

## Commission on Children convenes 19th meeting (with photos)

The Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Chan Kwok-ki, today (December 4) chaired the 19th meeting of the Commission on Children (CoC).

At the meeting, members were briefed on the Government's various measures to keep children safe from cyber threats. The Education Bureau has integrated information literacy into the school curriculum, and promotes healthy Internet use, privacy protection, as well as anti-bullying and anti-cyber-bullying, among students through teachers' professional development and parent education. The Hong Kong Police Force prevents and combats cybercrime through close collaboration with stakeholders, proactive promotion of crime prevention, and enhancement of intelligence exchange and law enforcement. The Student Health Service of the Department of Health and the Cyber Youth Support Teams subvented by the Social Welfare Department (SWD) provide support for young people in need through early identification, intervention and follow-up as necessary. Members noted the trend of both primary and secondary school students spending more time on the Internet and electronic screen products, and discussed how to protect children from cyber traps and health risks.

Members were updated on the SWD's progress of implementing the various recommendations of the Committee on Review of Residential Child Care and Related Services regarding service quality, service regulation and monitoring, service planning and provision, and foster care service, as well as on the additional resources allocated by the Government. They took note that the SWD would continue to follow up the recommendations for progressive implementation. Members welcomed the further measures set out in the 2023 Policy Address, including substantially increasing the incentive payment for both foster and emergency foster care services starting April 2024 to encourage more willing individuals to become foster families, offering additional support to foster families with children having special learning or care needs, and increasing the number of residential child care service places.

Members took note of the work progress of the Working Groups under the CoC. Two stakeholder engagement events were held under the "Walk with Kids" thematic campaign. The stakeholder engagement event under the theme of "harmony" was held in September 2023, and the one under the theme of "review and outlook" and "Let's T.A.L.K. and Walk with Kids" Child Protection Campaign Award Presentation 2023 was held in November 2023 in collaboration with the Hong Kong Police Force and the SWD. Positive feedback was received from the participants and the expected publicity effect was achieved. Moreover, members visited Cha Kwo Ling Promenade in November 2023 to understand the innovative and inclusive features of its play facilities for children and exchanged views on how they could improve children's physical and mental health as well as play experience.

Prior to the meeting, Mr Chan led members to appeal to the welfare, education and health sectors, child concern groups, as well as parents at large, to lead by example and vote at the District Council (DC) election on December 10 to elect competent DC members in building a caring community, where children can grow up healthily and happily with their rights and well-being safeguarded. At the same time, he encouraged parents to guide their children to understand the election, and added that schools could also take the opportunity as part of civic education for the next generation to learn about their civic duty from an early age.

