

**For discussion
on 27 February 2018**

**Legislative Council House Committee
Subcommittee on Children's Rights**

Establishment of a Commission on Children

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on the preparatory work for the establishment of a Commission on Children.

Establishment of a Commission on Children

2. As the Chief Executive announced in her 2017 Policy Address, the Government plans to set up a Commission on Children (the Commission) in mid-2018 to amalgamate the efforts made by relevant bureaux/departments and child concern groups, and focus on addressing children's issues as they grow. To this end, the Government established a Preparatory Committee chaired by the Chief Executive in September 2017 with the Chief Secretary for Administration as the Vice-chairperson. Members include the Policy Secretaries of relevant bureaux, 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.

3. The Preparatory Committee held its first meeting in October 2017 to discuss the terms of reference, structure, composition and initial work plan of the future Commission, as well as the public engagement activities to be conducted for the establishment of the Commission. The preliminary proposals and the public engagement activities concerned are set out in the ensuing paragraphs.

Proposed Terms of Reference

4. We plan to establish the Commission as a high-level advisory committee to be chaired by the Chief Secretary for Administration, with the Secretary for Labour and Welfare being the Vice-chairperson. Members

include the Policy Secretaries of relevant bureaux/Heads of relevant departments, as well as independent non-official representatives of children affairs. The Preparatory Committee proposes the following terms of reference for the Commission –

With a vision of ensuring that Hong Kong is a place where children's rights, interests and wellbeing are respected and safeguarded, their voices are heard, and where all children enjoy healthy growth and optimal development so as to achieve their fullest potentials, the Commission on Children is established to –

- (a) advise the Government on the development of strategies related to the development and advancement of children;*
- (b) enhance integration and rationalisation of children-related policies and initiatives under different bureaux/departments and with advisory bodies;*
- (c) review children-related services by the Government and non-governmental organisations and identify areas for improvement;*
- (d) promote children's rights as articulated in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and encourage direct consultation with children on matters that affect them;*
- (e) initiate surveys and research studies on children's issues;*
- (f) manage funding schemes for promotional and public educational projects, engage with stakeholders, and organise other promotional activities; and*
- (g) develop a framework to evaluate the extent to which the vision is achieved.*

5. The Preparatory Committee also proposes that children under the age of 14 should be the primary target group of the Commission, in order to minimise possible duplication with the work of the Commission on Youth (and the future Youth Development Commission upon re-organisation).

Proposed Framework for Initial Work Plan

6. The Preparatory Committee proposes that the initial work plan of the Commission may build on a possible framework that focuses on identifying the needs of children, possibly classified into physical, emotional, cognitive and social; and deriving plans and measures to create an environment that can most optimally cater to the needs of children, also ensuring support from their families, schools, the community, the Government and identification with

culture. Efforts and collaboration across sectors should be amalgamated to support children and meet their needs, and to prepare them for the challenges and the fast changing world as they grow, such as the development of important core values, cultivation of curiosity, and establishment of positive relationships.

7. On the basis of the above framework, the following three categories of issues could serve as reference in considering the Commission's initial work plan –

- (a) issues that are more specific to children at different age groups (say, infants and toddlers (0-2); kindergarten stage (3-5); primary school stage (6-11); and junior secondary school stage (12-14));
- (b) issues that may straddle different stages of growth of children and should be dealt with holistically; and
- (c) issues that are specific to particular groups of children arising from their family backgrounds, biological characteristics or other individual circumstances.

For reference, some examples of the issues under the three aforementioned categories are set out at **Annex**.

Public Engagement

8. To ensure that the functions and the work of the Commission will have the support of the community, we have conducted a public engagement from 13 November 2017 to 31 January 2018 to canvass public views extensively, including those of children, on the establishment of the Commission, and raised the proposed terms of reference and the framework for the initial work plan as aforementioned for seeking views. We also set up a dedicated webpage to disseminate information about the public engagement activities. We organised four public engagement forums for children rights groups, the social welfare, education/healthcare sectors and parents/general public respectively, which were held on 13 November, 15 November, 30 November and 12 December 2017 respectively. We also organised three children forums respectively targeting at ethnic minority children, primary school students and secondary school students, which were held on 20 January, 2 February and 3 February 2018 respectively. We also collected the views of children aged three to six expressed through their drawings. Besides, we have briefed the relevant advisory bodies (e.g. Social Welfare Advisory Committee, Family Council, Women's Commission and Commission on Youth) on our proposal.

We also attended a relevant meeting organised by a non-governmental organisation.

9. From the public engagement activities, we have collected various views on matters including the role and functions of the Commission as well as the priority areas to be addressed by the Commission. The Preparatory Committee will consider these views carefully, and will formulate a concrete proposal in respect of the establishment of the Commission.

Advice Sought

10. Members are invited to note and advise the content of the paper.

**Labour and Welfare Bureau
February 2018**

**Issues that could be referred to by
the Commission on Children’s Initial Work Plan**

(a) Issues that are more specific to children at different age groups

Age Group	Issues
Infants and toddlers (0-2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Early childhood development• Day child care services• Child neglect
Kindergarten stage (3-5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Quality of kindergarten education• Children’s right to play• Preparation for transition to formal education
Primary school stage (6-11)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Quality of primary school education• Children suicide and mental health• Physical abuse• Children’s right to play• Stimulation of children’s creative and curious mind of thinking• Platform for expressing and exchanging opinions
Junior secondary school stage (12-14)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Quality of secondary school education• Vocational training• Children suicide and mental health• Child delinquency• Bullying (physical and cyber)• Sexual abuse• Stimulating children’s interest in scientific discovery• Platform for expressing and exchanging opinions/participating in public affairs

(b) Issues that may straddle different stages of growth of children and should be dealt with holistically

- the holistic development of children;
- the physical and mental health of children;
- mechanism for soliciting the views of children;
- mechanism for assessing the impact of policies on children;
- coordination for collection of data concerning children;
- innovations and technologies for the benefit of children; and
- support for and education on parents.

(c) Issues that are specific to particular groups of children arising from their family backgrounds, biological characteristics or other individual circumstances

- children with special needs;
- children in acute health conditions;
- children living in poverty;
- children with a special family background (e.g. children of divorced/separated parents, children of parents holding Two-Way Permit, children of migrant workers, cross-boundary children, ethnic minorities, refugee children, etc.); and
- children at risk or vulnerable (e.g. abduction, abuse, violence, neglect, drug involvement, etc.) and children receiving residential child care services.