

# 立法會

## *Legislative Council*

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### **Panel on Welfare Services**

#### **Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat for the meeting on 10 May 2021**

#### **Welfare initiatives and support services relating to the growth and development of children and youth**

#### **Purpose**

This paper provides background information and gives an account of the past discussions of the Panel on Welfare Services ("the Panel") on welfare initiatives and support services relating to the growth and development of children and youth.

#### **Background**

2. At present, the Social Welfare Department ("SWD") provides a range of welfare and support services for children and youth, including those in disadvantaged circumstances and lacking means to meet their needs as well as those who were at risk. These services, which include those provided in integrated services and those specifically for children and youth, are provided by SWD's own service units, non-governmental organizations ("NGOs") through government subventions and funded projects. A summary of the major services relating to the growth and development of children and youth is in **Appendix I**.

#### **Deliberations of the Panel**

3. Issues relating to the subject were discussed at three meetings of the Panel held between 2015 and 2017 in the context of discussing the services and policies relating to hostels for children, implementation of the after-school care and support services, and implementation progress of projects under the Child Development Fund ("CDF"). The major

deliberations and concerns of members are summarized in the ensuing paragraphs.

### Residential child care services

#### *Provision and arrangements of residential child care services*

4. Members were concerned about the long waiting time for residential care places for children with mental handicap. They enquired whether a target waiting time would be set for residential special child care centres, small group homes for mildly mentally handicapped children and Integrated Small Group Home. The Administration advised that it would be difficult to do so as many parents had preference for a specific district or service unit. In the context of receiving briefing on the welfare initiatives featuring in the Chief Executive's 2020 Policy Address, members were advised that to increase the number of residential child care places by phases, a total of 30 and 24 additional small group home places plus four and three additional places of emergency or short-term care in small group homes had been planned for provision in New Territories East and Hong Kong East respectively in 2022-2023.

5. On members' concern about whether manpower shortage was a factor for the long waiting time for the services, the Administration advised that findings of the regular survey on manpower situation of the welfare sector revealed that there was a serious shortage of allied health professionals in the welfare sector. To alleviate the manpower shortage, SWD had implemented a training sponsorship scheme to provide funding support for NGOs to sponsor the tuition fees of students enrolled in the two-year Master Programmes in Occupational Therapy and in Physiotherapy of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University. Sponsored students were required to serve at the NGOs concerned upon graduation for three years.

6. Noting that there were cases whereby children were required to frequently change their residential placements for reasons such as over-age, changes in service needs, etc., members urged the Administration to draw up a holistic plan to provide stable residential child care services for needy children. According to the Administration, SWD had strengthened professional support for residential homes for children through increasing the number of social workers and introducing clinical psychological service. The social workers would follow up regularly conditions of the children and assess their welfare needs, with a view to reviewing their residential care arrangements for achieving the long-term welfare plan. Changes of residential care arrangements were sometimes required because some children could not adapt to the residential care services or had behavioral or emotional problems.

*Support for children in need of residential child care services*

7. Members noted with concern that some children aged below 18 who did not have medical needs were hospitalized in public hospitals due to lack of emergency residential child care places. They called on the Administration to arrange NGOs to provide transitional services for these children. The Administration advised that upon referral from caseworkers, SWD would arrange emergency places for the children concerned as soon as practicable. In the longer term, it would examine the overall provision of residential child care services.

8. There was a concern that many mildly mentally handicapped children in need of residential child care services staying in private residential care homes for persons with disabilities might lack learning and social activities. The Administration assured members that children residing in private homes were closely followed up by caseworkers and school social workers. Family aide service was provided for these children and arrangements would be made for them to attend training or learning activities in district support centres for persons with disabilities as appropriate.

9. Members considered it undesirable that some suspected child abuse cases were provided with residential care services instead of early intervention. The Administration advised that SWD would take into account factors such as age, emotion and behavior of the children concerned and provide welfare services that best suited their needs. In considering residential care arrangements, the children concerned would be involved in the process and social workers would explain to them the arrangements. For children with urgent need for residential care, social workers might approach residential care units providing emergency placement direct for enquiries and referrals, and arrange for admission if places were available. For children who required care or protection as stipulated under the Protection of Children and Juveniles Ordinance (Cap. 213) and had imminent need for out of home care, the social workers might apply to the court under the Ordinance for admitting them to places of refuge.

