

Commission on Children convenes eighth meeting

The Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung, chaired the eighth meeting of the Commission on Children today (November 13).

At the meeting, members noted the latest education developments and measures taken by the Government to alleviate the academic pressure of students, including the promotion of joyful learning and the provision of sufficient play time for children. The Education Bureau (EDB) promotes children's "learning through play" and encourages kindergartens to adopt the approach in planning their learning and teaching strategy. Members agreed to the promotion of joyful learning, and parent education and home-school co-operation, which enable parents to understand that happy and healthy development of children are equally important, with a view to fostering positive parenting.

In addition, members were briefed on the Government's major health services for children and measures on students' health promotion, including disease prevention, rehabilitation, building healthy lifestyles through the promotion of physical fitness and a healthy diet, as well as health education for children and parents. With rising demand for early identification and treatment for children with developmental problems, the Commission agreed that the Government should co-operate closely with non-governmental organisations and parent groups, and collaborate with academia in developing a comprehensive diagnostic instrument.

Members noted the Government's measures regarding the outbreak of upper respiratory tract infection at multiple kindergartens, child care centres and primary schools, including, as preventive measures, arranging distribution of deep throat saliva specimen bottles for teachers and students of classes with reported cases, providing COVID-19 testing to all staff members and students of the affected classes and advising the schools to suspend affected classes for at least three days until test results are available. The Government has also announced that all kindergartens, kindergarten-cum-child care centres and child care centres would suspend face-to-face classes or services for two weeks from tomorrow (November 14). The EDB and the Social Welfare Department (SWD) have issued press releases on the relevant details and arrangement.

The Commission also noted the progress of the work of its working groups. Members noted that the Child Fatality Review Panel under the SWD would expedite the implementation of the Panel's recommendations on raising public awareness of the important messages on the prevention of avoidable child death, particularly reminding the general public of scenarios closely related to their daily lives and the negligence of which would lead to serious or fatal consequences, such as the dos and don'ts on babies' safety while sleeping, by disseminating such messages through a greater variety of channels including TV and radio, children service units and relevant

websites.

Members also noted that the consultant engaged to examine the feasibility of developing a central databank on children in Hong Kong has already completed the review of overseas experiences and local databases. The consultant has identified the options of collecting children's data, including for the purposes of "trend monitoring", "policy appraisal" and "prevention and early intervention". The consultant will conduct a series of engagement sessions shortly to collect the views, possible concerns and expectations from stakeholders until March 2021, subject to the prevailing pandemic situation.