

Subcommittee on Children's Rights

List of Follow-up to the discussion at the meeting on 4 November 2017

(a) Information on how refugee and asylum seeking children can get library cards/borrow books from the Hong Kong Public Libraries

The response of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department

The Hong Kong Public Libraries (HKPL) of the LCSD has 70 public libraries and 12 mobile libraries in the 18 districts over the territory. For persons under the age of 18 who wish to apply for a library card, they must be holders of Hong Kong identity documents or valid travel documents in the case of non-Hong Kong residents. Their applications should be made under the guarantee of their father, mother or guardian or an adult Hong Kong resident who is a holder of Hong Kong Identity Card, together with the required document(s) and proof of residential address. Upon verification, a library card will be issued by the HKPL.

2. Notwithstanding the above, any persons, including non-Hong Kong residents and refugee and asylum seeking children, can gain free access to public libraries and enjoy various free public library services and facilities without the requirement of a library card. Rich library collections such as books and newspapers in printed and electronic form and electronic resources are readily available for use in libraries. Besides, digitised information in the Multimedia Information System (MMIS), such as audio-visual materials, maps, photographs, newspaper clippings and books can be accessed via the internet and digital service workstations inside the library while some may be accessed outside the library through the internet.

3. At present, the HKPL has extended its services to various communities by offering block loan of library materials and professional advice to the participating non-profit making organisations for setting up community libraries under the “Libraries@neighbourhood - Community Libraries Partnership Scheme”, bringing convenient library services to those who cannot visit the public libraries due to various reasons. The HKPL also maintains regular contacts with non-governmental organisations serving different groups including the non-refoulement claimants minors. We welcome these organisations to approach the HKPL for setting up community libraries.

(b) The membership of the Preparatory Committee for the Establishment of a Commission on Children

The response of the Labour and Welfare Bureau

4. The Government will set up a Commission on Children in mid-2018 as a high-level advisory committee to provide its views and advice directly to the Government. The Commission will amalgamate the efforts made by relevant bureaux/departments and child concern groups, and focus on addressing children's issues as they grow (including the issue of poverty). To this end, the Government established in September 2017 a Preparatory Committee chaired by the Chief Executive, with the Chief Secretary for Administration as the Vice-chairperson. Members include the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, the Secretary for Food and Health, the Secretary for Education, the Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs, the Secretary for Home Affairs, experts in children affairs, such as members of the healthcare, education, social welfare and legal sectors; as well as academics and representatives of ethnic minorities and parents.

5. The Preparatory Committee is conducting a public engagement on the establishment of a Commission on Children from 13 November 2017 to 31 January 2018, and organising a series of public engagement activities, including forums for children, parents, children's rights groups, the social welfare, education, and healthcare sectors and the general public, to canvass views from the community extensively including those of children, in particular their views on the expected role, functions (such as initiating surveys and research studies on children's issues), composition, structure, work priorities and directions of the Commission, so as to ensure that the functions and the work of the newly formed Commission will have the support of the community.

6. To fulfil its functions as a high-level advisory committee, the newly formed Commission on Children will be chaired by the Chief Secretary for Administration himself.

7. Membership of the Preparatory Committee for the Establishment of a Commission on Children-

Chairperson
Chief Executive

Vice-chairperson
Chief Secretary for Administration

Non-official members

Dr CHOW Chun-bong, BBS, JP
Dr KAM Sau Wan, Sanly, MH
Dr LAM Hiu Fung, Alan
Ms LAW Suk Kwan, Lilian, JP
Ms MAHTANI, Shalini
Mr SIN Kim-wai
Ms SIU Wing-yee, Sylvia, JP
Dr TSANG Kit Man, Sandra, JP
Ms TSANG Lan See, Nancy, JP

Ex-officio members
Secretary for Labour and Welfare
Secretary for Education
Secretary for Food and Health
Secretary for Home Affairs
Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs

(c) The views and concerns raised by the deputations and members

The response of the Education Bureau

Student Financial Assistance

8. The Government reviews various student financial assistance schemes from time to time, and will expand the scope of subsidies to step up support for students from needy families where necessary. For example:-

- The Government implemented the “Subsidy Scheme for Internet Access Charges” in the 2010/11 school year to provide subsidies for needy families, with a view to alleviating their burden in meeting the internet access charges for their children’s e-learning at home.
- To continue enhancing the support for low-income families in meeting the school-related expenses of their children, the assistance programme “Enhancement of the flat rate grant under the School Textbook Assistance Scheme” under the Community Care Fund (CCF) has been incorporated into the Government’s regular assistance programme starting from the 2014/15 school year.
- A Grant for School-related Expenses for Kindergarten Students is provided for eligible kindergarten students to defray school-related expenses incurred from the students’ kindergarten education starting from the 2017/18 school year.