After-school care and support services

10. Taking the view that the number of places of the After School Care Programme ("ASCP") was far from adequate to meet the service needs, members called on the Administration to put in place a mechanism for evaluating the service demand and substantially increase the provision of after-school care services. The Administration should also simplify the

application procedures to facilitate more eligible families to apply for ASCP service. Given the increasing number of children with special educational needs receiving ASCP service over the years, question was raised as to whether there were adequate fee-waiving quotas for children with special educational needs.

11. According to the Administration, it would maintain communication with the District Social Welfare Offices and NGOs operating the ASCP centres the demand for the service and fee-waiving subsidies in each district. The utilization rate and allocation of fee-waiving quotas would be reviewed every six months. Members were subsequently advised that a host of enhancement measures for ASCP had been implemented in October 2020, including adding 2 500 full fee-waiving subsidy places, relaxing application eligibility, streamlining means-test procedures, increasing subsidy level, providing extra subsidy for children with special educational needs, etc. The Pilot Scheme on Relaxing the Household Income Limit of the Fee-waiving Subsidy Scheme under ASCP for Low-income Families and Increasing Fee-waiving Subsidy Places under the Community Care Fund had also been regularized to provide one-third fee-reduction level for applicants with monthly household income above 75% but not exceeding 100% of relevant Median Monthly Domestic Household Income.

12. On members' concern about the monitoring of the charges and the quality of the after-school learning and support programmes under the Partnership Fund for the Disadvantaged ("PFD"), the Administration advised that it would carefully examine proposals submitted by NGOs and schools and monitor the implementation of the programmes. All the business donations or income generated from the projects, if any, had to be first used up. For projects which lasted for more than a year, matching grants would be disbursed by instalments according to their implementation timetable. NGOs and schools were required to submit progress reports, review reports and audited financial statements to the Administration. The Administration could withhold any payment of the matching grants if NGOs or schools failed to provide adequate information as required by the Administration. Separately, members of the Advisory Committee of PFD and the PFD Secretariat would conduct project visits to understand the implementation progress of the projects.

### Child Development Fund

13. Members noted that the funding allocated to participating NGOs and schools for conducting the training/programmes for the participating child, his/her parents/guardians and mentor included the components of training subsidy and administrative expenses. Pointing out that the amount of

administrative fee per participant was considered by some participating NGOs and schools to be insufficient, some members suggested that the Administration should take into account the resources NGOs and schools required for operating CDF projects when setting the administrative fee. The Administration advised that it was aware that some operating NGOs and schools had to pay part of the administrative costs out of their own resources. It would keep in view the situation.

14. On the suggestion that the Administration should consider removing the requirement for operating NGOs to secure donations so that they could focus on helping participants' personal development, the Administration advised that those operators which had difficulties in appealing for donations could seek assistance from the Child Development Matching Fund (a community organization set up by the private sector), or contact SWD for information about organizations which might be interested in giving donations to CDF projects.

15. Members noted that an aim of CDF, which comprised the components of Personal Development Plan, Targeted Savings and Mentorship, was to reduce inter-generational poverty. Some members were of the view that the targeted accumulated savings upon programme completion, which comprised the targeted monthly savings of \$200 for a two-year period, matching fund from corporate or private donors and matching fund from the Government, were far enough for the grassroots children and youth participants to accumulate asset and help them escape poverty. Members asked whether the Administration would evaluate the effectiveness of the Targeted Saving component and study the long-term saving habits of the participants after they had completed the programme. There was also a suggestion that more places should be given to primary students for participating in CDF projects as it would be more difficult for older children to change their saving habits.

16. The Administration explained that while there were advantages for children to start building a savings habit at a younger age, elder children were often more prepared in drawing up and implementing their personal development plans under CDF. Members were subsequently advised that the Hong Kong Polytechnic University had been commissioned to conduct the Further Study on the Long Term Development of CDF Project Participants to evaluate the effectiveness of CDF projects in 2018. The study revealed that projects launched by CDF were effective in developing a positive learning and working attitude for grassroots children and youths in the long run as well as significantly improving their social skills, problem-solving abilities, resource management and future planning. Persistent savings habits were also developed, which had positive impacts on the alleviation of inter-generational poverty.

