

**For discussion on  
22 June 2018**

**Legislative Council Panel on Welfare Services Special Meeting**

**Pilot Scheme on Social Work Service for Pre-primary Institutions**

**Purpose**

This paper briefs Members on the Pilot Scheme on Social Work Service for Pre-primary Institutions (the Pilot Scheme).

**Background**

2. For early identification of and providing assistance to pre-primary children and their families with welfare needs, the Government announced in the 2018-19 Budget that some \$504 million would be allocated from the Lotteries Fund to launch a three-year Pilot Scheme to provide social work services in phases for about 150 000 pre-primary children and their families in more than 700 subsidised/aided child care centres (CCCs), kindergartens (KGs) and kindergarten-cum-child care centres (KG-cum-CCCs) in Hong Kong.

**Objectives of the Pilot Scheme**

3. The Government expects to enhance the existing child protection service through the implementation of the Pilot Scheme, as well as to try out an appropriate mode for providing social work service in pre-primary institutions, so as to form a basis for the potential regularisation of the service in future. The major objectives of the Pilot Scheme are set out below –

- (a) to identify early and assist pre-primary children and their family members with welfare needs so as to prevent the occurrence of family violence (e.g. child abuse) or other family problems;
- (b) to support pre-primary personnel and enhance their knowledge and skills in identifying and assisting pre-primary children and their family members with welfare needs, as well as to facilitate liaison and coordination between pre-primary institutions and

various support service units so as to respond to the needs of children and their families more effectively; and

- (c) to enhance parents' awareness and skills in effective parenting, strengthen parent-child communication and relationship, so as to foster children's healthy and happy development.

### **Implementation Mode and Service Contents**

4. Given the substantial variation in the numbers of children among individual pre-primary institutions, the Government initially set the social worker to child ratio at 1 to 600 for implementing the Pilot Scheme, and has also built in supervisory support, with a service model similar to the school social work service in secondary schools. The Government plans to invite qualified non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to form social work teams, each comprising eight Assistant Social Work Officers, to provide the service.

5. The service contents of the Pilot Scheme mainly include the following areas -

- (a) to provide professional counselling and referral service for children and families;
- (b) to organise parenting education groups and talks;
- (c) to organise relevant thematic activities to consolidate family relationship;
- (d) to provide professional consultations for teaching staff and parents; and
- (e) to provide crisis management for cases in need.

### **Consultation with Stakeholders**

6. The Government consulted stakeholders, including the Council of Non-profit Making Organizations for Pre-primary Education, kindergarten principals, pre-primary education sponsoring bodies, small welfare agencies, The Hong Kong Council of Social Service as well as relevant service representatives, etc. (the list of groups participated in the

consultation is at **Annex**), in April and May 2018. On 7 May 2018, the Government also collected views from 760 subsidised/aided pre-primary institutions (i.e. 748 KGs and KG-cum-CCCs<sup>1</sup> and 12 aided standalone CCCs) through questionnaires. As at 24 May 2018, a total of 574 questionnaires were received.

7. Based on the views collected, stakeholders generally supported the implementation of the Pilot Scheme by way of the social work team mode. However, many stakeholders pointed out that, since the number of children of most of the pre-primary institutions is below 200, each social worker may need to serve three or more pre-primary institutions at the same time if the social worker to child ratio is set at 1 to 600. As such, social workers would not have sufficient time to contact the children concerned and their parents and provide them with more intensive services. Hence, the social worker to child ratio has to be reasonably adjusted. Besides, most of the stakeholders expect to arrange social work service through their own matching process and in accordance with their own agency or religious background.

### **The Latest Progress**

8. In response to stakeholders' views and concerns, the Government is examining the feasibility of arranging each social worker to serve no more than two pre-primary institutions, so as to address stakeholders' expectation and enhance the support to the pre-primary institutions. On this basis, the eight social workers of each social work team will provide service for not more than 16 pre-primary institutions; and on the basis that there are an average of 200 children in each pre-primary institution, each social work team will serve about 3 200 children. The Government is re-estimating the budget, working out the detailed arrangements of the service and formulating related service output requirements.

9. The Government plans to apply for funding from the Lotteries Fund in July 2018. After obtaining the relevant funding, the Government will invite eligible NGOs (including NGOs with experience in providing family services, school social work service in KGs/primary schools/secondary schools, etc.) to submit proposals in respect of the Pilot Scheme, from which the Government will select appropriate NGOs

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<sup>1</sup> According to the information provided by the Education Bureau, there are 748 subsidised KGs and KG-cum-CCCs joining the Free Quality Education Subsidy Scheme since September 2017.

to participate in the three phases of the Pilot Scheme respectively. If the procedures could be implemented on schedule, the Government will launch the Pilot Scheme in phases according to the following dates –

- (a) Phase 1 : February 2019
- (b) Phase 2 : August 2019
- (c) Phase 3 : August 2020

### **Advice Sought**

10. Members are invited to note the content of this paper and provide views on the Pilot Scheme.

**Labour and Welfare Bureau  
Social Welfare Department  
June 2018**

**The list of groups participating in the consultation on the Pilot Scheme on Social Work Service for Pre-primary Institutions**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Groups</b>
18 April and 3 May 2018	The Council of Non-profit Making Organizations for Pre-primary Education
18 April 2018	Child protection concern groups and representatives of some of the district kindergarten principal associations
4 May 2018	Kindergarten principals
4 May 2018	Pre-primary education sponsoring bodies
18 May 2018	Small welfare agencies
30 May 2018	The Hong Kong Council of Social Service and representatives of service providers of school social work service