9. To support needy students to participate in after-school activities, EDB has implemented the School-based After-school Learning and Support Programmes (Programme) since the 2005/06 school year. Schools and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are provided with the School-based Grant and Community-based Project Grant respectively to organise after-school activities for eligible students, i.e. Primary 1 to Secondary 6 students in receipt of Comprehensive Social Security Assistance or full grant under the Student Financial Assistance Schemes, to facilitate the whole-person and all-round development of these students.

10. In addition, as mentioned in the Chief Executive’s 2017 Policy Agenda, the Government will invite CCF to consider providing subsidy to needy primary and secondary students for purchasing tablet computers to facilitate the practice of e-learning. Besides, we have reserved \$2.5 billion to set up a “Student Activities Support Fund” to continue supporting primary and

secondary students with financial needs to participate in life-wide learning activities. We will continue to make every effort to support students from needy families.

11. On financial assistance to meet school-related expenses (e.g. uniforms, books, stationery, etc.), the Student Finance Office (SFO) of the Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency provides a grant for school-related expenses for eligible kindergarten students to defray school-related expenses incurred from the students' kindergarten education. In general, if applicants submit their applications with complete information and the required supporting documents to SFO and the completed School Certificates to schools for verification of students' status according to the timeline stated in the application guidance notes, SFO will normally be able to disburse the grant to eligible applicants in around end September subject to schools' confirmation of student information.

12. In addition, eligible primary and secondary students are provided with textbook allowance under the School Textbook Assistance Scheme for purchasing textbooks and meeting miscellaneous school-related expenses. In general, if first-time applicants submit their applications with complete information and the required supporting documents to SFO and return the completed Eligibility Certificates to schools according to the timeline stated in the application guidance notes, SFO will normally be able to disburse the textbook allowance to eligible applicants in around October subject to schools' confirmation of student information. As for continuing applicants (who have been disbursed with textbook allowance in the preceding school year), subject to their timely submission of their applications with complete information and the required supporting documents according to the application guidance notes, eligible applicants will normally receive the advanced textbook allowance in around end July/August. However, the processing time of applications may vary depending on the circumstances of each case.

13. The Government's policy on student finance is to ensure that no student is denied access to education due to a lack of means. SFO provides various financial assistance schemes to needy families and reviews these schemes from time to time in order to step up the support for students from these families. Financial assistance schemes applicable to pre-primary, primary and secondary students include Kindergarten and Child Care Centre Fee Remission Scheme, Grant for School-related Expenses for Kindergarten Students, School Textbook Assistance Scheme, Student Travel Subsidy Scheme, Subsidy Scheme for Internet Access Charges and Examination Fee Remission Scheme. In fact, a number of reviews have been conducted on the income test mechanism and individual financial assistance schemes in recent years. For example, the Government reviewed in the 2011/12 school year the income test

mechanism of the means-tested assistance schemes and relaxed the income ceiling for the full level of student financial assistance under the income test mechanism. At present, about 60% of the beneficiaries of student financial assistance schemes are receiving the full level of assistance. In the same school year, the Government reviewed the Examination Fee Remission Scheme. Amongst other improvement measures, the scope of the scheme has been extended to provide examination fee remission to school candidates who are eligible for half level of assistance and first-time repeaters receiving full or half level of assistance apart from school candidates receiving full level of assistance.

Kindergarten (KG) Education

14. The policy objectives of the new kindergarten education policy, implemented starting from the 2017/18 school year, are to provide good quality and highly affordable KG education, and enhance the accessibility of students to different modes of services that suit their specific needs.

15. Existing evidence from researches and studies preclude drawing conclusions that whole-day (WD) programmes are more favourable to young children than half-day (HD) programmes. Studies show that family education plays a crucial and complementary role in shaping young children. A HD programme can achieve the requirements of the curriculum and would allow relatively more family time for young children to play and interact with their family in a less-structured and more relaxing setting to nurture their bonding and sense of security. Although many countries offer WD services for parents as an option, it is not a common practice internationally to provide free WD KG service for all children from three to six years of age. Notwithstanding this, to unleash the potential of the local labour force under the population policy, on a co-payment basis with parents, an additional subsidy has been provided for WD and long whole-day (LWD) KG services at 30% and 60% of the HD unit subsidy respectively so that parents will pay a subsidised school fee at a low level. Needy families may apply for fee remission.