17. An oral question concerning the Targeted Saving component of CDF was raised at the Council meeting of 16 January 2019. The question and the Administration's reply are in **Appendix II**.

**Relevant papers**

18. A list of the relevant papers on the Legislative Council website is in **Appendix III**.

Council Business Division 2  
Legislative Council Secretariat  
7 May 2021

**Summary of major welfare and support services relating to the growth and development of children and youth**

Service	Target person	Service scope
Child Care Centres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children from birth to under three years old</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide day care to the children in a safe, stimulating and learning environment, to enhance their growth and development</li> </ul>
Pilot Scheme on Social Work Service for Pre-primary Institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pre-primary children and their families in subsidized/aided pre-primary institutions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For early identification of and providing assistance to pre-primary children and their families with welfare needs</li> </ul>
School social work service in secondary schools <sup>1</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Secondary students with academic, social or emotional problems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify and help needy students maximize their educational opportunities, develop their potentials and prepare them for adulthood</li> </ul>
After School Care Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children aged between six and 12</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Services include homework guidance, meal service, parent guidance and education, skill learning and other social activities</li> <li>Through the Fee Waiving Subsidy Scheme for the Programme, the Social Welfare Department provides assistance to needy families by waiving or reducing the fee of after-school care services</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> Starting from the 2018-2019 school year, the Education Bureau has provided more resources for public sector primary schools to implement, in light of their school-based circumstances, the policy of "one school social worker for each school", with a view to strengthening their social work and guidance services.

<b>Service</b>	<b>Target person</b>	<b>Service scope</b>
Partnership Fund for the Disadvantaged - Dedicated Portion for After-school Learning and Support Programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Primary One to Secondary Six students coming from grassroots families or disadvantaged circumstances such as single parent, new arrival or ethnic minority families</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Include training programmes on whole-person development, and may also include tutorial classes or programmes for developing the disadvantaged students' learning capability and study skills, improving students' life planning skills, alleviating stress of parenting and improving parenting skills, supporting parents to stay in employment or enter job market, etc.</li> </ul>
Integrated Children and Youth Services Centres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Children and youth aged between six and 24</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Guidance and counseling, supportive programmes, developmental and socialization programmes as well as community engagement programmes</li> </ul>
District Youth Outreaching Social Work Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Young people aged between six to 24 who normally do not participate in conventional social or youth activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Reach out and provide counselling and guidance</li> </ul>
Overnight Outreaching Service for Young Night Drifters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● High-risk young night drifters</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Reach out to young night drifters exposed to possible moral danger</li> </ul>
Cyber Youth Support Teams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● At-risk and hidden youths</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Provide professional social work intervention including online and offline counselling and group/programme services</li> </ul>
Hotline Service for Youth- at-Risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Youth-at-risk facing crisis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Services provided to the callers include telephone guidance and counselling, face-to-face counselling for immediate intervention and referrals to other appropriate service units</li> </ul>



<b>Service</b>	<b>Target person</b>	<b>Service scope</b>
Community Support Service Scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Children and youth cautioned under the Police Superintendent's Discretion Scheme, the arrested youth and their peers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Provide supporting services to assist the children and youth to re-integrate into the community, eliminate their deviant and unlawful behaviour and to reduce their likelihood of law infringement</li> <li>● Services include individual and family counselling, therapeutic groups, skill training/educational groups, community services, crime prevention programmes, etc.</li> </ul>
Crisis Residential Service for Youth-at-Risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● At-risk boys/girls between the age of eight and 21</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Provide professional intervention and immediate and temporary accommodation lasting from one day to a maximum of two months for the youth-at-risk</li> </ul>
Residential child care services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Children who cannot be taken care of in a suitable manner by their families temporarily for various reasons</li> <li>● Young persons with behavioural and/or emotional problems under the age of 21</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Institutional services include residential child care centres (also known as residential creches and residential nurseries), residential special child care centres, children's homes, children's reception centre, boys'/girls' homes and boys'/girls' hostels</li> <li>● Non-institutional services include foster care service, small group homes, integrated small group homes and small group homes for mildly mentally handicapped children</li> </ul>
District Support Scheme for Children and Youth Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Children and youth aged 24 or below who are financially deprived or under disadvantaged circumstances</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Direct cash assistance to subsidize the expenses on individual items for the children and youth to meet their developmental needs</li> </ul>

