

**Family Council**  
**Minutes of 26<sup>th</sup> Meeting held on 13 August 2015**

Date: 13 August 2015 (Thursday)

Time: 3:00 – 5:05 p.m.

Venue: Conference Room 4, G/F, Central Government Offices,  
2 Tim Mei Avenue, Tamar, Hong Kong

Attendance

Chairman

Prof. SHEK Tan-lei, Daniel

Official Members

Mrs Betty FUNG, Permanent Secretary for Home Affairs (*attended on behalf of Secretary for Home Affairs*)

Ms Doris CHEUNG, Deputy Secretary for Labour and (Welfare)<sup>1</sup> (*attended on behalf of Secretary for Labour and Welfare*)

Mr Edwin TSUI, Principal Education Officer (Hong Kong and Kowloon), Education Bureau  
(*attended on behalf of Secretary for Education*)

Prof WONG Chack-kie, Member (2)/Central Policy Unit (*attended on behalf of Head/Central Policy Unit*)

Ex-officio Members

Prof. CHAN Cheung-ming, Alfred, Chairman of the Elderly Commission

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

Non-official Members

Prof. LAM Tai-hing

Mr LEE Luen-fai

Prof. LEUNG Seung-ming, Alvin

Dr LI Sau-hung, Eddy

Ms LOO Shirley Marie Therese

Miss TANG Pui-yee, Phoebe

Dr TSUI Luen-on, Gordon

Ms WONG Pik-kiu, Peggy

Ms YAU Oi-yuen, Irene

Ms YIP Lai-wa, Emily

Mr YIU Tze-leung, Ivan

Secretary

Ms Aubrey FUNG, Principal Assistant Secretary for Home Affairs  
(Civic Affairs) 2

In attendance

Mr Laurie LO, Deputy Secretary for Home Affairs (1)

Ms Jessica CHENG, Chief Executive Officer (Family Council)

Dr Florence FONG, Senior Researcher (5), Central Policy Unit

(For agenda item 3 only)

Mr Kevin YEUNG, Under Secretary for Education

Mrs Conny LI, Senior Education Officer (Kindergarten\_Special Duty  
2), Education Bureau

(For agenda items 4 and 5 only)

Miss Winnie TSE, Principal Assistant Secretary for the Civil Service  
(Conditions of Service)

Dr Rachel CHENG, Principal Medical and Health Officer (Family  
Health Service)(Acting), Department of Health

Absent with apologies

Mr LAU Ming-wai, Chairman of the Commission on Youth

Mrs CHU YEUNG Pak-yu, Patricia

Ms LAW Suk-kwan, Lilian

Miss WONG Siu-ling, Gabriella

**Welcome Remarks**

The Chairman welcomed all to the 26<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Family Council (the Council).

**Item 1 – Confirmation of Minutes of the 25<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Family Council**

2. The minutes of the 25<sup>th</sup> meeting were confirmed without amendments.

**Item 2 – Matters Arising from the previous meeting**

3. The Chairman informed the meeting that the Council Secretariat had circulated a progress report to Members for information and consideration. As Members had no further comments, the progress report was endorsed.

**Item 3 – Report of the Committee on Free Kindergarten Education (Paper FC 15/2015)**

4. With a view to making practicable recommendations on the implementation of free kindergarten (KG) education in the context of 15-year free education, the Committee on Free Kindergarten Education had submitted a report to the Education Bureau (EDB) and made recommendations regarding the future development of KG education.

5. To consult the Council on the recommendations of the report from family perspectives, Under Secretary for Education (USED) and Senior Education Officer (Kindergarten Special Duty 2) took Members through the powerpoint presentation to give an overview of the major recommendations of the Report. The salient points were covered in the paper FC 15/2015.

