



The Hong Kong Association of Business and Professional Women

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The Hong Kong Association of Business and Professional Women Submission to Legco on Review of Child Care Services

Introduction

With reference to government reports and independent studies, the Hong Kong Association of Business and Professional Women (BPWHK) would like to submit its view on child care services regarding to women's development.

Child Care Services and Women's Development

According to a report titled "2016 Population By-census – Main Results" released by the Government, the labour force participation rate (excluding foreign domestic helpers) was 50.0% for female compared to 68.4% for male, with a much higher proportion of the economically inactive population among females aged 25 – 54 than males, because of "the predominance of home-makers at these ages among females". Therefore the Government report provides a strong reason to for us believe that adequate child care services with decent amount would release the potential labour force of female, especially who cannot not go to work because they have to take care of their families, and contribute to both gender equality and economic development of Hong Kong in the long run.

Inadequacies of Child Care Services in Hong Kong

In 2015, The Bauhinia Foundation Research Centre published a study on “Developing child support services on all fronts”, identifying three major inadequacies of existing child care services in Hong Kong. BPWHK would like to focus on the second inadequacy, the lack of commitment to child care services by the Government, in this submission.

Though the Government subsidises non-governmental organisations NGOs to provide some child care services to assist parents who cannot take care of their children because of work or other reasons, the numbers of places the rates of increase of these subsidised services are extremely limited. Up to 2016, various types of child care services provided a total of about 29,500 places for children aged below 9, while the population of children aged below 9 was 571,237. Only 1 out of 19 children aged below 9 could enjoy the subsidised services provide by the Government. Among which, only aided child care centres (CCCs) attached to kindergartens (KGs) for children aged below 3 and extended hours service (EHS) for children aged below 9 increased by 3.9% and 2.3% respectively, with other forms of services hold still.

Since the Government cannot provide sufficient child care services, families and individuals have to take up the responsibility themselves. According to Thematic Household Survey Report No. 56, females on average spent distinctly more time per day (2.7 hours) on homework and care work than males (0.8 hour). 637,500 (97.4%) fulltime home-makers who look after the home without pay were females and 16 900 (2.6%) were males. Most of the female home-makers indicated that they would very unlikely / definitely not take up a job, because of “engaging in general housework” and “taking care of family members”. Nearly 34,500 female home-makers indicated that “flexible working hour” would raise their interest in participating economic activities.

Recommended Policies

BPWHK believes adequate child care services could build a solid foundation for developing a pool of quality talents, and further benefit the Hong Kong society. The primary responsibility of providing child care services should not solely lie with individuals and families, but the Government instead. Therefore we suggest the following two policies.

1. Providing adequate child care services to release the potential labour force of female.

The Government should not only continue to increase the places of aided CCCs attached to KGs and EHS, it should also enlarge the scale of aided standalone CCCs, occasional child care service (OCCS), and the Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project (NSCCP). In addition to encouraging NGOs and social enterprises getting more engaged, the Government may also call up enterprises to take up their social responsibilities by providing adequate child care services for their employees, with a tax deduction for profit tax for child care services providing as a reward.

2. Advocating equal share of child care responsibilities between parents to release the potential labour force of female.

As Hong Kong society has long been affected by the traditional norm of 'Men in charge of external issues and women in charge of internal issues', women are expected to perform more household duties than men. Nowadays, with a gradually increase in women's participation in the labour market, Government should advocate for an equal share of care giving responsibilities including child caring within household. Drawing insight from this logic, an equal distribution of parental leave between spouses with pay might be a good departure.

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Annex: References

1. The Bauhinia Foundation Research Centre. (2015) Developing child support services on all fronts: To facilitate both parenting and employment. Available from: <http://www.bauhinia.org/assets/document/doc212eng.pdf> [Accessed Dec 2017].
2. Census and Statistics Department. (2015) Thematic Household Survey Report No. 56. Available from: <http://www.statistics.gov.hk/pub/B11302562015XXXXB0100.pdf> [Accessed Dec 2017].
3. Census and Statistics Department. (2016) Population By-census - Main Results. Available from: <http://www.bycensus2016.gov.hk/data/16bc-main-results.pdf> [Accessed Dec 2017].
4. Sui Stephen. (2017) LCQ18: Child Care Services (with Annex). Available from: <http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201702/22/P2017022200399.htm> [Accessed Dec 2017].