

# Fourth Report of Child Fatality Review Panel released (with photo)

The following is issued on behalf of the Child Fatality Review Panel:

The Child Fatality Review Panel today (May 31) published its fourth report on the prevention of child death. The report contains 53 recommendations for the prevention of avoidable child fatality following an analysis of the child death cases in 2014 and 2015 reported to the Coroner's Court.

Speaking at a briefing today, the Chairman of the Review Panel, Mr Herman Hui, said that children are our future and they should be protected, kept healthy and safe. Every child's death is a tragic loss for the family, as well as society, particularly in those cases which could have been avoided. He expressed the hope that the work of the Review Panel could help prevent avoidable child deaths.

The review covered the deaths of 166 children aged below 18 who died of natural (107) and non-natural (59) causes. The report revealed that most of the children who had died of non-natural causes lost their lives because of suicide (18), followed by accidents (12) and assault (nine). In light of repeated child deaths caused by co-sleeping with adults, inappropriate sleep arrangements, concealment of pregnancy and accidental falls, the Review Panel has continued the thematic review on these topics.

Among the 18 child or youth suicide cases, 13 persons jumped from height to their death, with the youngest one aged 11. "Diagnosed/Suspected mental illness" stood out as the most frequent circumstance for death by suicide, followed by "Adaptation to Form One schooling", "Parent-Child Conflict" and "Relationship Breakup". As some of these children sent suicidal messages to their friends prior to their suicidal attempts, enhancing children/youths' skills in responding to death threats from their peers might be helpful in preventing their deaths. A total of 18 recommendations were made in the report for the prevention of child and youth suicide.

Among the 12 fatal child accident cases, six children died of falling from height or from a bed/chair and the others died from fire (three), choking (two) and a traffic accident (one). Twelve recommendations for prevention of accidents were made which include reminding caregivers not to leave children alone or unattended at home, to install proper window grilles and ensure that they are properly locked, to place slip-resistant rubber mats on the floor, not to arrange for children to sleep alone on a high bed without a fence, to enhance training on child safety for foreign domestic helpers, and to seek immediate medical attention when children sustain head injuries. Recommendations on safe sleeping arrangements, strengthening public education on fire prevention and safety and proper use and installation of electrical home appliances were also made.

A total of nine children lost their lives as a result of assault. Seven children were assaulted by their parents, one by a relative and one by a stranger. A total of 11 recommendations were made to prevent such tragedies, including enhancing carer support services for parents with children with disabilities, further enhancing public knowledge of depression, educating youths on the importance of self-protection when using social media and strengthening co-parenting support services for divorced/separated families.

Mr Hui expressed his heartfelt thanks to all of the front-line workers, professionals and managerial personnel of service organisations, professional bodies and government departments who assisted and participated in the review.

The Assistant Director (Family and Child Welfare) of the Social Welfare Department (SWD), Ms Pang Kit-ling, expressed her gratitude for the efforts of the Review Panel. She acknowledged the value of the child fatality review to facilitate the improvement and enhancement of the current child protection and child welfare service systems. She said that the SWD has accepted the recommendations of the Review Panel and will continue to enhance multi-disciplinary and cross-sectoral collaboration in protecting children.

To identify and support students in the face of difficulties, the Government has, starting from the 2018/19 school year, provided public sector primary schools with additional resources through a new funding mode to enable them to implement the "one school social worker for each school" policy as soon as possible according to school-based circumstances. To enhance teenagers' mental health and stress resilience, the Government will implement the measures of "two school social workers for each school" from the 2019/20 school year in some 460 secondary schools, together with a concomitant increase in supervisory support. In February this year, the Government also launched a three-year Pilot Scheme on Social Work Service for Pre-primary Institutions in phases in more than 700 pre-primary institutions for about 150 000 pre-school children and their families.

The SWD will continue to collaborate with the Food and Health Bureau, the Education Bureau and the Hospital Authority to provide comprehensive support for students with mental health needs through the Student Mental Health Support Scheme. In 2019-20, the 24 Integrated Community Centres for Mental Wellness subvented by the SWD will extend support services to cover all secondary school students with mental health problems. The SWD will also deploy five mobile publicity vans in five regions across the territory to promote mental health. To enhance preventive and supportive services for vulnerable children and their families and prevent youth suicides, from 2019-20 onwards, the SWD will provide additional resources for 24 integrated family service centres and two integrated service centres operated by non-governmental organisations to recruit 26 more front-line social workers and 14 family aid workers.

Furthermore, to strengthen the support for parents and relatives/carers of persons with disabilities (including those with special educational

needs), the SWD will gradually set up an additional 13 Parents/Relatives Resource Centres from 2018-19 to 2019-20, making a total of 19 centres. In addition, to render support to divorced parents and their children, five specialised co-parenting support centres operated by non-governmental organisations will be set up across the territory in the third quarter this year to provide one-stop co-parenting support services for these families.

Ms Pang stressed that the SWD will continue to work closely with relevant stakeholders in providing a comprehensive network of welfare services to strengthen family ties for people to prevent and handle personal and family problems.

The full content of the Review Panel's fourth report is available on the SWD homepage ([www.swd.gov.hk](http://www.swd.gov.hk)) for public viewing.

