

**Family Council**

**Family Perspectives in Policy Formulation**

**PURPOSE**

This paper informs Members of the Government's enhanced approach of including family perspectives in the policy-making process by the introduction of the following new measures with effect from 1 April 2013 –

- (a) the assessment of family implications becomes a mandatory requirement in all policy submissions and Legislative Council (LegCo) briefs; and
- (b) Heads of Bureaux are encouraged to consult the Family Council (the Council) on new policies which carry family implications.

**EXISTING ARRANGEMENTS**

2. In 2009, the Home Affairs Bureau (HAB), as the Secretariat of the Family Council, introduced general guidelines on the inclusion of family perspectives as a factor in policy formulation for bureaux and departments (B/Ds) to consider on a voluntary basis. Under this approach, B/Ds have, by and large, examined and taken family perspectives into account in the policy formulation process which has been a good starting point. Some B/Ds have also consulted or briefed the Council on their policy which might have family perspectives. For example, the Security Bureau has consulted the Council on trial scheme on "School Drug Testing" in Tai Po, whereas the Food and Health Bureau has presented to the Council the arrangement for the use of obstetric services by non-local women. In the past, HAB, the Education Bureau, the Labour and Welfare Bureau as well as the Transport and Housing Bureau have also been

invited to present to the Council efforts they have made in helping to foster a pro-family environment in their respective areas of work.

## **MANDATORY ASSESSMENT OF FAMILY IMPLICATIONS**

3. Noting that attempts to build in an assessment of family impact are still relatively new in overseas countries, the current practice introduced since 2009 whereby B/Ds are asked to consider family perspectives on a voluntary basis has been a good starting point. However, we consider there is room for a more vigorous approach. Hence, with effect from 1 April 2013, the assessment of family perspective implications will become a mandatory and integral part of the decision-making process within the Government. As the assessment will also be made public in LegCo briefs, public discussion will be enriched and better informed with family perspectives and considerations.

4. B/Ds will be invited to consider if their policies have given proper regard to the family core values and also the impact on family's structure and functions as identified by the Council under the following dimensions –

### Love and Care:

- reinforcing the families and relationship amongst family members (e.g. fostering marital relationships; enhancing parental competence and knowledge and commitment necessary for raising children; enhancing inter-generational relationships)
- fostering mutual care of family members towards one another, including those with special needs
- protecting family members from abuse, violence or neglect

### Respect and Responsibilities

- respecting the rights of family members
- enforcing family members' obligations to provide support, financial or otherwise, to one another

- recognizing the reciprocal influence of family needs on individual needs and vice versa

### Communication and Harmony

- facilitating communication amongst family members
- enabling family members to better balance work, family and community commitments
- strengthening the connection to the wider kin and community/neighbourhood networks

5. We recognise that public policies may entail some degree of conflicting objectives and constraints, and that a family perspective to policy formulation does not mean simply giving the highest priority to the family. The most essential aspect is to consider the policy's potential consequences on the family. If Heads of Bureaux consider that there are overriding policy considerations justifying recommendations which may not be conducive to the family core values, these considerations should be reflected in the relevant papers and submissions.

### **CONSULTATION WITH THE FAMILY COUNCIL**

6. B/Ds are also encouraged to consult the Council on new policies which carry family implications. B/Ds are required to suitably reflect the views of the Council in the assessment of the family implications during the consultation process. The Council Secretariat will keep the Council engaged to ensure that it will be able to support the more frequent consultation to be initiated by B/Ds.

### **DEFINITION OF FAMILY**

7. As regards the definition of "family", we will not attempt a strict definition, but continue to adopt a common sense understanding of the concept of family. Such a concept may be defined primarily with reference to relationships that pertain to or arise from blood, marriage, adoption or affinity, all of which are regulated by law or customs. It is

important that relevant government policies should not contravene the Family Status Discrimination Ordinance (Cap.527) (the Ordinance). Under the Ordinance, “immediate family member”, in relation to a person, means “a person who is related to the person by blood, marriage, adoption or affinity”.

## **FAMILY IMPLICATIONS**

8. Family-related policies cut across the portfolios of different B/Ds, and these policies together help address the multifarious needs of families. The proposal of implementing a holistic family-oriented approach will assist B/Ds to examine and evaluate their policy proposals from the perspective of family core values against other policy objectives in a more systematic and coherent manner. In the long run, it will help build a pro-family environment in the community which is in line with the objectives of our family policy.

## **ADVICE SOUGHT**

9. Members are invited to note the new initiatives of including family perspectives in the policy-making process.

**Family Council Secretariat  
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