

For discussion
on 14 February 2008

Legislative Council Panel on Welfare Services

Establishment of the Family Council

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on the establishment of the Family Council.

Background

2. The Government is committed to providing enhanced support to strengthen the families and build a more caring and harmonious society. The provision of family support work spans various Government bureaux and departments (e.g. the Education Bureau, Home Affairs Bureau, Labour and Welfare Bureau, Home Affairs Department, Labour Department and Social Welfare Department (SWD)). For example, the SWD, together with non-governmental organisations, operates a territory-wide network of Integrated Family Service Centres to provide a continuum of preventive, supportive and therapeutic welfare services to families in need.

3. The Government has also been taking steps to relieve the burden of people who take care of their parents and other family members. This is achieved through tax allowances and support services including training for elderly carers, counselling services and health care. A set of enhanced public housing arrangements have recently been implemented to encourage mutual care and support across generations by encouraging younger families to live with or closer to their elderly parents.

4. Despite the above, we recognize that the root of many complicated social problems often lies at home and that these problems need to be tackled from the family perspective, or our efforts risk being undermined. To effectively establish a family-based support network and forge closer and harmonious relationships among family members, the Chief Executive (CE) stated in his 2006-07 Policy Address that “a proposal worth considering was the setting up of an integrated, holistic and high-level Family Commission responsible for policies and initiatives relating to family support. The Commission would bring under one roof the various commissions and committees currently responsible for handling issues regarding different age groups and genders.”

5. Taking into account the recommendations of the then Health, Welfare and Food Bureau, the CE subsequently announced in his 2007-08 Policy Address that the Family Council, to be chaired by the Chief Secretary for Administration, would be set up. The CE added that supporting and consolidating the family would be the primary consideration of our social policy and social services planning; and reiterated that the Government would strengthen the family by formulating social policy and providing welfare services relating to the family that meet the needs of women, children, youngsters and the elderly.

Establishment of the Family Council

6. In December last year, the Government established the Family Council to advise it on the formulation of policies and strategies for supporting and strengthening the family and on the development of related programmes/activities, and to monitor their implementation. The Family Council comprises five Government officials and 16 non-official members who represent different quarters of the community including social welfare, professional, commercial and industrial, and academic sectors, and is served by the Home Affairs Bureau as the secretariat. Membership and terms of reference of the Council are set out respectively at **Annexes I and II**.

Recent Development

7. The first meeting of the Family Council was held on 14 December 2007. At the meeting, members exchanged views on their expectations of the work of the Family Council and specific issues to be addressed in the months ahead. The Council agreed to accord priority to the following areas –

- (a) Identification of core family values.
- (b) Identification of ways to create a pro-family environment including work environment, implant a family perspective in service professionals and workers, promote family-friendly employment practices, and promote better work-life balance.
- (c) Identification of ways to enhance the effectiveness and co-ordination of family education, strengthen parental education, and map out the respective roles of women and men in family lives.
- (d) Fostering a family perspective among policy-makers, for example, by introducing family impact assessment in policy formulation in long run.
- (e) Mapping out the future structure of the Family Council and the Elderly Commission, the Women's Commission and the Commission on Youth.
- (f) Making reference to family-related studies done by other organisations and initiating research on such studies as necessary, including research on the impact of cross-boundary marriages, employment and schooling on families, the needs of families with new arrivals and the need for special support services and measures.

8. In the course of working on the above, the Council will draw reference from overseas experiences and practices, and research findings by Government departments and relevant agencies. As the Family Council seeks to rationalise the work of the Elderly Commission, the Women's Commission and the Commission on Youth under the Council by March 2009, it will explore ways to achieve more collaboration between the Council and the three commissions.

9. The Government and the Family Council will be working closely with key stakeholders to study ways to promote and deepen various family-friendly measures, enhance public awareness, and promote better public understanding on matters relating to the interests of families.

Home Affairs Bureau
February 2008

Annex I**Membership of the Family Council (2007 to 2009) :**

Chairman: Chief Secretary for Administration

Non-official Members:

1. Ms CHAU Chuen-heung
2. Mr CHOW Yung, Robert
3. Ms KAO Ching-chi, Sophia
4. Mrs KWAN HO Shiu-fong, Cecilia
5. Ms LAI Fung-yee, Angelina
6. Mr LEE Chung-tak, Joseph
7. Dr LEE Wai-yung
8. Dr the Hon LEONG Che-hung
9. Mr LEONG Kwok-kuen, Lincoln
10. Mrs LEUNG NGAI Mou-yin, Justina
11. Dr PANG King-chee
12. Prof SHEK Tan-lei, Daniel
13. Ms TAO Chee-ying, Theresa
14. Dr WONG Chung-kwong
15. Prof WONG Po-choi
16. Mr WONG Ying-wai, Wilfred

Official Members:

Secretary for Education, or his representative
 Secretary for Home Affairs, or his representative
 Secretary for Labour and Welfare, or his representative
 Head, Central Policy Unit, or his representative

Terms of Reference of the Family Council

- (a) To advocate for cherishing the family as a main driver for social harmony; and to promote a family-based support network to forge closer and harmonious relationships amongst family members;
- (b) To advise the Government on the formulation of policies and strategies for supporting and strengthening the family and on development of related programmes/activities; and to monitor their implementation;
- (c) To advise the Government on the integration of family policies and related programmes across different bureaux and departments for individual age and gender sectors to ensure effective coordination;
- (d) To plan/implement programmes and activities for particular age and/or gender sectors; and rationalize the work of the Elderly Commission, the Women's Commission and the Commission on Youth; and
- (e) To initiate research to promote better understanding of matters related to the family as necessary.