16. In the 2017/18 school year, 748 KGs joined the new KG education scheme (Scheme). About 610 of these Scheme-KGs offered WD/LWD programmes and about 70% of them collect school fees below \$1,000 per month. The percentage increase is significant when compared with the corresponding figure of only 5% in the 2016/17 school year.

17. The Government will continue to enhance the support to KG education as necessary. In the recently released 2018-19 Budget, it was proposed to commit an additional recurrent education expenditure of \$2 billion to achieve quality education which included, among others, strengthening support for KGs. Besides, some \$504 million from the Lotteries Fund would be

allocated to launch a three-year pilot scheme to provide social work services in phases for about 150 000 children and their families in all aided child care centres, KGs and KG-cum-child care centres.

Internet Learning Support and e-learning

18. The Internet Learning Support Programme (“ILSP”), initiated by the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO), has been implemented since 2011. Its objective is to facilitate non-profit-making organisations (“NGOs”) in progressively developing a long-term operating model within the five-year funding period to provide continuous support on Internet learning to needy students. Having regard to the financial position of ILSP, OGCIO extended it for two years up to August 2018 after consulting the Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting of the Legislative Council in February 2016. The two NGOs implementing ILSP, according to OGCIO, intend to continue to provide Internet learning support services to students from low-income families after ILSP ends, and are currently looking into the scope of services and related details.

19. To support needy students in respect of Internet learning at home, SFO and the Social Welfare Department will continue to provide Subsidy for Internet Access Charges for eligible families. The full subsidy rate in the 2017/18 school year is \$1,400. Moreover, to facilitate Internet learning by students outside schools, the Government has been providing free Wi-Fi services at all 69 public libraries in Hong Kong. OGCIO also subsidises around 170 study rooms and youth service centres operated by NGOs to offer free Wi-Fi services, which are expected to be in full operation in early 2018.

20. Regarding the promotion of e-learning, the Education Bureau (EDB) has been implementing the Fourth Strategy on Information Technology in Education to enhance interactive learning and teaching experience. One of the key measures is to equip all public sector schools with Wi-Fi coverage in all classrooms to facilitate the use of mobile computing devices for e-learning. Relevant construction works will generally be completed in the 2017/18 school year. At present, quite a number of schools have implemented “Bring Your Own Device” (BYOD) and are using e-learning resources, e-textbooks and learning management systems to personalise student learning. The Government understands that the development of BYOD will increase the financial burden on students from low-income families. Thus, the Chief Executive’s 2017 Policy Agenda announced that EDB would invite the CCF to consider providing subsidy to needy secondary and primary students for purchasing tablet computers to conduct e-learning. EDB will submit the programme proposal to the Commission on Poverty for consideration.

Subsidisation for Post-secondary Education

21. All along, the Government has been striving to provide secondary school leavers with flexible and diversified articulation pathways with multiple entry and exit points through promoting the quality and sustainable development of the publicly-funded and self-financing post-secondary education sectors. Through the development of both sectors, about 45% of our young people in the relevant cohort now have access to degree-level education. In recent years, the Government has implemented a number of measures to further increase subsidised higher education opportunities, in a bid to provide school leavers with broader and more diversified articulation pathways –

- increasing University Grants Committee (UGC)-funded senior year undergraduate intake places to 5 000 by 2018/19;
- implementing Non-means-tested Subsidy Scheme (NMTSS) for eligible students pursuing self-financing undergraduate studies in Hong Kong and designated undergraduate programmes in the Mainland starting from 2017/18;
- introducing the Study Subsidy Scheme for Designated Professions/Sectors (SSSDP) to subsidise students who pursue self-financing undergraduate programmes in selected disciplines to meet Hong Kong's manpower needs. SSSDP will be regularised in 2018/19 with an increased subsidised quota of about 3 000 per cohort;
- implementing the Hong Kong Scholarship for Excellence Scheme from 2015/16 to support up to 100 outstanding students per cohort to study in renowned universities outside Hong Kong to nurture a diversified pool of top talents to propel Hong Kong's development; and
- introducing the Mainland University Study Subsidy Scheme since 2014/15 to provide financial support to eligible Hong Kong students pursuing studies in designated Mainland institutions.

