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Panel on Home Affairs, Culture and Sports

Report of the Subcommittee on Promoting Family Education

Purpose

This paper reports on the deliberations of the Subcommittee on Promoting Family Education (“the Subcommittee”).

Background

2. The Government established the Family Council in December 2007 to serve as a cross-sector and cross-bureau platform for advising the Government on family-related policies and promoting in the community a culture of loving families. Members note that the Law of the People’s Republic of China on Family Education Promotion (《中華人民共和國家庭教育促進法》) (“Family Education Promotion Law”) has come into force with effect from January 2022. It specifies that the state and society shall provide guidance, support and services for family education, so that family education, school education, and social education can be closely integrated and coordinated. Members are concerned that the policy initiatives for promoting family education and family responsibilities in Hong Kong are currently implemented by different policy bureaux/departments (“B/Ds”), and consider that Hong Kong should study how to strengthen the promotion of family education and the related policy initiatives.¹

¹ Family education generally refers to the cultivation, guidance, and influence of parents or guardians on minors, aiming to promote their all-round and healthy growth in terms of moral attributes, physical well-being, life skills, cultural accomplishments and behavioural habits. It also includes various educational activities and services that enhance family relationships and functionality. In Hong Kong, the term “parent education” (家長教育) or “parenting education” (親職教育) may also be used for discussing relevant educational activities.

The Subcommittee

3. Members agreed to appoint a subcommittee to study the policy on family education in Hong Kong and the promotion of related measures. The terms of reference and membership of the Subcommittee are set out in **Appendices 1 and 2** respectively.

4. Under the chairmanship of Hon LUK Chung-hung, the Subcommittee has held a total of six meetings since commencement of its work in late May 2023, and has invited deputations to attend one of its meetings to give views on the current situation of family education and the way forward. A list of the deputations/individuals which/who have given views to the Subcommittee is in **Appendix 3**, and a summary of views expressed by deputations/individuals is in **Appendix 4**. In addition, to facilitate the Subcommittee to draw reference from the relevant experience of other places, the Subcommittee has requested the Research Office of the Legislative Council Secretariat to study the implementation of family education in the Mainland and Taiwan Region of China as well as Canada in terms of the experience gained, the policies and legislation involved.²

Deliberations of the Subcommittee

5. Given that the policy initiatives relating to family education are implemented by a number of B/Ds, the Subcommittee has held meetings with the relevant B/Ds and advisory bodies, including the Home and Youth Affairs Bureau (“HYAB”), Education Bureau (“EDB”), Health Bureau (“HHB”), Social Welfare Department (“SWD”), Labour Department (“LD”), Department of Health (“DH”), Family Council and Committee on Home-School Cooperation (“CHSC”), to discuss the following major issues:

- (a) work progress of the Family Council;
- (b) strategies and measures of promoting parent education;
- (c) work progress of the Committee on Home-School Cooperation;
- (d) provision of welfare services for children and families
- (e) efforts in promoting family-friendly employment practices (“FFEPs”);

² The [Information Note](#) entitled “Experience in promoting family education and parent education in selected places” has been uploaded onto the website of the Legislative Council.

- (f) family health and student health services; and
- (g) way forward for implementing policies to promote family education.

The deliberations of the Subcommittee are summarized in the ensuing paragraphs.

Work progress of the Family Council

6. The Subcommittee notes that HYAB has been supporting the work of the Family Council in promoting a culture of loving families to forge close and harmonious relationships amongst the family members. The Family Council has identified three sets of family core values, i.e. “Love and Care”, “Respect and Responsibility” and “Communication and Harmony”. Apart from organizing various programmes and activities to foster a culture of loving families, the Family Council advises the Government on family-related policies in pursuit of a pro-family culture.³

Promotion of pro-family culture

7. The Subcommittee is concerned that many parents have misunderstanding or little knowledge about family education, and information about family education is rather fragmented on the Internet. Members have suggested that the Family Council may enhance publicity and education efforts by, for example, establishing a discussion platform on its website to enable provision of correct information by experts and sharing of experience by members of the public; trying to produce videos similar to docu-dramas and including, in concrete terms, parent-child education skills and recommendations, and so on. Noting that various series of short videos have been produced by the Family Council and uploaded to its website and social platforms, members have suggested that the Family Council may consider enabling the comment function to allow interactions and discussions about the videos among audience.

8. The Administration has advised that the Family Council will launch publicity campaigns with different themes each year to promote a culture of loving families among members of the public and develop resilience of

³ With effect from 1 April 2013, B/Ds are required to take the three sets of family core values identified by the Family Council and the impacts on family structure and functions as basis when assessing the impacts on families arising from relevant policies during the policy formulation process. The family impact assessment has been conducted for over 1 090 policy initiatives and programmes so far.

families. For example, sponsorship has been provided to non-governmental organizations (“NGOs”) under the “Thematic Sponsorship Scheme to Support Family-related Initiatives” to set up support hotlines, mutual support groups for parents, organize workshops, and so on; and funding support has been provided through the “Happy Family Campaign” funding scheme to youth uniformed groups for organizing family-related activities. The Administration and the Family Council will continue to take forward different projects and programmes through various channels and platforms to actively promote a culture of loving families and family education, including stepping up publicity on the importance of pre-marriage planning and introducing additional measures to support new parents. The Administration and the Family Council will also continue to consult different stakeholders, so that more targeted efforts are made to promote a culture of loving families and family education.

