

Commission on Children convenes first meeting (with photo)

The Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung, chaired the first meeting of the Commission on Children (Commission) today (June 28).

At the meeting, members were briefed on the structure and operation mode of the Commission, and they also considered the future work priorities. Members had an initial discussion on the possible topics which the Commission might consider in future, and offered recommendations in relation to the Government's work in promoting children's growth and development in Hong Kong. The Chairman, Mr Cheung, agreed that members' views would enable the Commission to have more in-depth and thorough considerations when formulating its work plan.

"The Commission will be an ongoing, action-oriented, responsive and high-level body that will drive the work for the benefits of children and perform the co-ordinating role to enhance cross-bureau and cross-department collaboration. The Commission will also strive to listen to children's views and address children's issues to promote children's growth and development in Hong Kong," Mr Cheung stressed.

"Non-official members of the Commission are highly representative, including experts and stakeholders involved in matters concerning children's growth and development. At the meeting, they provided valuable opinions to the Commission on various aspects by drawing heavily on their professional knowledge and experience, which enabled the Commission to understand better the views and needs of children."

As discussed and agreed at the meeting, the Commission will include the following issues in its initial work plan: children with special education needs, ethnic minority children, children's health, children at risk, a mechanism for dealing with absentee students, and other systematic issues such as exploring the possibility of developing a central databank on children.

At the meeting, members also discussed the regularisation and possible enhancement of the Pilot Scheme on On-site Pre-school Rehabilitation Services. Members noted the progress of the Pilot Scheme and the preliminary observations of the evaluative study on the Pilot Scheme, and agreed that the pre-school rehabilitation services could be further enhanced through possible measures, such as provision of transitional support for identified children from kindergartens to primary schools and consideration of interface with existing pre-school rehabilitation services.

In addition, members were updated on the progress of the Consultancy Study on the Long-term Development of Child Care Services and provided views

on the direction of the Study's recommendations, including the philosophy and positioning of child care services, planning parameters for child care centre places, manning ratios for qualified child care workers serving in child care centres, enhancement of the Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project and re-engineering of the Mutual Help Child Care Centres, as well as the Government's subsidy for child care centre service.

The meeting also noted the work to be undertaken by the two Working Groups set up under the Commission. In the light of the policy directions endorsed by the Commission, the Working Group on Research will initiate research studies on children-related issues and help review children-related policies and services as appropriate. As for the Working Group on Public Engagement, Education and Publicity, it will promote the importance of children's rights and interests, manage funding schemes for organising publicity or community projects, and keep in touch with children through different channels and means to enable the Government and the Commission to listen to their voices, understand their views and take into account their suggestions. The two Working Groups will convene their first meetings soon.