22. On full implementation of these measures, and given the declining student population, there are sufficient publicly-funded and self-financing first-year-first-degree (FYFD) places for all secondary school leavers meeting minimum entrance requirements for university admission. The Government has made higher education more affordable through measures including subsidisation for self-financing post-secondary education opportunities. We therefore do not see a genuine need to increase UGC-funded FYFD places at

this juncture. The Government will continue to exercise prudence in its planning for the provision of subsidised higher education opportunities, with due emphasis on both quality and quantity.

23. Details on NMTSS for students pursuing self-financing undergraduate studies in Hong Kong are as follows:

- Starting from the 2017/18 academic year, the Government provides a non-means tested annual subsidy of \$30,000 for students pursuing self-financing undergraduate programmes offered by eligible institutions in Hong Kong.
- NMTSS covered 15 self-financing institutions¹ which offer full-time locally-accredited local and non-local self-financing undergraduate (including top-up degree) programmes.
- Under NMTSS, students should have attained “3322”² in the Hong Kong Diploma for Secondary Education (HKDSE) Examination when they are enrolled in eligible self-financing first-year-first-degree programmes; or sub-degree qualifications³ when they are enrolled in eligible self-financing top-up degree programmes.
- In 2017/18 academic year, EDB has received over 20 000 applications for subsidy from students enrolling in eligible programmes, which is about 79% of the students admitted to the relevant self-financing undergraduate programmes.

24. Furthermore, the Government encourages the young people to join different industries according to their own abilities and interest. The Government has been implementing the Pilot Training and Support Scheme through the Vocational Training Council since 2014/15 to provide quality and diversified vocational and professional education and training for young people. The Scheme will continue to be implemented in the 2018/19 academic year. The Government will review the implementation of the Scheme this year to finalize the regularisation arrangements.

¹ The 15 institutions are Caritas Institute of Higher Education, Centennial College, Chu Hai College of Higher Education, Gratia Christian College, Hang Seng Management College, HKCT Institute of Higher Education, Hong Kong Art School, Hong Kong Institute of Technology, Hong Kong Nan Yan College of Higher Education, Hong Kong Shue Yan University, Savannah College of Art and Design (Hong Kong), The Open University of Hong Kong, The School for Higher and Professional Education under the Vocational Training Council, The Technological and Higher Education Institute of Hong Kong under the Vocational Training Council, and Tung Wah College.

² “3322” refers to Level 3 in Chinese Language and English Language and Level 2 in Mathematics Compulsory Part and Liberal Studies in HKDSE. Individual programmes may require higher attainment in HKDSE. The latter shall prevail where appropriate.

³ Referring to Associate Degree and Higher Diploma qualifications only.

25. Regarding student loan scheme, to alleviate the financial burden of student loan borrowers, the Government completed a review on the interest rate and repayment period of student financial assistance schemes in 2012. The interest rate of the living expenses loans of the means-tested financial assistance schemes has been reduced from 2.5% to 1% per annum. Moreover, the standard repayment period has been extended from five years to 15 years. On the non-means-tested loan schemes, we have reduced the rate of the risk-adjusted-factor from 1.5% per annum to zero. The current interest rate is 1.132% per annum. In addition, the standard repayment period has been extended from ten years to 15 years.

26. To ease the financial burden of loan borrowers upon graduation and to allow them more time to seek a stable job, loan borrowers are given the option of starting the student loan repayment one year after the completion of their studies. Loan borrowers who have difficulty in repaying their loans on grounds of financial hardship, serious illnesses or further full-time studies may apply for a deferment of loan repayment. If their deferment applications are approved, a maximum of two years' interest-free extension of the loan repayment period is allowed, which means that the entire repayment period can be extended up to 17 years.

Support for Students with Special Educational Needs (SEN)

27. The EDB has been providing public sector ordinary primary and secondary schools with additional resources, professional support and teacher training to facilitate their implementation of the Whole School Approach to align school policies, culture and practices in rendering support to students with SEN through the 3-Tier Intervention Model. Schools should flexibly deploy various resources to render appropriate tier of support together with related strategies in the daily teaching and learning activities for the students based on their levels of needs.

