

CE chairs 13th meeting of Commission on Children (with photo)

The Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, chaired the 13th meeting of the Commission on Children today (May 19).

A Commission on Children was established for the first time by the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region in fulfilment of the Chief Executive's pledge in her Election Manifesto to consolidate the efforts made by relevant bureaux and departments and focus on addressing children's issues as they grow up. Since June 2018, the Commission has been advising the Government in the formulation and implementation of various policies and programmes aiming at taking better care of children.

Mrs Lam said, "While the Government has rolled out various initiatives in recent years, including strengthening the provision of child care services, expanding by phases the On-site Pre-school Rehabilitation Service to 10 000 places in the next school year in order to achieve the objective of 'zero waiting' time, introducing the Funding Scheme for Children's Well-being and Development to support worthwhile projects, transforming more than 170 public play spaces to enhance the outdoor play environment for children, developing a central databank on children in Hong Kong to enable the Government and other stakeholders to collect and share useful data on children, etc., more need to be done as illustrated in the two subjects addressed by the Commission at this meeting."

During the meeting, members were briefed on:

(1) A comprehensive review of residential child care and related services to be conducted by the Government in the light of the incident in Children's Residential Home of the Hong Kong Society for the Protection of Children which had aroused major public concern: The review would cover three major areas, namely service regulation and monitoring, service planning and provision and service quality and staff training. Members supported the review and offered views on major aspects that it should cover. The Government would complete the review in September 2022 and report the outcome to the Commission; and

(2) The fifth Report of the Child Fatality Review Panel and the Government's responses

([www.swd.gov.hk/storage/asset/section/2867/en/CFRP_Fifth_Report_\(Eng\).pdf](http://www.swd.gov.hk/storage/asset/section/2867/en/CFRP_Fifth_Report_(Eng).pdf)): Members noted that the review covered the death of 259 children aged below 18, 100 of whom were due to non-natural causes. The report revealed that most of the children who died of non-natural causes lost their lives because of suicide, followed by accidents. Members commended the work of the Review Panel and offered advice on possible ways to expand the coverage of the review and improve the timeliness in making recommendations. Members also supported the early implementation of the various recommendations made by the Review Panel to prevent child and youth deaths.

Referring to the proverb that "it takes a village to raise a child", Mrs Lam said that protection of children should be the priority and obligation of not only the Government, but also all service providers, principals and teachers, and most importantly, parents.

"To raise alertness and ensure that each party will do its best, I said in my 2021 Policy Address that we would take forward legislation on establishing a mandatory reporting mechanism of child abuse. The Labour and Welfare Bureau is aiming at introducing a Bill into the Legislative Council in the first half of 2023," she added.

Members noted the Government's efforts to stabilise the epidemic while upholding the pro-child and pro-family principle. For cases where children were involved, the Government had been striving to ensure that each and every decision was made in the interests of the children and their families. Separation of children and parents during hospitalisation or quarantine should be avoided, and specific needs of the affected children should be fully taken into account.

Mrs Lam said, "I express my sincere gratitude to the Commission for its dedication over the years and members' initiative of presenting proposals on how to strengthen care for the child at this meeting. We will make sure that their views are conveyed to the next-term Chief Executive for consideration."

Members extended their heartfelt appreciation to the Chief Executive for her staunch support in the establishment of the Commission and the importance she attached to safeguarding the rights, interests and well-being of children.

The chairperson of the Commission is the Chief Secretary for Administration. As the post of the Chief Secretary for Administration has been left vacant, the meeting today was chaired by the Chief Executive.