<b>Service</b>	<b>Target person</b>	<b>Service scope</b>
Child Development Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Children aged between 10 and 16 or studying Primary Four to Secondary Four from a disadvantaged background (i.e. their family is receiving Comprehensive Social Security Assistance or full grant under the student finance schemes under the Student Financial Assistance Agency, or their household income is less than 75% of the Median Monthly Domestic Household Income)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Provide funds to non-governmental organizations to operate three-year projects, which have three key components, namely, personal development plan, mentorship programme and targeted savings, with an aim to promote the longer-term development of children and encourage them to develop an asset-building habit, thereby reducing inter-generational poverty</li></ul>

**PRESIDENT** (in Cantonese): ~~Fifth question.~~

### **Child savings scheme**

5. **DR CHIANG LAI-WAN** (in Cantonese): *The Government set up the Child Development Fund ("CDF") in 2008 to provide funding to non-governmental organizations and schools for implementing matching funds for savings programmes and mentorship programmes. It is learnt that the participation in CDF has been poor, with only 17 000 children benefited since its establishment 10 years ago. On the contrary, in countries such as Singapore, the United Kingdom and Canada, universal programmes set up for providing long-term asset accumulation for children have received very positive responses. For instance, the take-up rate of the Co-Savings Scheme set up by the Singapore authorities for newborns was as high as 97% for certain birth cohorts. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:*

- (1) *whether it has assessed if the scope of coverage of CDF is too narrow and its subsidy period too short, which have resulted in the poor participation in CDF;*
- (2) *whether it will consider expanding the target beneficiaries of CDF from grass-roots children to all children as well as extending its subsidy period; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and*
- (3) *whether it will draw reference from the practice of the Singapore authorities and set up a universal savings scheme for newborns, and allocate a sum equivalent to 1% of the Government's recurrent expenditure for co-contribution with parents of the newborns (or by a third party) to the scheme annually?*

**SECRETARY FOR LABOUR AND WELFARE** (in Cantonese): President, having consulted the relevant bureaux and departments, I provide a reply to the Member's main question as follows:

I wish to point out in the first place that the purpose and policy objectives of the Child Development Fund ("CDF") set up by the Government are different from those of the overseas child savings schemes referred to by the Member. They should not be regarded in the same light.

In fact, CDF only targets at children aged 10 to 16 or students in Primary Four to Secondary Four from a disadvantaged background, with an aim of helping them develop savings habits and set their personal goals during the three-year participation period. Each child participating in a CDF project will be matched with an experienced volunteer mentor. With mentors' guidance, participating children can build up self-confidence and learn to map out their future development paths. A special feature of CDF is the joint implementation of projects by various parties including the families of participating children, private organizations offering sponsorship or volunteer mentors, non-governmental organizations or schools operating CDF projects and the Government. We therefore consider it inappropriate to determine the effectiveness of CDF only by the number of participating children, or directly compare CDF projects with other overseas schemes of an entirely different nature.

Each CDF project, which lasts for three years, comprises three key components, namely Targeted Savings, Mentorship and Personal Development Plan. These components are designed to broaden participants' horizons, enhance their abilities and personal qualities, and enrich their social experience.

Each participant will join a targeted savings programme to save \$200 per month over a two-year period. The targeted savings, which can be up to a maximum of \$14,400, have 1:1:1 tripartite contributions from the participant himself/herself, private sector matching fund and Government's special financial incentive. Participants may use the savings to realize their personal development plans ("PDPs") in the third year of the project.