Formulation of policy initiatives for supporting families

9. The Subcommittee is concerned that the social environment in Hong Kong is unfavourable to the establishment of good relationships among family members (e.g. school children are facing enormous study pressure, parents are working under great pressure, etc.). Members have suggested that the Family Council should be more proactive in proposing to the Administration the review of the relevant policies, including ways to alleviate the learning burden on school children, how to promote mental wellness of parents and so on, with a view to creating a more favourable social environment for establishing good parent-child relationship. Given the high divorce rate in Hong Kong, members have also called on the Administration to strengthen the role of the Family Council in supporting single-parent/separated or divorced families, including working with the Specialized Co-parenting Support Centres (“SCSCs”) to advocate the “child-focused” principle under which separated or divorced parents should exercise their parental responsibilities and strengthen parent-child connection, so as to promote the healthy physical and psychological development of children from separated or divorced families. Expressing concern that many maintenance payees have difficulties in collecting maintenance payments, members have suggested that the Administration should act in line with the initiatives to launch a maintenance mediation pilot scheme through the Community Care Fund as announced in the 2023 Policy Address and strengthen support in this regard.

10. The Administration has advised that the Family Council has launched a number of publicity programmes and activities targeting families of different backgrounds including single-parent/separated or divorced families and families with other special needs. The Family Council has also

engaged tertiary institutions and research organizations to conduct researches on the phenomenon of divorce in Hong Kong and the related issues, and has shared the findings and recommendations of the researches with the relevant B/Ds. Regarding the maintenance mediation pilot scheme, the Administration hopes that the pilot scheme can assist the parties concerned, including women who are victims of maintenance arrears, to resolve disputes through mediation. The Administration will consult the Community Care Fund Task Force after working out the relevant details, and will take into account the views of different stakeholders, with a view to developing a suitable platform to provide appropriate support to the parties concerned.

Family-related researches/surveys

11. Noting that local tertiary institutions and research organizations have been commissioned by the Family Council to conduct family-related researches/surveys, the Subcommittee has suggested that the Administration and the Family Council should take appropriate follow-up actions on the findings and recommendations concerned (e.g. the Consultancy Study on Family Education and the Study on Parenting Practices in Hong Kong published in 2012 and 2017 respectively) so that the community will attach greater importance to the relevant research/survey findings. Members have suggested that when conducting future Family Surveys, the Family Council may consider including a chapter on the promotion of family education covering areas such as challenges faced by parents arising from implementation of family education and parenting, and the support they need to overcome the challenges. Members have also urged the Administration to enhance family-related policy researches, with a view to putting forward operational policy initiatives.

12. The Administration has advised that upon receipt of the reports on various researches/surveys, the Family Council will first hold internal discussion and then share the findings with the relevant B/Ds to facilitate their consideration of the follow-up measures. The Family Council will also make reference to the results of related studies in formulating the themes of its publicity campaigns and work strategies. The Administration will further explore with the Family Council the conduct of more researches on the promotion of family education through appropriate channels.

Strategies and measures of promoting parent education

13. The Subcommittee notes that EDB's strategies for promoting parent education are focused on kindergartens, primary and secondary schools (including special schools) as the platform for promotion of home-school

cooperation and development of home-school partnership. At the school level, EDB encourages schools to implement parent education programmes via their Parent-Teacher Associations (“PTAs”) and other channels; and at the community level, EDB provides resources to Federations of Parent-Teacher Associations (“FPTAs”) in the 18 districts and NGOs for organizing parent education programmes and activities.

14. The Subcommittee is concerned that while the Administration has adopted various strategies and measures to promote the importance of parent education as well as the proper ways of and attitudes towards nurturing children, the effectiveness has yet to be assessed. Members have suggested that the Administration should review the effectiveness in implementing parent education (e.g. by collecting attendance data of parent education programmes/activities) and explore ways to better coordinate different B/Ds, with a view to implementing parent education in a more systematic manner. There is also a suggestion that EDB may encourage schools to make use of the one-off grant,⁴ which is offered for supporting schools in embarking on structured school-based parent education programmes/activities, to support parents of students in organizing mutual help groups, through which they may share experience in parent education and establish community-based parent support networks.

15. The Subcommittee has also suggested that there is a need to make timely adjustments to the contents of parent education (including the inclusion of elements such as national education, national security education and mental health) in response to the changes in the social environment. Apart from implementing parent education in schools, members have suggested that the Administration should reach out to parents through other channels, including the provision of parent education to new parents as early as possible, especially in the first three years after birth of their children, to enhance their parenting knowledge and skills. Besides, the Administration may also encourage enterprises/trade unions to organize workplace parent education programmes/activities for their staff during working hours, and step up publicity and promotion of the parent education programmes/activities organized by NGOs in the community. Members have also suggested that the Administration may draw reference from the experiences of the country and other regions and explore ways to promote the participation of parents in parent education programmes/activities, for

⁴ EDB provided kindergartens joining the Kindergarten Education Scheme with an additional one-off subsidy of \$90,000 to \$100,000 in the 2021-2022 school year, a one-off grant on parent education of \$200,000 for all publicly-funded primary schools in the 2022-2023 school year, and will provide a one-off grant of \$200,000 for publicly-funded secondary schools in 2024 to support schools in embarking on structured school-based parent education programmes or activities.

instance, by making it a requirement that parents applying for the relevant government subsidies have to participate in such programmes/activities.

16. The Administration has advised that EDB has launched the Curriculum Frameworks on Parent Education, targeted at kindergartens, primary schools and secondary schools respectively, for schools and other organizations to make reference to in designing parent education programmes, and for parents to learn the parenting knowledge and skills appropriate to the age of their children in a systematic manner. To tie in with the launch of the Frameworks, EDB has commissioned a tertiary institution to provide two 10-hour parent education courses for parents of kindergarten and primary school students respectively and produce electronic learning resources to facilitate parents' self-learning. To ensure the quality of parent education activities, EDB will collect feedback from parents and require the organizers of government-funded parent education activities (e.g. schools and PTAs) to submit evaluation reports after the approved activities have been carried out. In the 2022-2023 school year, EDB provided funding support of approximately \$50 million in total to about 1 650 primary and secondary schools which had organized around 3 620 parent education activities engaging about 700 000 parents (frequency count) in the activities. A hit rate of over 1.6 million has been accumulated for EDB's one-stop parent education website "Smart Parent Net" since its launch in 2018. EDB will continue to learn about the family education topics of interest to parents and understand their needs while providing relevant information to parents in a timely manner via the "Smart Parent Net". Different B/Ds will continue to work through cross-sector collaboration to create synergy in their efforts to promote parent education and strengthen the affection for and sense of belonging to our country among the next generation.

