

**(English Translation)**

政府總部  
勞工及福利局

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LABOUR AND WELFARE BUREAU  
GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT

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10 December 2018

Mr Colin Chui  
Clerk to Panel on Welfare Services  
Legislative Council Secretariat  
Legislative Council Complex  
1 Legislative Council Road  
Central  
Hong Kong

Dear Mr Chui,

I refer to the emails from the Legislative Council Secretariat to the Labour and Welfare Bureau (LWB) dated 6 and 7 December 2018. As the Panel on Welfare Services will discuss the two papers on “Consultancy Study on the Long-term Development of Child Care Services” and “Proposed Creation of an Administrative Officer Staff Grade C Post in the Labour and Welfare Bureau for enhancing the secretariat support for the Commission on Children” at its meeting scheduled for 10 December 2018, in the interest of time, we would like to give a concise response to Members’ enquiries as follows:

Child Care Services

Regarding the long-term development of child care services, the Government commissioned The University of Hong Kong in December 2016 to conduct the Consultancy Study on the Long-term Development of Child Care Services (the Study), and the Study has been completed. For conducting the Study, the Consultant Team adopted a series of data collection methods for examining and assessing the six types of day child care services currently provided in Hong Kong, and made recommendations on the future planning and improvements to the quality and supply of child care services. The Consultant Team also collected views on child care services (including the Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project (NSCCP)) from stakeholders, service users and non-users of child care services through survey questionnaires and focus group discussions. After considering and analysing the views collected, the major recommendation of the Consultant Team regarding the development direction of the NSCCP is to strengthen the training for

home-based child carers and to raise their incentive payments, so as to enhance the service quality of the NSCCP and attract more suitable persons to become home-based carers, with a view to addressing the community's needs for flexible child care service.

The Government has in principle accepted the Consultant Team's recommendation on strengthening the training for home-based child carers and raising their incentive payments. To meet the development and demand for child care service, the Government, by drawing reference to the recommendations of the Study, will enhance the service quality of the NSCCP by strengthening the training for home-based child carers and raising their incentive payments within 2019-20. The Government will consult the service operators of the NSCCP in respect of the training and funding allocation so as to work out the implementation details.

Regarding the re-engineering of the existing Mutual Help Child Care Centres (MHCCCs) by phases, the Social Welfare Department will discuss the relevant implementation details with the service operators concerned later, including the detailed service content and arrangement if the MHCCCs are to provide after-school care services for pre-school children.

After making reference to the recommendations of the Study's Final Report, the Government will introduce a series of measures to enhance child care services as mentioned in the paper submitted to the Panel on Welfare Services. As regards other recommendations in the Study's Final Report, the Government will examine the follow-up measures or explore feasible options. If the recommendations are considered appropriate, the Government will introduce relevant measures in a timely manner.

#### Proposal for enhancing the secretariat support for the Commission on Children

The current-term Government set up the Commission on Children (the Commission) with cross-bureau and cross-department representation in June this year, engaging children concern groups to focus on addressing children's issues as they grow. The Commission has already commenced work. Meanwhile, the Government will allocate additional resources to the Commission from 2019-20 onwards for enhancing the Commission's research and publicity education work (including the funding scheme). Details of the additional resources will be included in the 2019-20 Budget.

The Commission is an on-going, action-oriented, responsive and high-level advisory body that focuses on addressing children's issues as they grow. If a statutory Commission is to be established, it would take years as drafting and legislative procedures would be involved, causing the establishment difficult to be completed in a short period of time. At present, various departments have been dealing with investigations, complaints, enforcement of children-related cases in accordance with the existing mechanisms or legislations. To respond to the community demand as soon as practicable, the Chief Executive considers it necessary to gain time and set up a non-statutory Commission vested with effective executive functions as soon as practicable for the early benefits of children.

Members of the Commission, as well as various children concern groups, the welfare sector and the public have earnest expectations for the work of the Commission. The Commission also has on-going and heavy work commitments that need to be implemented. To ensure that the Commission can effectively perform its duties, the Commission needs a dedicated team led by a directorate officer to provide policy advice and secretariat support. The major responsibilities of the proposed dedicated policy team as the Secretariat include conducting review on child welfare policy as appropriate and providing relevant policy proposals; as well as coordinating relevant bureaux/departments in taking forward the Commission's recommendations and taking relevant follow-up actions, so as to address a series of priority issues as soon as practicable for the early benefits of children. If bureaux/departments review the children-related legislations under their purview and consult the Commission, the Secretariat will follow up with relevant bureaux/departments in respect of the views raised by the Commission as appropriate.

The scope of work of the Commission Secretariat and that of the Community Care Fund Secretariat are different, and therefore, the two Secretariats are not directly comparable. The proposed dedicated policy team, as the Commission Secretariat, is required to handle heavy workloads and various complicated tasks. Apart from providing policy advice, supporting the Commission and managing the funding scheme, the proposed dedicated policy team is also required to formulate public engagement programmes, to organise various large-scale territory-wide and district-based publicity activities, as well as to coordinate efforts for and assist the Commission in implementing and overseeing important children-related research studies, especially the two important research studies on developing a central databank on children and children-related indices.

We will be happy to discuss the above two issues at the meeting of the Panel on Welfare Services scheduled on 10 December 2018, and will answer any relevant enquiries at the meeting.

Yours sincerely,

(signed)

( Ms Vivian KO )  
for Secretary for Labour and Welfare

c.c. Director of Social Welfare (Attn: Ms PANG Kit-ling)