

**For meeting on  
4 July 2011**

**Paper FC 9/2011**

## **Family Council**

### **Family Perspectives in the Policies of the Labour and Welfare Bureau**

#### **Introduction**

As reported to Members at the meeting held on 19 March 2009 vide Paper FC 2/2009, the Government is committed to featuring the family perspective as an important consideration in the policy making process. This paper briefs Members on how the family perspective has been taken into consideration in the formulation of social welfare and labour policies under the purview of the Labour and Welfare Bureau (LWB).

#### **Social Welfare Policies**

2. The Government believes that an effective family support network and harmonious family relationships can help individuals prevent and deal with their personal problems. Our welfare policies therefore seek to strengthen and support the family, and provide assistance to those whose needs cannot be adequately met from within the family. We have been mindful not to replace the functions of the family with our welfare services.

3. Under such a policy direction, the Social Welfare Department (SWD) provides a wide range of welfare services which contribute to the building of an effective family support network within society. Examples of such welfare services are given in the ensuing paragraphs.

#### *Family welfare services*

4. To cater for the needs of different families, SWD has developed a comprehensive range of family welfare services with preventive, supportive or remedial functions. It has set up an extensive network of 61 Integrated Family Service Centres (IFSCs) over the territory as the backbone of its family welfare services. Each IFSC provides, in a one-stop manner, a continuum of preventive, supportive and remedial services under the

direction of “child-centred, family-focused and community-based” within the community of service users. Services provided by IFSCs include enquiry service, family life education, parent-child activities, mutual support groups, outreaching service, counselling and referral service for individuals and families in need, etc..

5. To ensure that the IFSC service mode can meet the changing needs of families in Hong Kong, SWD commissioned the University of Hong Kong (HKU) to conduct a Review on the Implementation of the IFSC Service Mode (the Review) in October 2008. The Review was completed in May 2010. The HKU consultant concluded that the IFSC service mode had received general support from stakeholders and should continue to be adopted for publicly-funded family services in Hong Kong. They also recommended that specific target service groups such as single parents, new arrivals, ethnic minorities and deprived families should continue to be served by IFSCs under the integrated service mode in their own communities.

6. Violence among family members can cause severe damage to the functions of a family as well as the physical and mental well-being of family members. As such, the Government has allocated additional resources and stepped up preventive, supportive and professional services for the persons and families-in-need in recent years. These services include the launch of the Batterer Intervention Programme and Anti-Violence Programme to change abusers’ behaviours and attitude, review of domestic violence handling procedures by various frontline professionals concerned, promotion of inter-disciplinary collaboration in handling domestic violence cases, as well as enhanced public education and publicity campaign in preventing domestic violence, etc..

#### *Child care services and child protection*

7. It is the responsibility of parents to take care of their children. SWD has launched promotional and educational activities to remind parents of the need for them to take their parental responsibility seriously and to avoid leaving their children unattended at home. To support parents who cannot take care of their children temporarily because of work or other reasons, SWD has been subsidising non-governmental organisations to provide a variety of child care services, and has strived to enhance the flexibility of the services. Apart from the regular and occasional care services provided through independent child care centres and kindergarten-cum-child care

centres, SWD has also proactively introduced new child care services which are more flexible in both operational mode and hours and cover evenings, weekends and holidays. These include the three-year pilot Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project (NSCCP) launched in October 2008, which aims to provide needy parents with more flexible child care services in addition to the regular services, and, at the same time, fostering mutual help and care in the community. After reviewing the operation of the NSCCP, the Government has decided to regularise the NSCCP and extend its coverage to all 18 districts within 2011.

### *Elderly services*

8. Elders cherish the support of their families. Most of them prefer ageing in a familiar environment where they can continue to receive care and support from their family members. Hence, one of the underlying principles of the Government's elderly care policy is to promote ageing in place.

9. To this end, the Government provides a range of subsidised centre-based and home-based community care services to elders, covering personal care, basic and special nursing care, rehabilitation exercise, meals and escort, etc.. As of March 2011, about 25 700 elders were using our subsidised community care services.

10. Recognising that family carers play an important role in supporting elders who age in place, the Government also provides them with various types of support and services through the 159 elderly centres in the territory, including counselling and training, provision of information, assistance in forming carers' mutual-assistance groups, loan and demonstration of rehabilitation equipment, etc.. In addition, all subvented residential care homes for the elderly and day care centres provide respite residential or day care services for elders in need.

11. We hope these services can help elders age in place in the company of family members who are empowered to discharge their family responsibilities with ease.

12. Regular services are complemented by special programmes which seek to further strengthen the support for elders and their family carers. Recent examples include the District-based Scheme on Carer Training which

aims at enhancing carers' skills and knowledge in elderly care; the Integrated Discharge Support Programme for Elderly Patients which provides one-stop support services for elders discharged from the hospitals as well as training and support to their carers; and the Pilot Scheme on Home Care Services for Frail Elders which provides tailor-made intensive home care services for frail elders who are staying at home and waiting for subsidised nursing home places.

### *Social security*

13. The Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme helps families which cannot support themselves financially meet their basic needs. It operates on a household basis to encourage mutual help and sharing of resources among family members. It also recognises the special needs of some family members, notably single parents and family carers, through giving them higher levels of assistance (as reflected in the standard rates which are some 20% higher than those for other able-bodied recipients, and the Single Parent Supplement of \$265 per month), setting more relaxed work requirements for them and discounting in some cases their residential property under the means test<sup>note</sup>.

14. Elders and persons with severe disabilities who are not on CSSA may apply for Old Age Allowance or Disability Allowance under the Social Security Allowance Scheme. These allowances may also help families shoulder the responsibility of caring for family members who have special needs arising from old age or severe disabilities.

### **Labour Policies**

15. The Government believes that the adoption of Family Friendly Employment Practices (FFEP) can help employees maintain a better balance between work and family commitments, thereby fostering the building of a more effective family support network in the community. As one of the

<sup>note</sup> The Director of Social Welfare may, at his discretion, allow single parents with young children to continue to receive CSSA without disposing of their residential property, subject to (i) the youngest child in the family is below 15; and (ii) the total value of the assets held by the family, including the net value of the owner-occupied residential property, is insufficient to meet the family's maintenance for 10 years according to CSSA standards.

facilitators in promoting FFEP, the Labour Department (LD) has launched a wide range of publicity and promotional activities on FFEP in recent years, which include –

- (a) Promoting FFEP through the network of 18 Human Resources Managers Clubs of different trades and industries and the nine industry-based Tripartite Committees formed by LD. Regular meetings and sharing sessions are conducted to discuss, among others, the adoption and implementation of various good people management practices including FFEP;
- (b) Staging roving exhibitions in different locations to promote, among others, public understanding of FFEP;
- (c) Publishing a booklet on good people management and FFEP in 2009 to showcase exemplary practices;
- (d) Organising a large-scale seminar on FFEP and other good people management measures in 2009 for representatives of employer and employee organisations, employers and human resources practitioners;
- (e) Producing a video to introduce different types and forms of FFEP, with real-life examples to dispel common misconceptions held by employers and the general public. DVDs of the video have been widely distributed to various stakeholders and the public since 2010; and
- (f) Producing a video for mass media broadcasting in public transport in February 2011.

### **Advice Sought**

16. Members are invited to note how the family perspective has been taken into consideration in the formulation of social welfare and labour policies.

**Labour and Welfare Bureau  
May 2011**