

Subcommittee on Children's Rights

List of follow-up actions arising from the discussion at the meeting on 20 June 2017

The Subcommittee has requested the Government to provide the following information with reference to the Subcommittee on Children's Rights' meetings held on 20 June 2017 –

The response of the Labour and Welfare Bureau / Social Welfare Department / Hospital Authority

1. Information delivered by medical social workers to parents whose children are identified as deaf or hard-of-hearing

- 1.1 Medical social workers (MSWs) are stationed in public hospitals and some specialist out-patient clinics to provide timely psycho-social intervention to patients and their families and help them cope with or solve emotional and life problems arising from illness, trauma or disability. As a member of the clinical team, MSWs play an important role in linking up the medical and social services to facilitate patients' rehabilitation and integration into the community.
- 1.2 In order to support the parents whose children are identified as deaf or hard-of-hearing, the MSWs will provide relevant information on social services for their reference. These information not only enable the parents to make the best use of the medical/rehabilitation services in medical institutions and the community but also provide support to the parents for facing their children's problem and difficulty arising from their illness.
- 1.3 Particularly, the MSWs of Child Assessment Centres under the Social Welfare Department (SWD) provide specific information on social rehabilitation services for hearing impaired persons to the parents whose children are identified as deaf or hard-of-hearing for their reference. There are views suggesting that the current information is unable to disseminate to parents clearly relevant support service according to individual circumstances of their children. In light of this, SWD will review and integrate the existing information provided to relevant parents and step up training for relevant front line staff, with a view to assisting

relevant parents in obtaining the most appropriate support, including provision of relevant information to facilitate parents in choosing the most appropriate teaching method and support for their children.

The response of the Education Bureau

2. Additional resources offered by the Education Bureau to support ordinary schools to use sign language in teaching in the past five years

- 2.1 To help ordinary schools cater for students with special educational needs (SEN) (including hearing impairment (HI)), on top of the recurrent subvention for ordinary schools, the Education Bureau (EDB) has been providing schools with additional resources, professional support and teacher training. Schools should pool and deploy these resources flexibly, through the Whole School Approach (WSA) and the 3-Tier Intervention Model¹ to provide appropriate support to students according to their needs. When schools provide support to students, they need to have comprehensive plans and arrangements, such as resource allocation and utilization, teacher training, curriculum accommodation, etc.
- 2.2 Generally speaking, students with HI suitable to attend ordinary schools, after fitted with assistive hearing devices, could learn and communicate with other people in oral language. Teachers, school-based speech therapists, etc. would facilitate students with HI to use the residual hearing to enhance their listening and oral communication abilities, to enhance their skills in communicating with other people with HI and with normal hearing. At the same time, with regard to the abilities and needs of students with HI, teachers will use oral language with the support of visual strategies, contextual cues, body language, written text and gestures, etc. in communicating with the students and in teaching.
- 2.3 Should the learning and communication problems of students with HI in ordinary schools persist after school-based support, the EDB will refer the students to receive the Enhanced Support Service for

¹ Tier-1 support refers to the use of quality teaching in regular classrooms to help students with mild or transient learning difficulties; tier-2 support refers to “add on” intervention, such as pull-out or after-school remedial programmes and hired professional services, etc., for students with persistent learning difficulties; tier-3 support refers to intensive individualised support, including drawing up an individual education plan, for students with persistent and severe learning difficulties.

Students with HI (ESS). ESS is provided by the special schools for children with HI (HI Schools) as commissioned by the EDB. Experienced resource teachers (RTs) of the HI schools will provide after-school support to students with HI to help them master learning strategies, improve language skills and enhance oral communication skills. RTs will also pay school visits to provide guidance to the students and to exchange their experience in teaching students with HI, and to share different teaching strategies (including how to use sign language in assisting teaching) with teachers of the schools of these students to enhance the learning effectiveness of the students with HI and to facilitate their integration into the schools. The speech therapists of the HI school will also further enhance the speech and language training of the students, improve their oral proficiency and facilitate the development of their literacy skills.

- 2.4 If ordinary schools opt to use sign language in providing support for students with HI in need, schools should have appropriate arrangements, such as formulating the criteria of using sign language by students with HI, arranging subject teachers and teaching assistants to learn sign language, training students to utilize residual hearing for listening, assisting students with HI to acquire skills in communicating with other people with HI and with normal hearing, reviewing regularly the abilities in using sign and oral language of students with HI, keeping in view the development in using sign language in education and sign language itself, etc. Schools could also utilize the additional resources such as Learning Support Grant (LSG) and other school resources to employ teaching assistants who know sign language to assist students with HI in learning.
- 2.5 Regarding the development of using sign language in assisting teaching, the EDB has been maintaining close partnership with the Lutheran School for the Deaf (LSD)². Since 2012, the school was supported by the Quality Education Fund to implement various projects of “Sign-assisted Instruction”, including “Development of New Vocabulary of Sign Language for New Senior Secondary Curriculum” programme and “Removing Communication Barriers in Sign Language and Oral Language Holistic support for Students with Hearing Impairment” programme to continuously integrate

² Chun Tok School was mainstreaming from September 2004. Starting from the 2018/19 school year, Lutheran School for the Deaf will be the only aided special school for children with HI in Hong Kong to provide primary one to secondary six curriculum.

and develop new sign vocabularies needed in teaching for the teachers to cope with the curriculum requirements. The Visual Sign Language Dictionary website of LSD has already compiled approximately 6 200 daily and subject-based sign vocabularies. Students and teachers of the school, professionals in the field and the public could browse at any time. LSD has also arranged systematic training on sign language for the teachers. All teachers have attained intermediate level of sign language use and some even attained advanced level. Benefit from the above measures, teaching staff and students could use more enriched sign vocabularies and more consistent signing in enhancing the effectiveness of using sign language in assisting teaching.

- 2.6 Furthermore, the LSD has set up a Sign Language Teaching Resources Centre to provide consultation services for students, parents and teachers in need to enhance their understanding of sign language. The school has also been able to enhance the understanding of sign language of ordinary schools and the public through different activities such as “The Inter-school Sign-a-Song Contest”, “Deaf Awareness Week” and “Sign Language and Deaf Culture Day”, sign language workshops and talks, etc. The EDB would continue to work with the school to promote sign language, enhance the students, parents and teaching staff’s understanding of HI and sign language. The EDB also fosters professional exchange between ordinary secondary and primary schools which opt to use sign language in assisting teaching and the Sign Language Teaching Resources Centre to enhance the teachers and teaching staff’s understanding of sign language and using sign language in assisting teaching
- 2.7 At the same time, the EDB has been communicating with ordinary primary and secondary schools which opt to use sign language in assisting teaching so as to support the students with HI to jointly explore the arrangements and effectiveness of support, such as the schools and teachers’ understanding about the use of sign language in assisting teaching, understanding and mastery of sign language of teachers, arrangement of lessons with the use of sign language, selection and application of teaching strategies, arrangements of classroom collaboration, deployment and use of resources, support tiers of students, teacher training, staff recruitment, etc. to ensure that schools can provide appropriate support for students with HI.

- 2.8 The annual expenditure on additional support and services for supporting students with SEN (including HI) in public sector secondary and primary schools in the past five school years are set out in the Table below. We could not separate the expenses for using sign language in providing support for students with HI only.

School Year	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17 (Revised estimate)
Expenditure (\$ million)	1,008.5	1,075.4	1,221.7	1,310.0	1,417.1

Education Bureau
Labour and Welfare Bureau
Social Welfare Department
Hospital Authority
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