At the same time, with CDF funding and volunteer mentors' assistance, project operators/schools organize specially designed three-year projects for participating children and young people, teaching them how to formulate PDPs and implement them using their own savings, matching fund and Government's special financial incentive. Project operators/schools provide training and guidance for the participants, their parents/guardians and mentors throughout the three-year project period to facilitate their completion of the project.

Despite that the Targeted Savings under CDF projects are made up of savings, matching fund and a financial incentive provided by the Government, they only form one of the components of CDF which attaches importance to

encouraging children from underprivileged families to accumulate intangible assets, such as positive attitude, resilience, social networks and so on, with a view to laying a foundation for their long-term development.

The Labour and Welfare Bureau has earlier commissioned the University of Hong Kong to conduct the Study on the Longer Term Development of Child Development Fund Project Participants. The study results indicated that the three key components of the CDF projects could effectively enhance underprivileged children and youngsters' ability in resource management and future planning, expand their personal networks and help them develop a persistent savings habit. These benefits could enhance their academic and career development, and are fundamental to their future success and their ability to combat poverty. The consultant team conducting the above study did not say that the coverage of CDF was too narrow, nor did it comment on the funding period. Since CDF is not simply a saving scheme, expanding its scope to cover all children in Hong Kong is inconsistent with its purpose and policy objectives. Currently, the Government has no plans to extend the funding period.

Children are the future of society and the future backbone of the community. The Government has always attached great importance to the growth and development of children, particularly those from a disadvantaged background. In this regard, the relevant government bureaux and departments have been adopting a multifaceted and target-specific approach in various areas to facilitate the development of children in need and support their families. We hold the view that providing all children with a uniform payment or matching contribution by the Government for saving purposes irrespective of their financial background is not in line with our current strategy of creating more equal development opportunities for children from underprivileged families.

**DR CHIANG LAI-WAN** (in Cantonese): *I am really saddened to hear the Secretary's main reply. Secretary, I wonder if you have watched a film titled "The Taste of Youth" directed by Director King CHEUNG recently. You will understand the feelings of the youngsters nowadays after watching this film, as well as the helplessness that they face and the difficulties that they encounter in the pursuit of their ideals and dreams at present. I recommend the Secretary to watch the film "The Taste of Youth".*

*President, I hope the Secretary is aware that, among the recurrent expenditure of the Government at present, no recurrent funding has actually been set aside for our next generation in the form of savings. Strictly speaking, there is none. Let us think about it, we are now in face of employment problems, housing problems and livelihood problems. The Secretary even remarked a few days ago that "retiring at 60 years old is just retiring middle-aged". Yet, these people cannot apply for elderly Comprehensive Social Security Assistance ("CSSA"), how can they support themselves to 120 years old?*

**PRESIDENT** (in Cantonese): Dr CHIANG Lai-wan, please state your supplementary question.

**DR CHIANG LAI-WAN** (in Cantonese): *Therefore, may I ask the Secretary—I ask him once again today—what makes him consider it impossible for the Government to set aside a sum equivalent to 1% of the recurrent expenditure of the Government among the some \$400 billion recurrent expenditure per year to our next generation? Please reply.*

**SECRETARY FOR LABOUR AND WELFARE** (in Cantonese): President, I believe we have stated our answer in the main reply given just now. Essentially, this is not a question concerning the percentage or amount of money. The question lies in whether the policy objectives and the effects generated can achieve the aim of creating more equal development opportunities for, in particular, grass-roots children.

**MR KENNETH LAU** (in Cantonese): *President, the targeted savings programme under CDF encourages each participant to set a monthly savings target of HK\$200, whereas children whose family is either earning a household income less than 75% of the median monthly domestic household income, or receiving financial assistances are eligible for the programme. Yet, families with less financial means can hardly make ends meet such that they may not have adequate financial resources to afford saving \$200 per month.*

*May I ask whether the Government would consider lowering the savings target of \$200 and raising the ratio of matching funds contributed by project operators and the Government to 1:2. That is to say, project operators and the*

*Government would each donate \$2 when a child saves \$1, so as to encourage more children from a disadvantaged background to participate in the programme?*

**SECRETARY FOR LABOUR AND WELFARE** (in Cantonese): President, when the programme was rolled out in 2008, we commissioned The Hong Kong Polytechnic University to conduct an assessment on various issues, one of which is whether families with less financial means would have difficulty in saving \$200 a month, which is precisely the issue that Mr LAU has raised concerns about.

