

# SWD's statement in response to improvement plans and review report submitted by Hong Kong Society for the Protection of Children on Children's Residential Home's incident

Regarding the suspected child abuse incident that happened at the Children's Residential Home (CRH) in December last year, a spokesman of the Social Welfare Department (SWD) today (January 26) reiterated that the incident is totally unacceptable. The SWD has immediately taken a series of measures to ensure the proper operation of the child care centre after the incident, and requested the Hong Kong Society for the Protection of Children which operates the centre to submit improvement plans and a review report regarding the incident. The SWD yesterday (January 25) received the review report from the independent review committee commissioned by the Hong Kong Society for the Protection of Children. After a preliminary study of the report, the SWD considers that the direction of reforming governance and recommendations on service improvement contained in the report are acceptable on the premise that an effective internal management and supervision system will be established by the Hong Kong Society for the Protection of Children as soon as possible to ensure that improvement measures are effectively enforced, so as to rebuild public confidence in the organisation. The SWD will closely monitor the effectiveness of the implementation of the recommendations, to safeguard the well-being of the children.

The independent review report revealed serious shortcomings in the daily operation, supervision and staff training in the child care centre. These observations match with those made by the SWD. The SWD takes note that the Hong Kong Society for the Protection of Children has accepted the recommendations of the independent review committee and undertaken to implement a series of measures, including replacing personnel in the senior management and strengthening organisational governance and daily supervision. The SWD will closely supervise the organisation's full implementation and effective enforcement of the improvement measures in the review report, including staff recruitment, support and training; and setting up committees to monitor service quality and management. The SWD also notes that the independent review committee will review in the next phase the overall governance of the Hong Kong Society for the Protection of Children. The department will closely monitor the outcome and recommendations of the review, as basis to consider whether the Hong Kong Society for the Protection of Children is suitable for providing services subsidised by the SWD.

In the process of handling the incident, the Government noted that there is room for improvement on SWD's monitoring system. The department will, adopting a risk-based approach, step up the depth and breadth of inspections

to ensure child care service providers are in strict compliance with the service quality standard of the SWD and legal requirements, and have effective internal control and monitoring systems in place. Enhancement measures include including health inspectors and other professionals to join the inspection teams; increasing the frequency of inspections of service units that take care of vulnerable children and/or service units with unsatisfactory past records based on risk assessment; and conducting random checks on closed-circuit television (CCTV) footages at the service units.

In addition, the SWD will require all residential child care service units to install CCTV system to facilitate supervision, and will provide financial assistance to individual service units if needed.

To follow up the implementation of the recommendations of the Review Report on Enhancement of Lump Sum Grant Subvention System completed in August last year, the SWD has accorded priority to conducting a review on residential child care and related services. The review covers service targets and nature (including interface between residential child care services and other child care services), service performance standards, notional staffing establishment and administrative support. The SWD has reported the scope and timetable of the review to the Working Group on Children Protection under the Commission on Children on January 19, and will consult stakeholders in March. The Commission on Children will also organise public engagement events to invite stakeholders to express their views on the subject. The Government will invite the Working Group on Children Protection to supervise the review, with a target of completing the review in March 2023.