Positive parent education/values education

17. The Subcommittee is concerned that as some parents may take negative actions or give negative verbal expressions when teaching their children, children may develop negative emotions and mental stress. Members have suggested that the Administration should step up promotion of positive education and values education to both parents and teachers, and motivate parents and teachers to use positive education methods to nurture the next generation who will be able to uphold positive values and attitudes. In addition, noting that parents with parenting problems are often more resistant to participating in parent education programmes/activities, members have urged that measures should be taken to assist schools in identifying parents with parenting problems at an early stage and referring them to professionals (e.g. social workers or educational psychologists) for

appropriate support services; where necessary, the Administration should take the initiative to intervene in serious cases for follow-up.

18. The Administration has advised that the Positive Parent Campaign has been launched by EDB since 2020 to raise public awareness of positive parent education through extensive promotion channels (e.g. arranging a Moving Showroom to conduct publicity in the community). The Positive Parenting Campaign has received positive responses, and many parents have indicated that they agree with the concept of positive parenting. At present, EDB's work is mainly focused on schools as the platforms for home-school cooperation to strengthen connections and communications, with a view to assisting parents with parenting problems in understanding how to nurture their children by appropriate means. As for cases with serious family problems, school social workers may liaise with SWD to jointly follow up and provide support to families in need. Moreover, EDB has been continuously providing training to equip teachers with the knowledge and ways of promoting home-school cooperation and positive parent education/values education. EDB has commissioned post-secondary institutions or educational organizations to provide 12-hour short training courses annually for teachers of kindergartens, primary and secondary schools to sharpen their skills in mediation and communication with parents, and to emphasize the importance of positive parent education.⁵

Discouraging the culture of excessive competition

19. The Subcommittee is concerned that students are prone to negative emotions and mental stress as a result of the education system in Hong Kong which places too much emphasis on students' academic performance. Members have urged the Administration to review the existing mechanism for progression in education and assessment of students' abilities, with a view to discouraging the culture of excessive competition. Also, members are concerned that students in Hong Kong are subject to heavy homework load and under heavy pressure from learning, which is not conducive to the

⁵ In the 2022-2023 school year, a total of 247 teachers from 164 kindergartens, primary and secondary schools completed the course. As regards pre-service teacher training, the Administration has refined the frameworks for the early childhood education programmes for pre-service teachers, making the "Parental Involvement in Early Childhood Education" as one of the core compulsory domains. For pre-service training for teachers in secondary and primary schools, EDB developed a guiding framework for primary and secondary teacher education programmes in 2023. The domain "Student Growth and Development" in the framework sets out that prospective teachers are expected to demonstrate an understanding of and competence in promoting home-school cooperation and understand the importance of parental involvement in primary and secondary education.

building of good relationships among family members. Members have suggested that the Administration should draw reference from the practices and experiences of the country and other regions and implement measures to alleviate the problems of heavy homework load faced by students (e.g. by formulating guidelines to cap the homework load and homework hours of primary and secondary students). Members have also expressed concern about the fact that many parents are highly concerned about whether the academic performance of their children is good enough for admission to professional disciplines, and pay little attention to their children's needs at different stages of development. Members have suggested that the Administration should actively promote whole-person development and provide more diversified career pathways to encourage students to choose suitable subjects according to their interests and abilities, and to make early planning for their future employment.

20. The Administration has advised that EDB has reminded schools to review their timetables and make proper arrangements in accordance with the guidelines to ensure that students have sufficient rest and activity time to interact with teachers and other students. EDB has also requested schools to review the amount of homework for students and the arrangements for test assessments so as to formulate suitable homework policy. At present, class teacher periods are provided in the schedules of lessons for primary and secondary students. Schools may make good use of class teacher periods for implementing life planning education and assist students in exploring their personal interests and abilities. Schools will continue to serve as a platform of EDB to enable parents to understand and support students in developing multiple pathways, and to actively promote life planning education. EDB has launched the senior secondary applied learning courses with recognized qualifications covering different areas of study (e.g. nursing, service industries, etc.) to cater for students' diverse learning and development needs, and to enable them to develop more diversified pathways for further studies and employment. In addition, in response to the "Belt and Road" Initiative, the development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, and the establishment of Hong Kong's "eight centres" positioning in the National 14th Five-Year Plan, HYAB has launched different exchange/internship programmes to help young people seize the development opportunities and explore multiple pathways.

Work progress of the Committee on Home-School Cooperation

21. The Subcommittee notes that, since its establishment in 1993, CHSC has been advising EDB, other government departments and NGOs on ways to promote parental involvement in education; actively promoting home-school cooperation and parent education at the territory-wide, district and

school levels; striving to forge a partnership between parents and schools; and developing an active attitude in parents and teachers towards home-school cooperation and parent education.

Strategies for promoting home-school cooperation and parent education

22. The Subcommittee notes that EDB has introduced various measures starting from the 2019-2020 school year to encourage PTAs and FPTAs to organize more home-school cooperation and parent education activities at the school and district levels. These measures include increasing the subsidy amount for the ceilings of the Subsidy for Home-School Cooperation Activities and the Subsidy for Joint Home-School Cooperation Project for PTAs of schools; raising the cap on the number of subsidized activities that each FPTA can apply for; introducing the Subsidy for Joint Cross-district Parent Activities, and so on. Also, the Administration will continue to provide subsidies for PTAs and FPTAs through CHSC, so as to encourage them to organize more programmes and activities aiming at deepening home-school cooperation and enhancing parent education.

