

[380 families commended for selfless devotion to foster care service \(with photos\)](#)

The Director of Social Welfare, Ms Carol Yip, commended 380 foster families for their selfless commitment to foster care services at the Foster Families Service Award Presentation Ceremony 2019 today (May 5). She said that the Social Welfare Department (SWD) will provide residential care services in a family setting for more children in need by making full use of existing resources and keeping a close watch on the recruitment situation of foster families.

Addressing the ceremony, Ms Yip praised foster families for their contributions to society, adding that foster parents' selfless devotion over the years has been essential to the sustainable development of foster care services. She said foster parents offer a helping hand to children whose parents are temporarily unable to take care of them by giving them a home which provides protection and shelter.

In addition to making foster children feel loved and giving them greater trust in people, foster parents also help foster children's own families to deal with their problems and overcome adversity, thus helping them to consider taking care of their own children again and achieving family reunion.

At today's ceremony, co-organised by the SWD and the 11 non-governmental organisations (NGOs) providing foster care services, various long-service awards were presented to foster families that have provided foster care services for five to more than 25 years. Special awards were also given to foster families with an outstanding performance in the past two years.

This year, the number of award-winning foster families hit a record high. Among them, 84 have been serving as foster families for more than 15 years, while nine of them have served for over 25 years.

Mr and Mrs Lai, who have been foster parents since 2010, were given a Long Service Silver Award. The couple started to take care of a two-year-old foster boy in 2013. The boy was diagnosed with developmental delay and did not know how to chew, speak, or walk properly at that time. With the unflinching care of the couple, the boy has grown up and is now comparable to an ordinary child of the same age. Apart from getting the boy back on track, the couple's devotion has also encouraged positive changes in the boy's birth mother, who has started to live an active life and has been able to quit undesirable habits which had been affecting her for 30 years. Returning to the right track, she is now also working hard to learn how to take care of her child.

Mr and Mrs Yiu, who have been emergency foster parents since 2002 and

have taken care of a total of 67 children, received an Outstanding Award at today's ceremony. They said that family problems and sudden life changes may cause regression in foster children's abilities. Emergency foster families can provide a peaceful and safe environment for foster children to calm down and equip themselves so that they can return home and reunite with their families when their family problems are resolved.

Established in 1982, the SWD's Central Foster Care Unit currently oversees and co-ordinates the provision of foster care services provided by 11 NGOs. Foster care provides substitute family care for children whose parents cannot adequately take care of them for different reasons, so that the children can continue to enjoy family life until they can be reunited with their families or when other long-term welfare plans are arranged for them.

Four of the NGOs provide emergency foster care services, which include the provision of immediate and short-term home-based residential family care to needy children whose parents cannot care for them because of emergency or sudden crisis situations, so that they can continue to enjoy family life until they can reunite with their families or secure a long-term placement. The duration of this type of care should not exceed six weeks.

As at the end of March this year, there were 900 registered foster families and 907 children receiving foster care services. Among the registered foster families, 141 were emergency foster families.

There are currently 1 130 foster care places in total. To enable more needy children to receive residential care services in a family setting, the SWD increased the level of various foster care allowances in December 2017 and has started to provide 240 additional foster care places in phases from 2017-18. Among the additional places, 60 places have been added in 2018 and the remaining 180 places will be added in phases. The SWD will continue to work closely with the 11 NGOs in publicising the service and recruiting foster families through various channels.