28. School personnel who have concern about the learning, emotional and behavioural adjustment of their students may consult school professionals, such as school-based educational psychologist (EP) or school-based speech therapist (ST), where necessary, on the formulation of appropriate strategies for early intervention. Among the cases referred to school-based EPs for assessment in the past four school years, an average of about 80% of the cases are assessed within two months while about 10% within two to three months. For cases referred to school-based STs, all students will be assessed within two months. In any circumstances, schools would adopt the principle of "intervention before assessment" to render support services to their students to facilitate their learning and development. In sum, as far as the assessment

services provided by the EDB are concerned, no primary and secondary students are left waiting for a long time for assessment.

29. Currently, schools would procure appropriate services for students with SEN. Through hire of services, schools can tap external expertise to strengthen the professional capacity of school personnel with a view to supporting students with SEN by concerted effort of different parties. Schools would monitor the quality and effectiveness of the support services and complement aptly in classroom teaching. Professional staff from the EDB would also pay visits to schools to render professional advice on schools' support measures and their effectiveness, etc.

30. Owing to the fact that parents may not have sufficient information and professional knowledge in choosing appropriate service providers such as those for children with autism with complex support needs and speech therapy services, and the services provided by respective providers may not be able to go with the teaching and learning activities at school, providing parents with subsidies to purchase services direct may not truly benefit students with SEN, besides burdening schools with difficulties in planning support services. We are of the view that the existing mode of school-based support has proven to be effective and can meet the needs of students, including those of low income families. It is also in line with the established practice worldwide. Providing schools with additional resources to hire services for students with SEN, where necessary, could ensure that the students would benefit from the supplemental support.

31. Moreover, as announced in the 2018-19 Budget, to cater for students with care needs, the Government will increase the nursing support of schools for children with intellectual disability, schools for children physical disability and schools for children with visual impairment cum intellectual disability. Nurses will also be provided for schools for children with visual impairment as well as schools for children with hearing impairment. From the 2018/19 school year, we will also improve the provision of school social workers in special schools. The Government also commit an additional recurrent expenditure of \$2 billion on education. The initiatives to be launched include improving integrated education.

Support for Non-Chinese Speaking (NCS) Students

32. The EDB has consulted teachers and language experts when formulating the Chinese Language Curriculum Second Language Learning Framework ("Learning Framework"). The EDB will continue to review the "Learning Framework" and to consider the views of various stakeholders and school practices on learning and teaching to further enhance the related

evaluation tools and supporting resources for schools as appropriate. At the curriculum level, the “Learning Framework” would be reviewed at an interval of three years, to revise the learning objectives at each Key Stage (i.e. Primary 1-3, Primary 4-6, Secondary 1-3) where appropriate. The information collected through school-based professional support services, teacher professional development programmes and focus group interviews since the 2014/15 school year is being collated and analysed, so as to understand the implementation of the “Learning Framework” in schools, as well as to propose specific recommendations for improvement in the “Learning Framework”, the Chinese Language Assessment Tools and the supporting learning and teaching materials. The initial findings would be reported to the Legislative Council after the completion of collation and analysis.

KG Student Admission and Quality Review (QR) Reports

33. On student admission, KGs are reminded to ensure equal opportunity for all children regardless of their race, gender and ability. The EDB issues annual circular and organises annual briefing sessions for all KGs to remind them that their school-based admission mechanism should be fair, just and open, and in compliance with the existing legislation (including the anti-discrimination ordinances like Race Discrimination Ordinance (RDO)), as well as circulars and relevant guidelines issued by EDB. Representatives of the Equal Opportunities Commission are invited to brief KGs in the briefing sessions on the key points to note under RDO in admission arrangements.

34. It is stipulated in the Terms and Conditions for Joining the new KG Scheme that Scheme-KGs must comply with the guidelines and/or standing administrative directives on the admission arrangements as specified by EDB from time to time. In addition, EDB will also monitor KGs’ compliance with the guidelines and/or directives concerned through school visits, inspection of relevant information and annual survey.

35. To further enhance the transparency of the Quality Assurance Framework as well as taking into account views from KGs and parents, EDB will upload both Chinese and English versions of the QR reports starting from the 2018/19 school year, which ties in with the use of the refined Performance Indicators in QRs and commencement of the new QR cycle.