23. Members have suggested that the Administration should consider raising the cap on the number of activities eligible for relevant subsidies and organizing more diversified activities to attract participation of parents and children from different groups, such as by organizing various types of parent-child activities (e.g. sports, arts and cultural activities) through schools or CHSC to enhance parent-child experience and foster good parent-child relationship; and reserving some participating places or tickets of large-scale events for use in organizing parent-child activities. Given that some parents seldom participate in home-school cooperation activities and parent education programmes/activities, members have suggested making good use of different social media platforms to disseminate information on parent education and promote home-school cooperation.

24. The Administration has advised that, in the 2022-2023 school year, approval was granted for subsidizing around 3 620 home-school cooperation/parent education activities, including, among others, about 900 activities promoting home-school cooperation and communication (seminars, workshops, tours, fun days and so on) and over 1 000 activities of other types (film sharing sessions, parent-child reading programmes, joint school drawing competitions and so on). The Administration will continue to support schools in organizing diversified activities to promote parent-child relationships; and will consider strengthening cooperation with organizers of major events, with a view to inviting parents and their children to attend parent-child activities through different channels, such as CHSC, FPTAs and the network of schools. The Administration will also continue to

encourage schools to disseminate relevant information to parents by making good use of the existing e-resources (e.g. school mobile applications and the “Smart Parent Net” of EDB, etc.). Besides, the Administration will also provide targeted training or support for parents of students with different needs (e.g. non-Chinese speaking students and children with special educational needs).

Support measures to promote mental wellness of students

25. The Subcommittee notes that the Administration and CHSC have all along been working for enhancing parental support to students (e.g. by organizing parent talks on the topics of mental health of students and parent education), thereby enabling parents to better understand the mental health needs of students. In view of the recent rising trend of student suicide, members have expressed concern about the enormous study pressure faced by students and enquired about the new measures put in place by the Administration to promote mental health among students. Members have also suggested that the Administration should include the prevention of student suicide as one of the key areas of work in implementing home-school cooperation and parent education.

26. The Administration has advised that EDB launched the “Spread the Love, Care and Shine” Campaign in November 2023 to promote the creation of a caring school culture, and provided PTAs of publicly-funded primary and secondary schools with additional one-off grants in December 2023 to encourage collaboration between schools and PTAs in organizing activities and programmes relating to promotion of the mental health of students and parents. To address the mental health issues of students, the Administration has implemented the Three-Tier School-based Emergency Mechanism through cross-departmental collaboration of HHB, EDB and SWD, and has maintained communication with the sector on the operation of the Mechanism since then. EDB has requested schools to review school assessments, tests and examinations, and timetable arrangement, and arrange additional physical activities in schools, with a view to ensuring that students have sufficient rest time and space for healthy activities. HYAB has also organized various activities to foster positive thinking among young people and help them develop resilience.

Subjects for research and surveys to be conducted by the Committee on Home-School Cooperation

27. Members note that CHSC will consider commissioning an external organization to conduct research study on the effectiveness of PTAs in promoting home-school cooperation and parent education, with a view to

identifying good practices in local schools and other regions/countries for sharing with schools. Members have suggested that CHSC may also carry out surveys on the parents' awareness of issues such as children's needs at different stages of development and parenting skills, and conduct research on the participation in parent education activities. In response to members' suggestions, the Administration has advised that EDB and CHSC have plans to commission tertiary institutions to conduct research and surveys on various subjects relating to family education and parent education, and, among which, the subjects under consideration include consultative study on home-school communication and the participation in parent education activities.

Provision of welfare services for children and families

28. The Subcommittee notes that the Administration is committed to preserving and strengthening families through promotion of family harmony and support for families which are unable to properly perform their functions. At present, welfare services for children and families are mainly provided by 65 Integrated Family Service Centres ("IFSCs"), two Integrated Services Centres ("ISCs"), five SCSCs and 21 Family Life Education Units operated by SWD or NGOs subvented by SWD. To support parents in taking care of their children, the Government also subsidizes NGOs to provide a variety of day child care services, including Child Care Centre ("CCC") services, Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project ("NSCCP") and After School Care Programme to meet the different needs of parents and children.

Service positioning of Specialized Co-parenting Support Centres

29. The Subcommittee notes that IFSCs/ISCs currently provide a spectrum of preventive, supportive and remedial family services, which include counselling, family life education and parent-child activities to provide parents with parenting skills and help them strengthen parent-child relationship. Additional resources were also allocated in 2019 to set up an SCSC for each of the five clusters in Hong Kong to provide one-stop services for separated/divorcing/divorced parents and their children in a bid to, among others, assist separated/divorced parents in carrying out parental responsibilities under the "child-focused" principle.

30. Members also note that SCSCs provide services such as co-parenting counselling, parenting coordination service, parenting groups or programmes and child contact service, and provide support to children affected by parental separation/divorce and family change. Apart from providing support to divorced families, SCSCs also carry out publicity and

education work for the public on the discharge of parental responsibility and co-parenting. In view of the large number of family cases handled by some IFSCs/ISCs, members have advised the Administration to consider having SCSCs assist in processing some family cases of IFSCs/ISCs to achieve the effect of diversion, and advised SCSCs to shoulder more work on parenting support and parent education and provide such services for family members of non-divorced families.

