

Family Council

Progress of Work of the Family Council

PURPOSE

At the meeting of the Legislative Council Panel on Welfare Services on 12 March 2012, the Administration was requested to provide a brief account of the work progress of the Family Council (the Council) since its establishment in December 2007. This paper aims to provide a brief review of the Council's major work in the past five years.

BACKGROUND

2. Arising from the recommendation in the 2006-07 Policy Address, the Council was set up on 1 December 2007. The terms of reference and membership (from 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2013) of the Council are at **Annexes A and B**.

3. Chaired by the Chief Secretary for Administration, the Council serves as an advisory body to the Government by providing a cross-sector and cross-bureau platform to study and address family related problems with a view to providing high-level steer and advice, and fostering effective coordination and collaboration. Provision of services to support families is financed and delivered by different relevant service providers and delivery agents.

4. To facilitate the Council to conduct more in-depth deliberations, three Subcommittees have been set up under the Council on issues related to promotion of family core values, family support and family education.

THE COUNCIL'S MAJOR WORK AND DELIVERABLES

5. The major work and deliverables of the Council since its establishment in 2007 are highlighted in the ensuing paragraphs.

Identification and promotion of family core values

6. The Council recognized that family is the cornerstone for social harmony and the basic unit for community building. At its meeting held on 28 March 2008, the Council identified the following family core values which are the key elements to a healthy and happy family life, namely “Love and Care”, “Respect and Responsibility” and “Communication and Harmony”. These core values have captured the essence of the more commonly perceived concepts about family values and are well-balanced for promotion and publicity purposes. On the basis of these core values, the Council has devised a series of publicity programmes for promulgation to members of the public.

Publicity programmes and the Happy Family Campaign

7. To promote family core values, the Council organized a series of publicity programmes as well as a territory-wide “Happy Family Campaign” (the Campaign) in 2009. Leveraging on the social awareness already established, the territory-wide Campaign aimed at reinforcing and further promoting family core values through different forms of collaboration with various stakeholders. The Campaign sought to engage as many stakeholders as possible to disseminate family core values and message through various means and channels.

8. Activities in the Campaign included roving exhibition, book publication, television and radio programmes, experience sharing workshops and other promotional programmes.

Happy Family Info Hub

9. As announced in the 2009-10 Policy Address, the Council has co-ordinated and liaised with bureaux and departments (B/Ds) as well as other relevant stakeholders in setting up a “Happy Family Info Hub” which is a multi-sectoral, inter-disciplinary and interactive support network and platform for exchange of information. It seeks to promote family core values and introduce family education as well as support services for the family, with a view to better addressing the multifarious needs of families and enhancing the role of the

family as a main driver for social harmony. Since its launch in May 2010, the “Happy Family Info Hub” has been very well-received. The average monthly hit rate in 2011 exceeded two million.

Identification of ways to create a pro-family environment

10. Creating a pro-family environment, in particular a pro-family working environment, is conducive to a happy family. At its meeting held on 26 June 2008, the Council deliberated the “family-friendly employment practice” (FFEPs) and “work-life balance”. The Council was of the view that a “cultural” change was needed to change people’s attitude to work and family, and to convince employers that happy employees with less worries for family matters would be conducive to productivity and eventually benefit the companies. Various means to foster cultural change, including legislative means (e.g. introduction of standard working hours, parental leave, paternity leave, etc.), financial incentives (e.g. tax incentives to employers) and administrative means (e.g. introduction of family-friendly measures and support by employers on voluntary basis) were discussed at the meeting. While legislation was not considered the best means to promote FFEPs as different employers and employees had different needs, the Council noted that the Labour Department (LD) would continue to promote FFEPs for their wider adoption in the workplace.

11. Realising that effecting a cultural change involves the collaboration of different stakeholders, the Council has taken proactive steps in fostering a cultural change through active promotion and education. As the business sector is a major partner and stakeholder who, with its huge number of employers and employees, holds the key to promoting family core values and a loving family culture, the Council launched the territory-wide “Family-friendly Employers Award Scheme”(the Scheme) for the first time in 2011 under which business firms were awarded for the family-friendly measures they implemented. With the support of some 1,110 companies which signed up for the Scheme, the Scheme had successfully raised the awareness of the business sector of the importance of FFEPs. In view of its success, the Council agreed that the Scheme should be organised as a regular biennial event and its scope and coverage should also be expanded to the non-business sectors including non-governmental organisations and social enterprises in the future.