Applied Learning Chinese (for non-Chinese speaking students) [ApL(C)]

36. Starting from the 2014/15 school year, the EDB has introduced ApL(C) at the senior secondary levels to provide NCS students with an additional channel to obtain an alternative Chinese language qualification to prepare them for further studies and career pursuits. ApL(C) results are

reported as “Attained” and “Attained with Distinction” in the HKDSE. In addition to the HKDSE qualification, ApL(C) is also pegged at the Qualifications Framework Levels 1-3. For further studies, UGC-funded institutions and most post-secondary institutions accept ApL(C) as an alternative qualification to Chinese Language for the admission of NCS students with “Attained” as the minimum grade required.

Placement Assistance for Children of Non-refoulement Claimants

37. If placement assistance is required by children of non-refoulement claimants, including asylum seekers, consideration may be given on a case-by-case basis to allow them to receive education temporarily. When approached by parents of these children, the EDB will seek comments of Immigration Department (ImmD). Upon confirmation from ImmD that there are no comments on allowing these children to attend schools in Hong Kong, EDB will provide placement assistance as appropriate having regard to their district of residence and learning level. Children of asylum seekers can apply to SFO for necessary financial support.

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

Monitoring Child Poverty Situation

38. The Government reinstated the Commission on Poverty in 2012 as a policy platform to discuss poverty alleviation initiatives. The Commission on Poverty announced the official poverty line for the first time in 2013 with a view to providing an objective basis for the Government to understand the poverty situation, formulate poverty alleviation policies and assess policy effectiveness. Being updated on an annual basis, the poverty line adopts the concept of “relative poverty” and is set at 50% of the median monthly household income before policy intervention (i.e. before taxation and welfare transfers) by household size. In 2016, the overall post-intervention poverty rate in Hong Kong was 14.7% (involving 996 000 persons). The analysis by age and socio-economic characteristics of households indicated that the poverty rate of children aged below 18 and that of households with children were 17.2% (involving 172 000 persons) and 15.3% (involving 114 000 households) respectively in 2016, both were at record-low levels since 2009 when poverty statistics were first available, representing a decrease of 2.7 percentage points (involving 51 000 persons) and 2.3 percentage points (involving 29 000 households) respectively as compared to 2009. The changes showed the positive impact of the Government’s poverty alleviation measures (including the launch of the Low-income Working Family Allowance (LIFA) Scheme in

May 2016 whereby Child Allowance is especially provided to ease intergenerational poverty) and the favourable economic conditions in recent years. The Government will continue to monitor the poverty situation and the effectiveness of poverty alleviation measures, including those relevant to children.

The Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme

39. The CSSA Scheme provides a safety net for those who cannot support themselves financially owing to old age, illness, disability, single parenthood, unemployment, low income, etc. Different categories of recipients are provided with different levels of assistance to help them meet their basic needs.

40. At present, the CSSA standard rates for children are higher than those for adults of similar physical conditions so as to meet their needs. In addition to the standard rates, eligible students on CSSA are entitled to a wide range of special grants to meet their educational expenses. These special grants include grants to cover transport fares to and from school, examination fees, and application fee for Joint University Programmes Admissions System; a flat-rate monthly meal allowance for full-day students taking lunch away from home; and a one-off flat-rate grant in each school year in accordance with the respective education level (the flat-rate grant in the 2017/18 school year ranges from \$1,700 to \$6,985) to cover selected items of school-related expenses (e.g. books, stationery, school uniforms, etc.).

41. The Government has been introducing measures as needed to strengthen the support for students on CSSA. For example, a household-based Subsidy for Internet Access charges (SIA) is provided to eligible CSSA families with children receiving primary or secondary education starting from the 2010/11 school year (the full-rate of SIA in the 2017/18 school year is \$1,400); on top of the regular adjustment mechanism, the flat-rate grant for school-related expenses for primary and secondary students on CSSA was increased by \$592 and \$1,000 in the 2011/12 and 2014/15 school years respectively; and post-secondary students of CSSA families are included in the calculation of rent allowance starting from 2014 so that the amount of rent allowance would not be affected as a result of having family members receiving post-secondary education. We will continue to monitor the situation and strengthen the relevant support through targeted measures in a timely manner.

Working Family Allowance Scheme

42. The Government launched the LIFA Scheme in May 2016. Its objective is to encourage self-reliance of low-income families through

employment, with a focus on supporting families with children and youths to ease intergenerational poverty. Apart from providing a working hour-linked allowance for low-income families fulfilling the working hour requirements, a Child Allowance is especially provided for each eligible child or youth in the family. As at 15 December 2017, nearly 38 000 families (involving around 138 000 persons, of which over 60 000 were children or youths) have received the allowance, with a total amount of allowances disbursed at over \$1 billion.