Even if we merely look at the relevant information but not the assessment report, basically, only 1% of the first batch of participants withdrew from the entire project due to failure to complete the savings programme. In fact, the second batch was with the largest number of participants withdrawn, amounting to about 1.9%. As for the fourth batch of participants who have participated in the programme recently or the school-based projects, the withdrawal rate is only 0.7% or 0.9%, which is less than 1%. Therefore, we have considered this issue seriously and found it an objective observation that in the past, 99% of the participating children were able to achieve the goal under the prevailing circumstances.

**DR CHENG CHUNG-TAI** (in Cantonese): *This is a rare occasion that I agree with some of the arguments presented by Dr CHIANG Lai-wan. Just now she pointed out that the Secretary's reply would make youngsters feel very helpless, but I think all Hongkongers would feel extremely helpless in respect of the Secretary for Labour and Welfare.*

*CDF mentioned in the main question is targeted at grass-roots children aged between 10 and 16. But at the same time, the problem is, in response to the public's criticism on the amendment of raising the age threshold for eligibility for elderly CSSA from 60 to 65, the Secretary remarked that when people have a life expectancy of 120 years, being 60 years old is just reaching middle-aged. Following this logic, I cannot understand at all why it is unnecessary to postpone the age window of CDF applicants from the present 10-16 to 15-19. I hope the Secretary would explain how the Government defines the age eligibility for receiving welfare benefits.*

**SECRETARY FOR LABOUR AND WELFARE** (in Cantonese): President, the requirement that a participant should be aged 10 to 16 was set basically because, when we set up CDF in 2008, we had considered the stage at which students could participate in the programme, and this age requirement was thus set. The most important or difficult part is that as we hope a project would last for three years, during which participants would make savings in two years, whereas some forms of training would also be provided. However, when children reach the age of 16, they may start to sit for various examinations, possibly followed by identity changes, such as joining the labour market or continuing with their studies. Therefore, according to the design of the programme, the age cap is set at 16 years old such that most of the participants are aged under 16 to ensure that they would have sufficient time to complete the project within the three-year period, and by then they are still students in most cases.

**PRESIDENT** (in Cantonese): Dr CHENG Chung-tai, which part of your supplementary question has not been answered?

**DR CHENG CHUNG-TAI** (in Cantonese): *President, the Secretary has not answered my supplementary question. My supplementary question is very clear: Why is it necessary to raise the age threshold for applying for elderly CSSA from 60 to 65, but following the same logic, it is unnecessary to adjust the age limit for children participating in CDF projects?*

**PRESIDENT** (in Cantonese): Dr CHENG, the Secretary has already answered your supplementary question clearly.

**MR HOLDEN CHOW** (in Cantonese): *President, Dr CHIANG Lai-wan has all along been advocating for the establishment of a "baby fund". Whenever I think of Dr CHIANG Lai-wan, I would associate her with "baby fund". I hope the Government would really listen to her views. The supplementary question I mainly wish to raise is that I have noticed the Secretary's remarks that CDF "attaches importance to encouraging children from underprivileged families to accumulate intangible assets, such as positive attitude, resilience, social networks and so on, with a view to laying a foundation for their long-term development" when he mentioned one of the key objectives of CDF in the main reply today.*



*President, I strongly agree that it is indeed very crucial to build up a positive attitude, resilience and social networks. Having said that, I would like to ask the Secretary, as CDF has already been implemented for some time, whether there are any performance indicators for measuring the progress of the children in building up a positive attitude or social networks? Would the Secretary please explain the relevant performance indicators and the time it takes to yield visible results?*

**SECRETARY FOR LABOUR AND WELFARE** (in Cantonese): The areas mentioned by Mr CHOW just now involve some changes which we call them "soft changes", such as children's attitude and positive thinking, etc. We have commissioned the University of Hong Kong to conduct an assessment before, and according to its findings, in regard to areas such as their motivation to and interest in study, children basically have higher expectations on their academic achievements, become more confident, and their communication skills, etc. have also shown improvement in the assessment. In fact, this is the second time that we have conducted a survey, the conclusions of the assessment conducted in 2008 are the same as that of the assessment conducted by the University of Hong Kong in 2015, both are very positive. Simply put, we can say that the CDF projects have enhanced human capital as well as social capital. In addition, it is of course important that this sum of savings will help participants realize their wishes and goals for growth.