Training and service quality of home-based child carers

31. The Subcommittee notes that the Administration has increased the incentive payment for home-based child carers (“HCCs”) and planned to increase the number of service places to step up assisting working families in childbearing.⁶ In view of the recent suspected child abuse incidents involving HCCs, some members have expressed concern about the quality of home-based child care service and the measures to ensure that HCCs receive proper training and supervision.

32. The Administration has advised that at present, various types of day child care services are provided, including CCC services under the charge of professionals (such as social workers and child care workers), and home-based child care services aim to provide flexible day child care services at the neighbourhood level. The Administration attaches great importance to the quality of home-based child care services and plans to introduce a series of measures to strengthen the training of HCCs and enhance the effectiveness of service monitoring.

Promoting family-friendly employment practices

33. Given that long working hours often have a negative impact on family life, the Subcommittee is concerned about the number of employers currently implementing FFEPs, and urges the Administration to explore relevant family-friendly policies (such as standard working hours and parental leave) and to adopt a gradual approach in promoting FFEPs by, for example, taking the lead in piloting family-friendly practices such as providing parental leave and flexible working hours for civil servants/government employees, so as to facilitate parents’ attendance at family-related activities (such as the first school day, parents meeting day, and parent education programmes) and

⁶ Starting from April 2024, the rate of incentive payment for HCCs of infants and young children aged 0-3 or children with special learning needs has been increased to \$60 per hour. For carers of children aged 3-9, the rate has been increased to \$40 per hour. From the fourth quarter of 2024, the number of service places will be doubled to about 2 000, with the estimated number of beneficiaries to be doubled to 20 000.

fulfilment of parental responsibilities. In addition, members have advised the Administration to consider providing additional boarding services in primary and secondary schools to support some needy families (e.g. working families or single-parent families), so as to alleviate the burden of parents in taking care of their children on a daily basis.

34. The Administration has advised that LD has been encouraging employers to adopt “employee-oriented” good human resource management measures and implement FFEPS, including flexible work arrangements, and additional leave benefit to cater for family needs. The measures implemented in recent years include extending the duration of statutory maternity leave, statutory paternity leave and statutory holidays for employees. The Administration will review the situation from time to time, take into full consideration the socio-economic situation and balance the concerns of both employers and employees, with a view to improving employees’ rights and benefits in a gradual and orderly manner. The Good Employer Charter 2024 (“GEC 2024”) introduced by LD features the theme of “Supportive Family-friendly Good Employer”, and encourages employers to adopt employee-oriented FFEPS.⁷ LD has also commissioned the Census and Statistics Department to conduct a Thematic Household Survey on employee benefits, the key findings of which are expected to be released in early 2025. In addition, HYAB has been supporting the Family Council in promoting and encouraging employers to adopt FFEPS. The Family Council has rolled out a new publicity campaign in 2023-2024, which includes promotional videos and short radio dramas, to introduce various types of FFEPS to the public. The Administration and the Family Council will launch different types of projects and programmes in a timely manner, taking into account relevant factors such as social needs and resource allocation, so as to take forward the work in this regard.

Family health and student health services

35. The Subcommittee notes that the Family Health Service and Student Health Service under DH provide a number of services related to family education. Among which, Maternal and Child Health Centres (“MCHCs”) provide health promotion and disease prevention services for babies and children from birth to five years and anticipatory guidance on childcare and parenting for parents and caregivers, and Student Health Service Centres (“SHSCs”) provide comprehensive, promotive and preventive health

⁷ In submitting the application, the signatories are required to undertake to adopt good human resource management practices in the following four major areas: employment practices to care for employees; practices to promote work-family/work-life balance; employee benefits that are better than statutory requirements; and good communication with employees or their organization(s).

programme known as Adolescent Health Programme for primary and secondary school students according to their needs at various stages of development.

Annual health assessment

36. Members notes that DH provides free annual health assessment service for students, covering assessments of their physical health, mental health, cognitive development, etc. Members have expressed concern about the attendance of students to the annual health assessment, as well as the fact that some parents/students may become less willing to receive the assessment since some of the assessments are perhaps ineffective in assessing the physical and mental health conditions of students (for example, visual acuity test does not include the assessment of the severity of myopia, and the assessment of students' mental health conducted through questionnaires may not reflect the actual situation accurately). Members have urged the Administration to review the service scope of the annual health assessment, with a view to enhancing its effectiveness.

37. The Administration has advised that before the COVID-19 epidemic, more than 400 000 students received annual health assessment every year. In spite of the epidemic, 330 000 students received assessment in the 2022-2023 school year. At present, DH provides free school bus service for students and their parents/guardians from schools to SHSCs, and sends mobile phone messages to remind students to attend annual health assessment. The annual health assessment aims to timely detect health problems of students (e.g. obesity, failing the visual acuity test, psychological and behavioural problems), and refer students in need to the relevant specialists for further assessment or treatment. Healthcare personnel will conduct screening and assessment of students' mental health through questionnaire, provide immediate professional advice, counselling and health information on the students' conditions based on the questionnaire if necessary, and make referrals for the relevant cases for follow-up. The Administration will continuously review and take appropriate measures to improve the attendance, and adjust the service scope if necessary.

Health problems found among students

38. Members are concerned about the common health problems found among students in recent years (e.g. worsening vision, overweight/obesity and mental health problems), and have urged the Administration to step up publicity and education work and organize different parent-child activities (e.g. health talks, sports events, etc.) in collaboration with relevant units such as schools and the Leisure and Cultural Services Department ("LCSD") to

encourage parents and children to address their health problems on the one hand, and promote family education on the other hand.