6. Following the presentation, deliberations of the meeting were summarised as follows –

- (a) Members welcomed the proposal to increase the teaching staff of KG by improving the teacher-pupil ratio from 1:15 to no worse than 1:12;
- (b) Members considered that this was a good attempt to revise progressively the existing planning standards for provision of KG (730 half-day (HD) and 250 whole-day (WD) places for every 1 000 children in the age group of three to under six) to 500 HD and 500 WD places for every 1 000 children in the aforesaid age group as it helped relieve the pressure of families with dual working parents from population policy perspective. This notwithstanding, the impact of family (including grandparents) on child's healthy development should not be overlooked as the benefits that could be brought to children in a family setting were irreplaceable by those in a school setting;
- (c) while fully recognising the need of upgrading and promoting the professional capacity of the teaching force, Members considered that it was equally important to instill positive values to children. The curriculum guide should be suitably reviewed by incorporating elements of national and moral education. Imparting children with self-caring skills was also an important element;

- (d) though the proposal of providing rental subsidy for eligible KGs as recurrent funding would, to a certain extent, help alleviate the financial burden of the operators of eligible KGs operating in rented premises in commercial buildings, the recommendation to set the ceiling with reference to the rentals of comparable kindergartens operating in premises situated in public housing estates might not be practical as it was unable to cover all the actual cost in full;
- (e) the proposal of providing additional teacher to enhance the support to students with special needs was desirable as it would help ease the workload of frontline KG teachers;
- (f) a Member considered that it might not be desirable for children to study in those KGs located in the aged public housing estates because of different types of maintenance problems (e.g. concrete spalling, water dripping from the air-conditioners). Provision of travel subsidy was a viable alternative as the families concerned could choose to study in the KGs not located in those aged public housing estates; and
- (g) Members agreed with the recommendation to strengthen parent education as good parenting was important to the healthy development of children. Parents' misconception about "Losing at the Scratch Line" should be suitably rectified through joint efforts of all parties concerned.

7. In response to Members' views, USED made the following remarks –

- (a) the mission of KG education was to provide for equitable access to quality holistic KG education. In making recommendations on the new KG education policy, the Committee noted that the duration of KG programmes (i.e. HD or WD) did not necessarily have an impact on the developmental outcomes of the children;

- (b) the Committee fully recognised KG education as a foundation stage of learning and whole person development for children. Having considered the developmental needs of children and overseas practices, the Committee considered that HD KG services would suffice in meeting the objectives of KG education. This notwithstanding, the Committee was also fully aware of the service needs of working parents for WD KGs. With a view to providing more support for working parents and unleashing the potential of the local labour force from the population policy perspective, the Committee therefore recommended additional resources to encourage KGs to provide more WD or long WD services, which would enable parents in need of such services to have better and more affordable access to them;
- (c) the Government was aware of the impact of high rent on the supply of quality KG premises. While the Committee proposed the provision of rental subsidy for all eligible KGs, it was of the view that there should be a ceiling on the amount of subsidy for each KG to ensure proper use of public funds. To ensure a stable supply of quality KG premises, the Committee also recommended the Government to explore measures to provide more government-owned KG premises in public housing estates and private development in the long run. The feasibility of co-location of KG and primary school could also be studied;
- (d) in view of the general principle of vicinity in student admission to KG, the option of providing travel subsidy would not be considered at this stage;
- (e) regarding pre-school rehabilitation services, USED informed the meeting that a pilot scheme on on-site pre-school rehabilitation services would soon be launched

by the Social Welfare Department (SWD) whereby operators of subvented pre-school rehabilitation services would provide on-site rehabilitation services to children studying in kindergartens or kindergarten-cum-child care centres. Further improvement measures could be formulated in the light of experience gained through the pilot scheme. Besides, if the overall teacher-to-pupil ratio was improved, KG teachers would have more capacity to cater for the diverse needs of their students; and

- (f) the issue of transition from KG to primary school was equally important. The Curriculum Development Council (CDC) would review the Guide to the Pre-primary Curriculum by taking into account the experience of learning and teaching in KG, the performance and future needs of children, the changes in society and the on-going professional upgrade and improved competencies among teachers. Among others, CDC would consider setting clear but non-prescriptive learning outcomes for KG graduates so that both KGs and primary schools might make reference to them in providing suitable learning and teaching activities for the students, especially at the transition years.