12. In consultation with LD, the Council will continue to discuss ways to explore how best to create a more pro-family environment in the society and

further encourage the business community to adopt FFEPs.

Better synergy of work between the Council and the Commission on Youth, the Elderly Commission and the Women's Commission

13. At its meeting held on 23 September 2008, the Council deliberated on the working relationships with the Commission on Youth, the Elderly Commission and the Women's Commission (the Commissions) and agreed on the functional integration approach in which the Commissions would form a close alliance with the Council through cross membership. To facilitate communication and co-operation between the Commissions and the Council, the Chairpersons of the Commissions were appointed as ex officio members of the Council with effect from 1 April 2009.

14. While the three Commissions continue to perform their roles in relevant sector-specific areas, active steps have been taken to encourage collaborations with the Council to create a more pro-family environment.

“Love and Respect Thy Elders” Campaign

15. Recognising that members of different generations and genders can contribute to harmonious family relationships, it would be of benefit to the society in general if members of a family put their strengths and wisdom collaboratively into good use. The collaborative act of sharing could only be sustainable if underpinned by mutual care and a strong sense of filial piety, a powerful cultural value governing the function of family. At its meeting held on 4 July 2011, the Council agreed that the three Commissions should join hands to launch various initiatives under the “Love and Respect Thy Elders” Campaign (LARTE Campaign) (“人人就位 孝愛互傳”運動).

Family perspective in policy formulation

16. In his 2008-09 Policy Address, the Chief Executive pledged the Government's commitment to look into ways to include the family as a factor to consider in its policy-making process. Considerations of family perspective help the Government balance competing needs of families and other priorities in formulating policies. On the basis of the three sets of family core values identified by the Family Council (i.e. “Love and Care”, “Respect and

Responsibilities” and “Communication and Harmony”), B/Ds are encouraged and reminded of the need to consider the family perspective and give proper regard to such values in policy formulation.

17. Besides, the Council has been inviting B/Ds to provide regular reports to the Council on how they have taken family perspective into account in their formulation of policies, programmes, measures and services. B/Ds including the Home Affairs Bureau, the Education Bureau, the Labour and Welfare Bureau as well as the Transport and Housing Bureau have 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.

Family education

18. With a view to strengthening family core values, the Council has stepped up its work on family education through the introduction of a series of family education materials. As a start, a workshop on family education was held on 10 June 2009 to share experience and exchange views on family education amongst stakeholders, including government departments, educational institutes, parent-teacher associations, non-government organizations (NGOs), commercial, professional, media groups and interest groups. The views collected in the workshop gave insights to the Council on how to step up its work on family education.

19. To better utilize the “Happy Family Info Hub” which is a readily accessible platform for family-related materials, the Council further enhanced and enriched its content of family education by producing multi-media materials with positive family messages. In 2011, the Council launched the “18 Handy Tips for Parents” and “Family Therapy Package”. While both packages have been uploaded onto the “Happy Family Info Hub”, the “18 Handy Tips for Parents” was also broadcast widely in “Roadshow”, Integrated Family Service Centres and various clinics under the Department of Health. Both packages received very favourable response. In 2012, the Family Council will launch another series of family education package on “Marital Relationship” and “The Twenty-four Filial Exemplars”.

20. At its meeting held on 17 June 2010, the Council agreed to commission a consultancy study to take stock and examine the effectiveness of the current framework and ongoing services/programmes on family education, and to

identify areas of improvement as well as new initiatives. The Council will be briefed on the findings at its meeting to be held on 7 June 2012.

Research to promote better understanding on matters of family

Thematic researches

21. The 2009-10 Policy Address pointed out that many social problems including youth drug abuse, prostitution and the neglect of elderly and children could be traced back to the family. To effectively tackle these problems from a family perspective, the Council was tasked to conduct research in these aspects, and propose new policy options to alleviate such problems from the family angle. The Central Policy Unit (CPU), as the research arm of the Council, co-ordinated work in these areas. Local universities were invited by the CPU to undertake four research studies. The studies acknowledged that many of the causes of the four social problems could be traced back to the family and proposed a number of family-focused strategies and measures which were deliberated by the Council at its meeting held on 4 July 2011.