39. According to the Administration, school suspension during the COVID-19 epidemic significantly reduced the opportunities for students to engage in outdoor physical activities and increased their screen time, thereby increasing the risk of overweight/obesity and worsening vision. The Administration has all along been disseminating the relevant health information to students through various channels, such as the Internet and social media; and plans to proactively promote the Whole School Health Programme (“WSHP”) with the objective of “Whole School, Whole Health” to strengthen student health promotion in school settings, with a view to raising awareness among students of health issues in such aspects as weight, visual and mental health, and provide them with appropriate support. The Administration has taken note of members’ views and will strengthen collaboration among the relevant B/Ds as needed in formulating work plans for student health.

Family health service

40. Taking note of the family education programmes (e.g. the Positive Parenting Programme (“the Triple P Programme”) currently provided by Family Health Service under DH, members have suggested that the Administration should actively promote such programmes to parents. Given that the Triple P Programme is a programme designed by the University of Queensland, Australia, members have suggested that consideration should be given to adapting or redesigning the relevant programme in the light of the culture of local Chinese community. Moreover, members are concerned about the breastfeeding support provided for pregnant women/mothers of newborn babies by the Administration, and have urged the Administration to look into how the relevant information can be disseminated (such as considering a wider use of electronic means for dissemination of information).

41. The Administration has advised that it will keep reviewing the effectiveness of the Triple P Programme under DH, and step up the relevant promotion efforts accordingly. Regarding support for breastfeeding, MCHCs operated by Family Health Service of DH provide professional support, and pregnant women/mothers of newborn babies in need of assistance may call the Breastfeeding Hotline set up by DH. DH has also launched the Breastfeeding Peer Support Service to facilitate mutual assistance between mothers, thereby offering support and encouragement to breastfeeding mothers who need help. Also, a key area of work of the

Administration in the future is to enhance the professional support to breastfeeding families.

Way forward for implementing policies to promote family education

42. The Subcommittee notes that the Administration will continue to take forward the work in family education, including the following initiatives launched recently.

Committed to cultivating a caring and pro-family culture

43. The Family Council will adopt “Family Values: Our Cherished Legacy” as the theme of its 2024-2025 publicity campaign with the aim of promoting traditional family values and virtues among families (including those of younger generations). HYAB and the Family Council will launch a new five-year Funding Scheme on the Promotion of Family Education in the latter half of 2024 to support community projects promoting family education, with a view to further promoting family values for enhancing family well-being and social harmony. The amount of funding of the new scheme is \$8 million per year. Projects funded by the new scheme may cover education for new parents, parent-child education, maintaining of family relationship and other marriage-related subjects. It is expected that about 8 to 10 projects will be funded under the new scheme each year, with details to be announced in due course.

44. Members have suggested that in implementing the above family education promotion schemes, the Administration may, other than providing funding support to school sponsoring bodies (“SSBs”) or NGOs providing family services, consider providing funding support to organizations (e.g. district groups, trade union organizations, women’s groups, etc.) with a stronger district network and interested in promoting family education, with a view to reaching out to more community groups (e.g. elderly male singletons) through their community networks. Members also hope that the Administration will give early consideration to increasing resource allocation for the scheme to expand its scale.

Promoting family education and parent education, and fostering home-school cooperation

45. EDB has commissioned post-secondary institutions to develop resource packages in phases based on the Curriculum Frameworks on Parent

Education⁸ to facilitate the continuous promotion of school-based parent education by relevant stakeholders (such as teachers, school social workers and guidance personnel). Starting from the 2023-2024 school year, EDB has set up the Home-School Cooperation Teacher Professional Network. Each publicly-funded primary or secondary school nominates one teacher to join the network and serve as a bridge between the school and EDB in promoting home-school cooperation and parent education, with a view to facilitating schools' and teachers' access to the latest information on activities and resources through electronic communications.

46. Members have called on the Administration to conduct more proactive publicity and promotion among parents after the launch of the relevant parent education resource packages. Members have suggested that in promoting parent education, the Administration can take the initiative to liaise and cooperate with community persons familiar with family education as well as retired school principals or experienced educators. Members have also suggested that consideration be given to providing parent education programmes at different levels according to parents' preference and/or age groups, proactively identifying parents under excessive parenting stress and providing them with appropriate assistance, as well as further sharing the experience of service units which have been effective in implementing family education (e.g. "Parent School" of Yuen Long Town Hall Family Life Education Unit).

Providing children and families in need with welfare services

47. In the 2023 Policy Address, a series of measures have been announced to further strengthen support for working families in childbearing.⁹ The Government rolled out a School-based After School Care Service Scheme in the 2023-2024 school year to allow primary students in need (especially those from single-parent families) to stay after school to receive care and learning support. The Administration will review the relevant social welfare services from time to time with a view to keeping them abreast of the times and providing appropriate and timely support to families in need.

⁸ The Curriculum Frameworks on Parent Education developed for kindergartens, primary schools and secondary schools have been launched in 2021, 2022 and 2024, respectively.

⁹ Such measures include increasing CCC places, extending the After School Care Programme for Pre-primary Children to the entire Hong Kong, raising the CCC Parent Subsidy from a maximum of \$600 to \$1,000 per month, and strengthening the home based child care service under NSCCP. In addition, the Government has increased the rates of the household and child allowances under the Working Family Allowance ("WFA") Scheme by 15% across the board with effect from April 2024, benefiting all households receiving WFA.

Promoting family-friendly employment practices

48. LD has launched GEC 2024 featuring the theme of “Supportive Family-friendly Good Employer”, and the list of signatories of GEC 2024 will be announced in the third quarter of 2024. In 2024-2025, the Family Council will continue to produce relevant promotional videos on various FFEPs and broadcast radio interviews with employers implementing various FFEPs in RTHK.

Health services for families and students

49. DH will continue to actively enhance the services to promote children’s and women’s health. The key areas of work in the future include starting the accreditation procedures for the remaining 25 MCHCs as Baby-friendly healthcare facilities to enhance professional support for breastfeeding families, and proactively implementing WSHP modelled on the Health Promoting School Framework among local primary and secondary schools to make the school campus a healthy environment for living, learning and working.

