

Subcommittee on Children's Rights

**List of follow-up actions arising from the discussion
at the meeting on 13 January 2018**

(a) The mid-term report of the Consultancy Study on the Long-term Development of Child Care Services

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

The consultant team of The University of Hong Kong (the Consultant) is in the process of preparing the Interim report of the Consultancy Study. The Government will brief the Legislative Council upon completion of the Consultancy Study.

(b) The views and concerns raised by the deputations and members at the meeting

The response of the Education Bureau

Whole-day kindergarten service

2. The Education Bureau (EDB) has implemented the new kindergarten (KG) education policy starting from the 2017/18 school year. The policy objectives 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.

3. 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 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 pay a subsidised school fee at a low level. In the 2017/18 school year, there are 748 KGs joining the KG Scheme (Scheme-KG)¹. Among them, about 610 Scheme-KGs are offering 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. Needy families may apply for fee remission.

Diverse modes of service

4. The operation of KG sector is highly flexible and diversified, including the HD, WD, and LWD service modes. In the 2016/17 school year, the respective number of HD and WD places of KGs joining the Pre-primary Education Voucher Scheme were about 112 700 and 46 700 (including about 23 600 LWD places). In the 2017/18 school year, the respective number of HD and WD places in Scheme-KGs are about 109 100 and 48 900 (including about 24 200 LWD places). The relevant data reflect that diverse choices are available for parents. Under the new policy, as a long-term goal, the EDB is reviewing the relevant part of the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines to increase the provision of KG places, especially WD KG places. EDB proposes to revise the standards from the present 250 WD and 730 HD places for 1,000 children aged between three and under six to 500 WD and 500 HD places respectively. The proposal has been circulated to Bureaux/Departments concerned. Upon endorsement, the revised standard will be applied to new public housing estates and large-scale private development projects for developing new KGs as appropriate.

Social work services in primary schools and kindergartens

5. EDB implements the Comprehensive Student Guidance Service under which primary schools adopt the Whole School Approach. Teachers work in collaboration with student guidance personnel (SGP) and professional staff to provide remedial, preventive and developmental guidance services for the establishment of a robust student guidance system. Currently, there are two types of funding modes for student guidance service through provision of manpower or grants. Schools may, based on their own needs, use their funding flexibly to employ guidance personnel with guidance qualifications or procure social work service from non-governmental organisations for development of students. These SGP must be registered social workers, registered teachers with experiences in guidance and/or teaching, or other professionals with equivalent qualifications and experiences as specified by EDB.

¹ As at December 2017, this accounted for about 97% of the about 770 eligible KGs (i.e. the local non-profit-making KGs).

6. According to statistics data of the EDB in the 2015/16 school year, the vast majority of public sector primary schools had one or more school-based SPG. 90% of the public sector primary schools employed registered social workers, mainly through outsourcing, as SGP. Starting from the 2018/19 school year, more resources will be provided for public sector primary schools to encourage them to strengthen and enhance their social work and counselling services according to school-based circumstances, with a view to ultimately achieving the target of “one school social worker for each school”.

7. For KGs, for early identification and provision of support to students and their families at high-risk and with welfare needs, the Government will allocate some \$500 million from the Lotteries Fund 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. The Government is considering the implementation details of the services and will consult the education sector for viable options in a timely manner. Details are yet to be finalised.

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

Child care services

8. To address the community demand for child care services, starting from 2018-19, the Government will provide in phases a total of about 300 additional places in aided standalone child care centres (CCCs) in North District, Kwun Tong, Kwai Tsing and Sha Tin. The Government will keep in view the demand for various child care services and the planned provision of CCCs in districts with high demand.

9. Meanwhile, starting from September 2017, the Social Welfare Department (SWD) has provided additional resources for units of day/residential child care services and pre-school rehabilitation services for enhancing the remuneration for qualified child care staff so as to retain and attract such staff.

10. To further improve the existing child care services, the Consultant will provide analysis and recommendations on the long-term service planning of child care services, including (i) the demand and supply situation of CCC service, (ii) manpower and training, (iii) financing modes, and (iv) facility planning.

Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project (NSCCP)

11. The NSCCP is not an employment project. The home-based child carers provide service as volunteers in the spirit of mutual help in the neighbourhood.

12. Since October 2014, the SWD has provided additional resources to the service operators for enhancing the social work support for the NSCCP, strengthening the work on administration and monitoring, as well as providing more training to the home-based child carers, so as to provide better services to more families in need.

13. According to the service agreements, the service operators should recruit suitable persons as the home-based child carers and provide appropriate training to them. The training contents generally include child care knowledge and skills, children's nutrition, identification of suspected child abuse cases and home safety, etc. Service operators should also conduct regular home visits to the home-based child carers to ensure their quality of care. The SWD, however, does not have a plan to set up a central registry for home-based child carers at this stage.

14. The Consultancy Study on the Long-term Development of Child Care Services will provide analysis and recommendations on the content, service model and training of home-based child carers under the NSCCP.

Progress of the Consultancy Study on the Long-term Development of Child Care Services

15. As mentioned above, the Consultant is in the process of preparing the Interim report of the Consultancy Study. The Government will continue to monitor the progress of the Consultancy Study, and brief the Legislative Council upon completion of the Study. It is expected that the Consultancy Study will be completed within 2018.

**Education Bureau
Labour and Welfare Bureau
Social Welfare Department
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