

Commission on Children convenes 11th meeting (with photos)

The Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr John Lee, chaired the 11th meeting of the Commission on Children today (August 6).

The Government is aware of the concern of some sectors of the community that the existing mechanism is unable to ensure the early and effective detection of suspected child abuse and neglect cases, and hence the suggestion of establishing a mandatory reporting mechanism in Hong Kong. With reference to overseas experiences and local situations, the Government has completed a preliminary study on the suggestion and consulted members on the key parameters of the proposed mechanism. Members expressed views on the proposed mechanism and whether it is appropriate to establish the mandatory reporting system through legislation. Members also provided views on whether there would be other administrative measures which could achieve "early detection" and "effective intervention". Members noted that the Government would organise consultation sessions for the social welfare sector, school sector and health sector respectively. Upon completion of the consultation, the Government would, taking into account all views received from various stakeholder groups, proceed to consider the next step forward.

In addition, members were briefed by the consultant on the progress of the Consultancy Study for Developing a Central Databank on Children (CDC). Having regard to overseas practices and views collated through the stakeholder engagement exercise conducted in the first half of this year, members noted that personal privacy concerns need to be properly handled and the development of a CDC in Hong Kong should proceed in an incremental manner in specific priority areas (such as "Risk of Abuse and Neglect" and "Children with Special Educational Needs"). Members also noted that the Consultant would next submit a final report on the guiding principles and an implementation framework for setting up the databank.

The Commission took note of the work progress of its four working groups. Among them, the Working Group on Children with Specific Needs held a stakeholder engagement session on children's growth and development on July 24. About 80 primary and secondary school students were invited to share their views on space for accommodation and daily life. The Secretary for Labour and Welfare and Vice-chairperson of the Commission, Dr Law Chi-king, participated in the group discussion session on the day. The Commission also endorsed the publicity plan in 2021-22 which would adopt "Caring for Our Kids", "Preventing Child Fatality" and "Preventing Child Abuse" as the themes for launching a series of promotion and publicity initiatives.