Recommendations

50. The Subcommittee recommends that the Administration should:
- (a) given that the existing policy initiatives relating to family education are scattered among various B/Ds, explore ways to better coordinate different B/Ds, with a view to implementing parent education in a more systematic manner;
 - (b) draw reference from the experiences of the country and other regions in promoting family education, and enhance family-related policy researches, with a view to putting forward operational policy initiatives;
 - (c) given that many parents have misunderstanding or little knowledge about family education, review the effectiveness of the current implementation of family education, and conduct surveys and researches on relevant topics (e.g. parents’ knowledge of family education and participation in parent education activities);
 - (d) consolidate resources and information relating to family education (including positive education and values education)

for easy access by parents, and make good use of social platforms to disseminate such information and step up publicity and promotion;

- (e) reach out to parents through channels other than that of schools, so as to provide parent education for new parents as early as possible, especially in the first three years after the birth of their children, to enhance their parenting knowledge and skills;
- (f) encourage schools to support the organization of mutual help groups by parents of students, consider increasing the types and number of activities eligible for various subsidies relating to home-school cooperation/parent education, and reserve some places or tickets of large-scale events for use in organizing parent-child activities, with a view to offering more diversified activities (such as various kinds of parent-child activities on, among others, sports, arts, cultural activities organized by schools or CHSC) to attract the participation of parents and children of different groups, so as to enhance parent-child experience and foster good parent-child relationship;
- (g) step up promotion of positive education and values education among both parents and teachers, proactively identify parents under excessive parenting stress and provide them with appropriate assistance, and assist schools in identifying parents with parenting problems at an early stage and refer them to professionals for appropriate support services;
- (h) explore ways to promote the participation of parents in parent education programmes/activities (for instance, by making it a requirement for parents applying for the relevant government subsidies that they must participate in such programmes/activities), encourage enterprises/trade unions to organize workplace parent education programmes/activities for their staff during working hours, and step up publicity and promotion of the education programmes/activities organized by NGOs in the community;
- (i) adapt or redesign the existing parent education programmes in the light of the local Chinese community's culture, and make timely adjustments to the contents of parent education (including the inclusion of elements such as national education, national security education and mental health) in response to changes in the social environment;

- (j) consider providing parent education programmes at different levels according to parents' preference and/or age groups, and further sharing relevant experiences of those units which are currently effective in promoting family education;
- (k) in taking forward various projects for promoting family education, consider liaising and bringing on board other bodies and persons interested in promoting family education (e.g. district associations, trade union organizations, women's groups, retired principals and experienced educators), in addition to granting subsidies to SSBs or NGOs providing family services;
- (l) promote more proactively family-friendly policy initiatives, with a view to creating a more favourable social environment for establishing good parent-child relationship, and adopt a gradual approach in promoting FFEs by, for example, taking the lead in piloting family-friendly practices such as providing parental leave and flexible working hours for civil servants/government employees, so as to facilitate parents' attendance at family-related activities and fulfilment of parental responsibilities;
- (m) consider providing additional boarding services in primary and secondary schools to support some needy families (e.g. working families or single-parent families), so as to alleviate the burden of parents in taking care of their children on a daily basis;
- (n) consider having SCSCs assist in processing some family cases of IFSCs/ISCs, and shoulder more work on parenting support and parent education, including providing such services for family members of non-divorced families;
- (o) review the service scope and effectiveness of DH's annual health assessment of students, step up publicity and education work on the more common health problems found among students in recent years (e.g. worsening vision, overweight/obesity and mental health problems), and organize various parent-child activities (e.g. health talks and sports events) in collaboration with relevant units such as schools or LCSD to encourage parents and children to address their health problems on the one hand, and promote family education on the other hand; and

- (p) keep the Panel on Home Affairs, Culture and Sports informed of the progress of work in promoting family education in a timely manner.

Advice sought

51. The Panel on Home Affairs, Culture and Sports is invited to note the deliberations and recommendations of the Subcommittee.

Council Business Divisions
Legislative Council Secretariat
16 July 2024

Panel on Home Affairs, Culture and Sports

Subcommittee on Promoting Family Education

Terms of reference

To study the policy on family education in Hong Kong and the promotion of related measures, including the upbringing responsibility of parents and other guardians for minors, the promotion of educational support measures from different government departments and the community to support families in instilling correct values in minors, and measures that can strengthen close and harmonious family relationships, and to follow up on the work of the Family Council and make timely recommendations.

Panel on Home Affairs, Culture and Sports

Subcommittee on Promoting Family Education

Membership list

Chairman Hon LUK Chung-hung, JP

Members Hon Vincent CHENG Wing-shun, MH, JP
Hon CHAN Hoi-yan
Hon JoePHY CHAN Wing-yan
Revd Canon Hon Peter Douglas KOON Ho-ming, BBS, JP

(Total : 5 members)

Clerk Mr Richard WONG

Legal Adviser Ms Clara WONG

Panel on Home Affairs, Culture and Sports

Subcommittee on Promoting Family Education

List of deputations/individuals which/who have given oral representation to the Subcommittee

1. Whole Person Education Foundation Limited
2. Mrs Linda KUNG
3. Federation of Parent-Teacher Associations of the Sai Kung District
4. Federation of Parent-Teacher Association, Kowloon City District
5. Tsuen Wan District Parent Teacher Association Federation Limited
6. Miss Daisy LAU Wing-size
7. Yuen Long Town Hall Family Life Education Unit
8. Federation of Parent-Teacher Associations of the Central and Western District Limited
9. Mr LEUNG Ping-kin
10. The Hong Kong Polytechnic University “Jockey Club ‘Promoting Family Resilience’ Project”
11. School of Continuing Education, Hong Kong Baptist University
12. Parent Support Network, The Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups
13. Mr CHAN Tan-tan
14. The Early Years Learning Education
15. Kowloon Women’s Organisations Federation
16. The Joint Council of Parent-Teacher Associations of the Shatin District Ltd.
17. Ms Peacher POON
18. Hong Kong Family Mediation Association
19. Women Affairs Committee, The Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions

List of deputations which have provided written submissions only

1. Chinese Dream Think Tank

2. Women Affairs Committee, The Federation of Hong Kong & Kowloon Labour Unions
3. Hong Kong Men's Association

Panel on Home Affairs, Culture and Sports

Subcommittee on Promoting Family Education

Summary of views expressed by deputations/individuals

Importance of promoting family education

- (a) The family is an important cornerstone of the country. Family education is fundamental to moulding people's manners and morals, and family culture is the basis for building good social atmosphere;
- (b) Promoting family education is conducive to enhancing the mental and psychological health of both parents and children, which plays an important role in creating happy families, while contributing to the prosperity and stability of society;
- (c) By participating in evidence-based parent education programmes, parents can acquire important knowledge, skills and attitudes in parenting, and raise their children in an enjoyable, healthy and balanced manner;

Current situation and challenges of family education

- (d) Hong Kong people tend to be more individualistic, and their ethical relations and moral sense are obviously weaker than those in the past. Moreover, young people are becoming less concerned about moral concepts in relation to family and respect for the elderly;
- (e) In Hong Kong, while families attach great importance to nurturing their children's habits and life skills, they do not pay enough attention to their children's physical and mental health, as well as enhancing their cultural accomplishments and sense of belonging to the country;
- (f) Parents in Hong Kong are busy at work and have little time to communicate with their children. As such, they may have no awareness at all of the problems encountered by their children. This, coupled with the heavy academic pressure in Hong Kong, may easily lead to parent-child conflicts and worsen parent-child relationship;
- (g) Many parents lack the skills and knowledge to educate their children and have little awareness of the information and resources available in the community for family education;

- (h) For many people, their understanding of family education is still limited to teaching parents how to nurture their children, yet no consideration is given to the mental and psychological health of the parents themselves. Even if parents have the knowledge to nurture their children, they can hardly put their knowledge to good use if they themselves suffer from mental and psychological problems;
- (i) Given the relatively high proportion of divorced and remarried families in Hong Kong as well as the trend of an ageing population, the functions of family have been undermined, and the family care system has been put under tremendous pressure;
- (j) Parents of students with special education needs (“SEN”) have greater difficulties in educating their children and hence, have greater emotional stress (especially during long holidays or when their children do not need to go to school);
- (k) Due to factors such as cultural difference and language barrier, ethnic minority and new arrival families face many challenges in parenting, and they have greater difficulty in obtaining information on education;

Way forward in promoting family education

- (l) The Government should encourage schools, enterprises and even the community as a whole to attach greater importance to family education, while promoting cross-sectoral cooperation and community-wide participation, with a view to establishing a network to support the different needs of families so that parents can obtain timely information and resources at different stages of their children’s development through different channels;
- (m) The Government can provide parent training courses (e.g. on parenting skills, psychological development of adolescents, family communication strategies, etc.) for free or at a low cost. It can also encourage collaboration between schools and community centres to provide parent education resources (including books, online courses, seminars, workshops, etc.) and set up community support networks and social media groups, so as to enable parents to learn from each other and share their experiences;

- (n) The Government may consider implementing evidence-based localized parent education in a systematic manner, taking into account the age groups of parents and children as well as family circumstances (including couples planning to have children, new parents, inter-generational families, divorced families, remarried families, etc.);
- (o) Taking into account the culture, ethnicity, socio-economic background, gender, family structure, carer type, etc. of the target family groups, efforts should be made to arrange different parent education/activity time slots to dovetail with their schedules as far as possible, and make good use of technology to provide online and offline modes of participation to facilitate parents;
- (p) For parents of children with SEN, the Government can specifically provide them with online parent education seminars conducted by professionals and more self-learning programmes to enhance their understanding of their children's SEN. In addition, existing community groups and parent groups can also play a supporting role;
- (q) The Government may consider setting up a task force on "family education and family values" by drawing reference from the collaborative mechanism among schools, families and the community in the Mainland, so as to incorporate elements of "family education and family values" into community education and school education, and establishing an online resource platform for the preservation of traditional Chinese virtues and values;
- (r) The Government may consider setting up family education centres in the districts (e.g. by making use of vacant school premises or the premises of former Mutual Aid Committees) to provide relevant and systematic family education services and provide appropriate support services to families in need;
- (s) Given that the new generation of school children generally spend a lot of time surfing the Internet, the Government should attach greater importance to education on cyber security, especially on how to enable parents and children to effectively filter problematic contents on the Internet;
- (t) The Government should collaborate with the Family Council to conduct more studies on family-friendly employment policies and more proactively promote family-friendly policies (e.g. flexible working hours, family leave, flexible workplace, family activity allowance, etc.) so that parents can spend more time with their children;

- (u) The Government can encourage parents and their children to participate in voluntary services together, thereby allowing the children to discover their interests and abilities. Meanwhile, the parents can accompany and support their children in the process, and give them proper guidance and education;
- (v) The Social Welfare Department and the Education Bureau may consider holding regular meetings with parents or setting up a questionnaire system to enable parents to provide feedback; and
- (w) The Government should regularly review the implementation and effectiveness of various parent education programmes to ensure the proper use of resources. In examining and reviewing different parent education programmes and schemes, the Government may also consider giving recognition to the best practices adopted by certain parent education programmes, so as to encourage the institutions concerned to step up promotion.