore, the Government would stay vigilant at all times, and strive to strengthen the national security infrastructures, adhere to the principle of observing and strictly enforcing the law, and resolutely safeguard national and local security. In addition, the Government would also strengthen the education for children and young persons to reinforce their proper values and law-abiding awareness, thereby protecting them from influences and harms.

**Item 5: Progress Reports of the Working Groups
[Paper No. 14-17/2023]**

11. The progress reports of the Working Group (WG) on Children Protection, the WG on Research and Development, the WG on Promotion of Children's Rights and Development, Public Education and Engagement

as well as the WG on Children with Specific Needs were circulated to Members for information prior to the meeting. The Secretariat had not received any view on the reports from Members.

Item 6: Any Other Business

12. Regarding a suggestion of organising a children-related large-scale international conference, Members recalled the consensus reached earlier by the Commission on the work plan of this year was to focus its efforts on launching thematic publicity programmes on child protection to dovetail with the scrutiny of the Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse Bill, including the organisation of a large-scale publicity event in collaboration with HKPF in November 2023 to promote the message of child protection. Upon completion and smooth implementation of the legislation on the mandatory reporting regime on child abuses, together with more achievements with efficacy on child protection work and related initiatives, Hong Kong would be in a better position to tell good stories of safeguarding the well-being of children in Hong Kong to the global community through organising events at international level.

13. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 5:50 p.m.

Commission on Children Secretariat
November 2023