8. The Chairman thanked representatives of EDB for their presentations and Members for their comments. To sum up, the Chairman concluded that the Council in general supported the recommendations in the Report. Recognising the importance of early identification in tackling different types of social problems, the Chairman also suggested that the Government should consider utilising KG as a point of intervention to identify the needs of families with a view to providing better support.

**Items 4 and 5 – Implementation of Family-Friendly Policies in the Civil Service and Promulgation of Breastfeeding Friendly Policies in the Civil Service (Paper FC 16/2015 and Paper FC 17/2015)**

9. At the previous Council meeting held on 26 May 2015, Members deliberated on the framework of the 2015/16 Family-Friendly Employers Award Scheme (the Award Scheme) to be launched in December 2015. To facilitate exchange of views and explore further collaboration opportunities, Miss Winnie Tse, Principal Assistant Secretary for the Civil Service (Conditions of Service) (PAS(COS)) and Dr Rachel Cheng, Principal Medical and Health Officer (Family Health Services)(Acting) of the Department of Health (DH) were invited to brief the Council on the implementation of family-friendly policies and practices in the civil service and promulgation of breastfeeding friendly workplace policy respectively. The salient points were covered in the papers FC 16/2015 and 17/2015. Deliberations of the meeting were summarised below –

- (a) Members commended the efforts of the Government in providing a friendly environment for their breastfeeding employees. While acknowledging the difficulties for some small offices to provide a separate room for milk expression, it was pleased to note that quite a number of government departments had already exercised their flexibility by providing temporary space with privacy for their breastfeeding employees to express breastmilk; and
- (b) in exploring the possibility of extending the Award Scheme to government bureaux/departments(B/Ds), PAS(COS) responded that it might be premature to consider the extension at this stage. She took the implementation of five-day week as an example to illustrate the difficulties encountered by B/Ds in participating in the Award Scheme meaningfully. In the light of various constraints beyond the control of individual B/Ds (such as the need to deliver public services during atypical office hours), not all B/Ds were able to adopt five-day week under the pre-requisites

set out by the Civil Service Bureau (CSB). Given five-day week was one of the major family-friendly workplace practices adopted in the civil service, it would be unfair to those B/Ds which experienced practical difficulties in implementing five-day week to compete for the award. This notwithstanding, CSB undertook to further explore the possibility of B/Ds' participation in the Award Scheme in 2017/18.

10. The Chairman thanked CSB and DH for their presentations. While understanding the practical difficulties to involve individual B/Ds in the general Award Scheme at this stage, he appreciated the efforts of the Government in encouraging B/Ds to participate in the "Award for Breastfeeding Support" this year and considered that government B/Ds should participate in the Award Scheme in the long run. To maximise the synergistic impact, the Council Secretariat would, through CSB, invite different B/Ds to take part in the post-award sharing of good family-friendly practices with employers from different sectors in due course.

#### **Item 6 – Progress of Work of the Sub-committees under the Family Council (Paper FC 18/2015)**

11. The Chairman invited the Convenor and Deputy Convenor of the Sub-committee on Promotion of Family Core Values and Family Education (the Promotion Sub-committee) and the Sub-committee on Family Support (the Support Sub-committee) to report work progress.

12. On the work of the Promotion Sub-committee, Ms Loo reported that the Promotion Sub-committee had deliberated on the production of family education package for new arrival families. The Promotion Sub-committee was in general pleased with the quality of the education package. Upon further editing, the education package was expected to be uploaded onto the "Happy Family Info Hub" in end September 2015. Besides, Ms Loo also reported that the family education package for families with newborn babies had been launched

in May 2015. The Promotion Sub-committee was pleased with the positive response and the wide press coverage.

13. As far as the work progress on the Support Sub-committee was concerned, Prof. Lam reported that the Support Sub-committee welcomed the publicity work currently undertaken by SWD in promoting parental responsibilities of divorced parents and agreed that the Council Secretariat should explore more collaboration opportunities with SWD. Prof. Lam also reported that the Support Sub-committee had endorsed the research design, sampling procedures, format of focus group discussions as well as time schedule of the study on “Family Mediation Services in Hong Kong”.

