

**Response to the outstanding items on Family Council raised by
LegCo Members at the meetings of the Panel on Welfare Services
on 11 May 2009 and 11 January 2010**

(A) Priority of work and work plan of the Sub-committee on Family Support

The Sub-committee on Family Support has accorded priority to the work in identifying ways to sustain a pro-family environment, and conducting researches and workshops to solicit new ideas and engage stakeholders as appropriate.

In response to the Chief Executive's Policy Address for 2009/10, the Sub-committee on Family Support had worked out its work plan for 2010 and deliberated on the specific research areas and the action plan for conducting studies on family issues, with a view to enabling the Family Council to approach various social issues from a family perspective and to provide policy recommendations to the Government in the areas of drug abuse, prostitution, neglect of elderly and neglect of children with a new dimension. The studies aimed at looking into the issues from a family perspective with a view to understanding whether and how the problems are related to the families and the solutions if any. Researchers were invited to conduct the studies through empirical data collection, in-depth case interviews or focus group interviews, and literature review as appropriate. We aim to have preliminary research findings available for consideration by the Sub-committee and the Family Council in the third quarter of 2010.

(B) Efforts undertaken by the Family Council in promoting the family-friendly employment practices

Relevant Government bureaux/departments have been formulating and implementing relevant policies and measures which are geared towards promoting a family-friendly environment. For example, encouraging employers to adopt family-friendly employment practices (FFEP) has been one of the Government's major promotional items.

Recent publicity and promotional activities on FFEP undertaken by the Labour Department (LD) include –

- (a) Promoting FFEP through the network of 18 Human Resources Managers Clubs of different trades and industries and the nine industry-based Tripartite Committees formed by LD. Regular meetings are conducted to discuss, among others, the implementation of FFEP and relevant good people management practices;
- (b) Organising roving exhibitions in different locations to promote, among others, public understanding of FFEP;
- (c) Publishing a booklet on “good people management and FFEP” in February 2009 to showcase exemplary practices;
- (d) Organising a large-scale seminar on FFEP and other good people management measures in September 2009 for representatives of employer and employee organisations, employers and human resources practitioners; and
- (e) Producing a video to introduce different types and forms of FFEP, as well as the benefits to employers and employees for implementing such practices. It also serves to dispel common misconceptions about FFEP held by the general public. DVDs of the video have been widely distributed to various stakeholders and the public in February 2010. Besides, LD has arranged video screening in suitable occasions to promote FFEP.

Being the largest employer in Hong Kong, the Government also actively implements measures to promote the occupational culture of a balanced life between work and family, as well as family-friendly employment practices. For example, since July 2006, the Government has implemented the Five-day Week initiative to enable employees to have more time for being with their family members, studying and participating in arts, cultural, recreational, sports and other activities. This initiative has been very well received.

At present, the number of civil servants working five days a week exceeds 100,000. The Government will continue to encourage Bureaux/Departments to explore, in consultation with staff, the feasibility of replacing or modifying existing roster arrangements to enable more staff to work according to a “5-day-on, 2-day-off” duty pattern, subject to the same basic principles governing the five-day-week initiative and with the proviso of not affecting public service interface. The Bureaux and Departments concerned will also monitor the situation and allow staff who are still working more than five days a week to rotate to five-day week posts within the same department where operational circumstances permit. This apart, the Government also provides various leave benefits to civil servants (such as annual leave and study leave), which enable civil servants to cope with their personal matters and family needs in a reasonably flexible manner.

Through the “Work Life Balance” electronic platform in the e-learning portal “CLC Plus” and through periodic seminars, the Civil Service Training and Development Institute continues to provide civil servants with relevant information to help them maintain healthy and happy minds, as well as work satisfaction and efficiency.

Various Departments have actively joined hands with the 18 District Councils, non-government organisations and professional bodies to promote healthy lifestyle in different aspects in life. The Government is also consolidating its work in promoting healthy living and facilitating its implementation. Using a context-specific approach to promote health, the Government looks forward to fostering partnerships with employers to create workplaces supportive of healthy lifestyle choices and practices.

In parallel, the Government enhances the knowledge of employers and employees on occupational health through a wide range of publicity and promotional activities, covering topics like the prevention of musculoskeletal disorders, proper management of work stress and workplace stretching exercises. The Government also encourages employers and employees to join hands in establishing a healthy work environment, improving work quality and nurturing a harmonious work atmosphere.

We will also continue to make efforts to help citizens reflect on the importance of families and remind them to strike a balance between work and family life. In 2010-11, the Committee on the Promotion of Civic Education will provide sponsorship to community organizations to organize district-based civic education activities on the theme of “Develop a Positive Attitude towards Life, Build Happy Families” under the Community Participation Scheme. The Family Council has launched a territory-wide “Happy Family Campaign” to appeal to the public to build families that Hong Kong people treasure. The Family Council also set up a “Happy Family Info Hub”, providing information such as family support services, family education, family-friendly employment practices and family related activities, with a view to encouraging the public to spend time with their family members in order to build “loving families”.

The Government and the Family Council will continue to work closely with relevant stakeholders to promote pro-family environment, and enhance public awareness and promote better public understanding and culture in cherishing families as a main driver for social harmony.

(C) The past discussions by the Family Council relating to the integration of family policies and related programmes across different bureaux and departments, and the needs of children as well as future plan on the above areas

(D) The specific needs and rights of men in the context of their roles in the family

The Family Council provides a high-level platform for cross-bureau and cross-sectoral discussion of major issues from the family perspective. The relevant Bureaux and Departments and the advisory bodies will continue to deliver services or programmes related to family issues and take on as appropriate new family support services and programmes with due regard to advice by the Council and relevant advisory bodies as appropriate.

The working relationship between the Family Council and the relevant Bureaux and Departments, together with their relevant advisory bodies, in respect of family-based policies and cross-sector issues from the family perspectives will be kept under review.

As far as issues relating to different age and gender groups are concerned, they cover wide-ranging policy and programme areas including welfare, fatality, abuse, neglect, education, health, development and rights, etc. They are followed up as appropriate by the relevant Bureaux and Departments. The Family Council provides a common platform for co-ordination and deliberation of such policy issues.

(E) Records of the past discussions of the Family Council pertaining to the review of policies having impact on families

The Chief Executive has pledged in his 2008/09 Policy Address that the Government was committed to look into ways to include the family as a factor to consider in its policy-making process.

The Family Council has made reference to overseas examples and practices in conducting family impact assessment, and worked out a list of guiding questions with reference to the family core values to assist the policy-makers in considering the family perspectives during the process of design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies. Bureaux and Departments are invited to consider if their policies have given proper regard to the core family values and impact on families as identified by the Family Council.

(F) Projects undertaken by the Family Council to promote family education

The Sub-committee on Family Education was set up to advise the Family Council on policies and strategies to promote family education, in particular parental education; and to map out the core values and outcomes for family education.

The Sub-committees promotes the importance of family education and facilitates the development of quality family education programmes which are sustainable and meet family needs. The Sub-committee will focus on developing the strategies and directions of family education.

The Sub-committee has arranged various workshops and sharing sessions to listen to and exchange views with different stakeholders to promote family education.