**MR MICHAEL TIEN** (in Cantonese): *Regarding Dr CHIANG's question, the Secretary essentially hopes to increase the fertility rate. In connection with this issue—Secretary, I am your fan, this is what you said in your blog—first of all, I have to tell you that I have been organizing "Uncle TIEN's parent-child activities" (田叔叔親子活動) in the districts. What young parents told me most often was that they actually wished to have one more child, but the Government failed to help them and ease their burden. I told them that the Government had a savings programme in place, but they said it did not help, they had no resources when a child was born. In addition, speaking of the child allowance, Roundtable cited the Secretary's argument when we met the Financial Secretary last month, you said: One of the policy priorities of the Labour and Welfare Bureau in the future is to help couples who wish to have children through alleviating some of the pressure of childbearing in the future". We fully agree ...*

**PRESIDENT** (in Cantonese): Mr Michael TIEN, please state your supplementary question focusing on the subject matter of the main question.

**MR MICHAEL TIEN** (in Cantonese): *Okay. I urged the Financial Secretary to raise the child allowance during the meeting. Now, I would like to ask, as CDF is not the major consideration of many parents when considering if they should have one more child at present, to make it the simplest, will the Secretary propose to the Financial Secretary that the child allowance should be raised substantially this year? If the child allowance is raised from \$120,000 to \$200,000, those who used to pay tax at ordinary tax rates can save some \$1,000 per month. This is a very concrete approach to eliminate the obstacles of childbearing. I wonder if the Secretary has anything to share.*

**PRESIDENT** (in Cantonese): Mr TIEN, your question is irrelevant to the main question. Secretary, will you answer the question?

**SECRETARY FOR LABOUR AND WELFARE** (in Cantonese): President, I am not as quick-witted as Mr TIEN, so I cannot figure out the relationship between these two issues. I am sorry.

**DR ELIZABETH QUAT** (in Cantonese): *President, the Secretary often says that Hong Kong is facing an ageing population, we should encourage childbearing and consider how to help parents, and so on. Nowadays, parents are most afraid of not being able to shoulder the burden, worrying that they would not be able to support their children to continue their studies and provide a good living environment for them in the future. Therefore, the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong ("DAB")—in particular Dr CHIANG Lai-wan—has always hoped that the Government would consider establishing a "baby fund" advocated by us for years.*

*When a baby is born, the Government would inject a sum of, say, several thousand dollars to \$10,000, after which the Government and parents would both make contributions every year until the child reaches the age of 18. At that time, children can make use of the savings to further their studies, acquire a home, or even receive treatment for diseases. While it would offer much*

*encouragement and support to parents, it would also provide a valuable opportunity for youngsters, since they know that by then they can continue their studies if they so wish, or they will be able to afford the down payment if they wish to buy a home, rendering the burden on their parents less heavy. Such a measure can definitely encourage childbearing and help small families. Yet, the Secretary responded that they have already set up CDF, but it is different from the children savings schemes set up in foreign countries, so we should not regard them in the same light. They would not consider it at all and just evade the issue, nor have they indicated that a study would be conducted. What does this mean?*

*The Government alleges that we have not made any suggestions, but when we put forward our proposal, the Government does not consider it at all and remains silent ...*

**PRESIDENT** (in Cantonese): Dr Elizabeth QUAT, please state your supplementary question.

**DR ELIZABETH QUAT** (in Cantonese): *I would like to ask the Secretary, does he really want to encourage childbearing and help families in Hong Kong? Will the Secretary consider setting up the "baby fund" advocated by DAB?*

**SECRETARY FOR LABOUR AND WELFARE** (in Cantonese): President, from our reply to Dr CHIANG's question, Members can see that I have focused on comparing the existing CDF with Dr CHIANG's suggestion. Therefore, considering whether we should encourage Hong Kong people to make savings for their children's future is indeed an entirely different issue. I believe we can have further discussion in this respect.