43. A series of improvement measures was set out in the Chief Executive's 2017 Policy Address announced in October 2017. The improvement measures aim at benefitting more working households. They include extending the Scheme to cover singletons, relaxing the income limit, increasing all rates of allowance (including Child Allowance), etc. Furthermore, the Scheme will be renamed as the Working Family Allowance Scheme. The Government expects to implement the relevant improvement measures on 1 April 2018.

Child Care Services

44. To support parents who cannot take care of their children temporarily because of work or other reasons, the Government subsidises non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to provide various child care services, including child care centres (CCCs), occasional child care service, extended hours service (EHS), the Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project and mutual help child care centres. Families in poverty or with low income are provided with fee waiving/ fee reduction of varying degrees. The Government will continue to review the demand for child care services and plan for new CCCs in districts with acute demand, including the provision of a total of about 300 additional aided standalone CCC places in phases in North District, Kwun Tong District, Kwai Tsing District and Sha Tin District starting from 2018-19.

45. Besides, in December 2016, the Government commissioned the University of Hong Kong to conduct a Consultancy Study on the Long-term Development of Child Care Services. The Study will review the service objectives, contents, targets, financing modes, service models, demand and supply situation, facility planning, manpower and training, etc. of the child care services in Hong Kong, and will make recommendations on the long-term development of the relevant services. The Study is expected to be completed in mid-2018.

After-school Care Support

46. NGOs provide supportive after-school care services for children aged 6 to 12 so that children whose parents are unable to take care of them

during after-school hours for reasons such as work and job search can receive appropriate care. The Social Welfare Department (SWD), through the Fee-waiving Subsidy Scheme for the After School Care Programme (the Fee-waiving Subsidy Scheme), waives or reduces the fee of after-school care services for children to help low-income families. The Government, through the Community Care Fund, rolled out in October 2017 a three-year pilot scheme to relax the income limit of the Fee-waiving Subsidy Scheme for low-income families and increase 2 000 full fee-waiving places.

47. In addition, the Partnership Fund for the Disadvantaged (PFD) has, since 2015, set up a dedicated portion to encourage the business sector to collaborate with welfare NGOs and schools to implement more after-school learning and support programmes to facilitate the whole-person development of primary and secondary school students mainly from grassroots families. Under the dedicated portion, the SWD may also consider applications with content similar to that of the PFD projects approved in the past, having regard to whether the applications are beneficial to students. To date, 165 after-school learning and support projects have been launched under the dedicated portion, benefiting over 80 000 primary and secondary school students. The Government will inject \$400 million into the PFD in 2018-19, of which \$200 million will be allocated to the dedicated portion. The \$200 million injection is expected to benefit about 130 000 additional primary and secondary school students from grassroots families.

Pre-school Rehabilitation Services

48. SWD provides children with special needs from birth to six years old with a wide range of subvented pre-school rehabilitation services, including Early Education and Training Centre, Integrated Programme in Kindergarten-cum-Child Care Centre and Special Child Care Centre. In parallel, SWD launched a two-year Pilot Scheme on On-site Pre-school Rehabilitation Services since October 2015. At present, the pilot scheme has served around 5 600 children with special needs and provided support services to their parents. While the Pilot Scheme will end in late 2017, the Government has set aside an additional provision of about \$180 million to continue providing the service places in the 2017/18 school year. In parallel, it was announced in the Policy Addresses in 2017 that an annual recurrent expenditure of \$460 million has been earmarked to regularise the pilot scheme from the 2018/19 school year, with an increase in service places from 3 000 at present to 5 000 from October 2018 and a further increase to 7 000 from October 2019. Besides, SWD also provides training subsidy to eligible children on the waiting list of subvented pre-school rehabilitation services. While currently SWD has no plan to extend the subvented rehabilitation services to children with special needs aged above six, SWD is working with the Education Bureau on ways to enhance support for

children with special needs so that they will be provided with appropriate services when they proceed to primary education.