22. The Council noted that it is difficult to generalize the causes of these social problems as they are complicated, multi-layered and multi-faceted. This notwithstanding, the research studies confirmed that many of the causes of the social problems could be traced back to the family. To sufficiently and effectively prevent relevant social problems, the Council has recommended three new policy directions, namely “Family Engagement”, “Prevention” and “Community-based Family Support”. At its meeting held on 9 February 2012, the Council further deliberated the measures in support of the new policy directions and considered that government policy initiatives, services and programmes should continue to take into account the interests and well-being of families. To enable B/Ds to have good family awareness and sensitivity in balancing such considerations against other policy objectives and considerations, they would continue to be reminded regularly to include family perspective in their policy formulation. The Council also considered that a cross-sectoral approach in strengthening families was conducive to devising family-focused strategies and measures to tackle the social problems, and undertook to explore how to take them forward.

Family Survey 2011

23. Apart from research work, the Council also conducted family-related surveys. With a view to gathering an updated and empirically-based information on the families in Hong Kong, the Council endorsed the proposal to conduct a survey to collect information and data on the existing situation of families in Hong Kong at its meeting held on 14 March 2011, so that the Family Council would have a better understanding of the current state of the Hong Kong families. The fieldwork survey was completed in September 2011, with a sample size of some 2,000 respondents. The findings of the Survey provided useful information to facilitate the tracking of families in Hong Kong, and also gave an insight into the changes in the Hong Kong families, the challenges they face and the kind of support required.

24. The preliminary findings of the Survey indicated that families in Hong Kong in general functioned quite well and respondents were also satisfied with their family life. However, the results also indicated the stress of raising children and balancing work and family as well as the low awareness and participation rate of family-related programmes organized by the Government and/or NGOs. The CPU was invited to conduct focus groups to probe the findings and implications of the Survey findings. Arising from the focus group discussions, the CPU will formulate action plans for the Council's consideration.

WAY FORWARD

25. As stated in paragraph 3 above, the Council serves as an advisory body to the Government by providing a high-level platform for discussion of major issues arising from the family perspective and strategic directions and priorities on family-related policies. The Council will continue to focus its work / discussion on the following areas -

- (a) promulgate and promote family core values through various territory-wide campaigns and partnerships with relevant stakeholders;
- (b) conduct seminar and research on family issues; and
- (c) work closely with relevant stakeholders to establish a support network, create a pro-family environment, enhance public awareness and promote better understanding as well as foster a culture in cherishing

families as a main driver for social harmony.

ADVICE SOUGHT

26. Members are invited to note the work progress of the Family Council since its establishment in 2007. Subject to Members' comments, the Legislative Council Panel on Welfare Services will be informed of the contents as set out in the paper.

Family Council Secretariat
May 2012

Terms of Reference of the Family Council

- (a) To advocate for cherishing the family as a main driver for social harmony, and to promote a family-based support network to forge closer and harmonious relationships amongst family members;
- (b) To advise the Government on the formulation of policies and strategies for supporting and strengthening the family and on development of related programmes/activities, and to monitor their implementation;
- (c) To advise the Government on the integration of family policies and related programmes across different bureaux and departments for individual age and gender sectors to ensure effective coordination;
- (d) To plan/implement programmes and activities for particular age and/or gender sectors; and rationalize the work of the Elderly Commission, the Women's Commission and the Commission on Youth; and
- (e) To initiate research to promote better understanding of matters related to the family as necessary.

**Membership List of the Family Council
(from 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2013)
(as at 25 May 2012)**

Chairman

Mr LAM Sui-lung, Stephen, Chief Secretary for Administration

Ex officio Members

Mr CHAN Chung-bun, Bunny, Chairperson of the Commission on Youth

Prof CHAN Cheung-ming, Alfred, Chairperson of the Elderly Commission

Mrs LAU KUN Lai-kuen, Stella, Chairperson of the Women's Commission

Non-official Members

Mr CHOW Yung, Robert

Dr KOONG May-kay, Maggie

Ms LAI Fung-yee, Angelina

Ms LAW Suk-kwan, Lilian

Dr LI Sau-hung, Eddy

Dr LEE Wai-yung

Ms LOO Shirley Marie Therese

Dr PANG King-chee

Prof SHEK Tan-lei, Daniel

Dr WONG Chung-kwong

Ms WONG Pik-kiu, Peggy

Prof WONG Po-choi

Ms YAU Oi-yuen, Irene

Mr YIU Tze-leung

Official Members

Mr SUEN Ming-yeung, Michael, Secretary for Education, or his representative

Mr TSANG Tak-sing, Secretary for Home Affairs, or his representative

Mr CHEUNG Kin-chung, Matthew, Secretary for Labour and Welfare,
or his representative

Prof LAU Siu-kai, Head of Central Policy Unit, or his representative

Secretary

Ms FUNG Ngar-wai, Aubrey, Principal Assistant Secretary for Home Affairs