Nevertheless, our current strategy emphasizes on helping grass-roots children through creating more equal development opportunities for them. While we believe it is impossible to make it perfect, and there may still be some areas which require improvement, this involves rather different policy considerations as compared with how to encourage parents to make savings for their children's future.

**DR ELIZABETH QUAT** (in Cantonese): *Part (3) of Dr CHIANG Lai-wan's main question is very clear: She asked whether the Government will draw reference from the practice of the Singapore authorities and set up a universal savings scheme for newborns. The Secretary has evaded our question. He has not answered our question ...*

**PRESIDENT** (in Cantonese): I think the Secretary has already answered your question in the main reply.

**MR PAUL TSE** (in Cantonese): *President, when we were small, our parents, society or banks all encouraged us to develop a savings habit. I can remember that there were some very beautiful savings boxes. We would break open a savings box at a certain time and use the savings for shopping, which made us so happy.*

*Yet, are there too many restrictions and mandatory requirements in society nowadays? Adults already have the Mandatory Provident Fund ("MPF") Scheme, the performance of which has been extremely unsatisfactory. Do we wish to sacrifice the interests of our children and force them to put away all their money since childhood? I am opposed to this, and I somewhat disagree with it indeed. It is alright if we are talking about encouraging people to develop a savings habit as introduced by the Secretary just now or in his article. Yet, I am definitely against the suggestion of forcing children to make MPF contributions since their childhood.*

*I would like to know that under the prevailing policy, what are children encouraged to do with the savings of \$14,400 at present? This sum is certainly not saved for investment or learning purposes.*

**SECRETARY FOR LABOUR AND WELFARE** (in Cantonese): President, in respect of the \$14,400, the project operator/school would assist the children participating in the project in thinking about their future goals and the elements involved in the process of achieving these goals. How can this sum of \$14,400 contribute to the fulfilment of some of these elements? In many cases, goals cannot be achieved in one go as many issues might be involved, for instance, they have to experience and learn something. Therefore, we hope they can think

about their long-term development goals, and then consider how to use this sum of money after setting their goals, through which we can, to a certain extent, help them accomplish their goals in life planning.

**PRESIDENT** (in Cantonese): Last oral question.

### **Mainland tourists affecting the daily lives of residents in certain districts**

6. **DR CHENG CHUNG-TAI** (in Cantonese): *In recent years, a large number of Mainland inbound tour groups have arranged their tour group members to have meals and go shopping in districts such as Tsuen Wan, Tsing Yi, Hung Hom and To Kwa Wan. Some residents in those districts have relayed that visits by tens of thousands of tourists daily have given rise to a number of problems, which include eateries and shops catering for people's daily needs in the districts being replaced by shops dedicated to receiving tourists, traffic obstruction arising from illegal coach parking, as well as environmental hygiene and noise problems caused by tourists littering and yelling on the streets. As a result, the daily lives of the residents have been gravely affected. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:*

- (1) *of the specific indicators taken into account by the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau in considering whether there is a need to divert the tourists in a certain district to other districts;*
- (2) *as many residents consider that the various government departments have not actively addressed the problem of tourists affecting residents' daily lives, and tackling such problem is not the main duty of the Travel Industry Authority to be set up, of the specific measures the Government has put in place to improve the living environment of the districts concerned so that residents' daily lives can resume to normal; and*
- (3) *given that the Government has, through the system for application for liquor licences, prevent liquor-selling premises from causing problems such as fire safety, environmental hygiene and noise problems, with a view to striking a balance between the commercial*

## Appendix III

### Relevant papers on welfare initiatives and support services relating to the growth and development of children and youth

Committee	Date of meeting	Paper
Panel on Welfare Services	12 January 2015 (Item III)	<u>Agenda</u> <u>Minutes</u>
	10 April 2017 (Item V)	<u>Agenda</u> <u>Minutes</u>
	10 July 2017 (Item V)	<u>Agenda</u> <u>Minutes</u>
	30 December 2020	<u>CB(2)504/20-21(03)</u>

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