Services for Children and their Families who are Exposed to Risk of Abuse and Domestic Violence

49. The Government has launched various initiatives in combating child abuse and domestic violence, as well as strengthening support for the victims and families in need. To meet the specific needs of individuals and families with the problems of child abuse and spouse/cohabitant battering, the 11 teams of Family and Child Protective Services Units of SWD have been providing specialised services with the objectives of restoring the normal functioning of the persons and families, and safeguarding the interests of the children concerned. In addition to providing support and specialised services for victims of domestic violence, we also provide support to needy families through the provision of child care services, family crisis intervention, counselling services, etc.

50. Besides, the Government has been instilling parents the importance of children's safety. In this respect, SWD will launch a series of Announcements in the Public Interest on television and radio, as well as through posters in 2017-18 on child protection and prevention of child abuse, which will be displayed in public transportation systems and posted on the social media through hyperlinks for widespread promotion.

The response of the Food and Health Bureau/Department of Health

Student Health Service

51. Student Health Service of the Department of Health provides health promotion and disease prevention services to primary and secondary school students. Enrolled, eligible students will receive, free of charge, annual health assessment designed to cater for the health needs at various stages of development, including screening for scoliosis. Students found to have scoliosis problem will be referred to specialist clinic for further management.

52. Scoliosis predominately affects female and usually starts at around 10 years old which may progress when the child is growing. However, after the bones are mature, the chance of getting worse will become smaller. The scoliosis screening of the Student Health Service starts from primary five or age 10. Notwithstanding, scoliosis screening will be performed for students of other class or age group if indicated.

53. Apart from providing individualised counselling and health education, Student Health Service of the Department of Health promotes spinal health to students, parents and the general public through various channels including health talks, pamphlets and online health education information.

Dental Care Service

54. Proper oral health habits are keys to preventing dental diseases effectively. In this regard, the Government's policy on dental care seeks to raise public awareness of oral hygiene and oral health and encourage proper oral health habits through promotion and education. To enhance the oral health of the public, the Oral Health Education Unit (OHEU) of the Department of Health has, over the years, implemented oral health promotion programmes targeted at different age groups and disseminated oral health information through different channels.

55. At present, the OHEU administers a "Brighter Smiles for the New Generation" Programme to help children in kindergartens and nurseries establish good tooth brushing and smart diet habits. "Brighter Smiles Playland" is also specifically designed for 4-year-old children to help them learn good oral care habits through interactive games and activities.

56. In addition, primary school students in Hong Kong, as well as students with intellectual disabilities (ID) and/or physical disabilities (such as cerebral palsy) and who have yet to reach the age of 18, can join the School Dental Care Service (SDCS) of the Department of Health to receive annual check-ups at a designated school dental clinic, which cover oral examination, basic restorative and preventive treatment.

57. To sustain the efforts made in primary schools, the OHEU has launched a school-based programme named "Teens Teeth" for secondary schools since 2005, under which senior secondary students are trained to promote and educate lower form school-mates on oral health care and hygiene on a peer-led approach (i.e. train-the-trainers).

58. The Government will continue to improve public awareness of oral hygiene and oral health through promotion and education.

The response of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department

Providing more recreation and sports programmes for children under poverty

59. The Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) organises many different recreation and sports programmes for children at concessionary rates to encourage their active participation. To cater for the needs of children in low-income families, LCSD has collaborated with non-profit-making organisations recognised by the Social Welfare Department to design various types of recreation and sports programmes for their participation free of charge. In planning the programmes for the coming year, District Leisure Services Offices (DLSOs) of the department will review the provision of programmes in the past year, taking into consideration factors such as the change in district population, the local (including children's) demand for recreation and sports programmes, the provision of recreation and sports facilities and views from the respective District Councils to ensure that the types, numbers and quality of such programmes meet the needs of the local community.

The response of the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer

60. Launched in the 2011/12 school year, the Internet Learning Support Programme ("ILSP") was intended to facilitate non profit-making organisations to develop a long-term operation model to continue the support on Internet learning for needy students. We understand that the two implementers, with accumulated experiences over the years, intend to continue providing Internet learning support services to students from low-income families after the ILSP ends in the 2017/18 school year. To support needy students in respect of Internet learning at home, the Student Finance Office and the Social Welfare Department will continue to disburse the Subsidy for Internet Access Charges to eligible families. Moreover, the Government provides free Wi-Fi services at all 69 public libraries of Hong Kong to facilitate Internet learning by students outside schools.

**Education Bureau
Labour and Welfare Bureau
Food and Health Bureau
Department of Health
Social Welfare Department
Leisure and Cultural Services Department
Office of the Government Chief Information Officer
March 2018**