14. The meeting noted the progress reports made by the Convenors of the two Sub-committees.

#### **Item 7 – Any Other Business**

15. The Chairman informed Members that the Council Secretariat had received a letter from the Heep Hong Parents Association (the Association) dated 3 August 2015 regarding the Pilot Scheme on On-site Pre-school Rehabilitation Services (the Pilot Scheme). In brief, the Association raised its concerns on the implementation of the Pilot Scheme.

16. Deputy Secretary for Labour and Welfare (1) responded that with a view to strengthening support for children with special needs and their families, the Chief Executive announced in his 2015 Policy Address that the Government would launch a pilot scheme through the Lotteries Fund to invite operators of subvented pre-school services to provide on-site rehabilitation services to children with special needs who were studying in kindergartens, or kindergarten-cum-child care centres. SWD had already invited proposals from prospective operators. Depending on the progress of preparation work, programmes under the Pilot Scheme were expected to be launched from the fourth quarter of 2015 onwards. The Labour and Welfare Bureau

would brief the Council on the programmes under the Pilot Scheme at the next meeting to be held on 26 November 2015.

(Action: Labour and Welfare Bureau)

17. The Chairman also took the opportunity to remind the Central Policy Unit (CPU) to expedite its work regarding the preparation of the consultancy briefs for two studies, including a study on “Family Impact Assessment” and “Family Studies in Hong Kong: A Summary Analysis and Annotated Bibliography”, so that both studies could be commissioned within 2015.

(Action: Central Policy Unit)

18. With a view to supporting family-related researches and initiatives in a holistic manner, the Chairman suggested that the Council should explore the need of setting up a “Family Development Fund” (Family Fund) in the long run. The Chairman invited Deputy Secretary for Home Affairs (1) (DSHA(1)) to share his observations with Members which were summarised as follows –

- (a) under the existing set-up, the role of the Council was to provide high-level steer and advice on family-related issues, with the three Commissions (the Commission on Youth, the Elderly Commission and the Women’s Commission) focusing on sector-specific work. Noting that different funding schemes and programmes had already been in place to provide support for various kinds of initiatives under the three Commissions, care should be exercised in the positioning of the proposed funding scheme to avoid duplicating efforts to support family-related initiatives;
- (b) the Council had been proactive and vigorous in promoting better understanding of matters relating to family through commissioning of worthwhile and relevant family-related researches since its establishment in 2007. With a view to supporting more family-related researches to be initiated by

academics and stakeholders, the Council might consider leveraging the Public Policy Research Funding Scheme<sup>1</sup> (the PPR Funding Scheme) currently administered by CPU through expanding its scope of study topics to cover family-related issues;

- (c) the Council might explore if thematic sponsorship could be given to worthwhile family-related projects with themes to be selected by the Council; and
- (d) the Support Sub-committee was proposed to be invited to study the issue further. With evidence-based data gathered through experience of the expanded scope of PPR Funding Scheme and thematic sponsorship, the Council would be in a better position to assess if the Family Fund should be set up in the long run.

19. Responding to DSHA(1)'s observations and suggestions, Member (2) of CPU welcomed the proposal to expand the scope of the PPR Funding Scheme and agreed to explore further at his end. A Member also shared the experience of the Health and Medical Research Fund<sup>2</sup> (HMRF) under the Food and Health Bureau in promoting and supporting health and medical researches. Taking its experience into account, some Members considered it worthwhile for the Council to adopt a more proactive approach in supporting family-related researches and initiatives.

20. Subsequent to Members' deliberations, the Chairman made the following remarks regarding the setting up of a Family Fund –

---

<sup>1</sup> The PPR Funding Scheme administered by CPU has a recurrent funding of HK\$30 million to support research for the following major themes including (a) land and housing, (b) poverty and ageing/retirement protection, (c) political development and governance, (d) external economy, (e) social issues, (f) economic development and (g) environmental protection.

<sup>2</sup> HMRF was set up in December 2011 with an injection of \$1 billion. It supports advanced medical research. It aims to build research capacity and to encourage, facilitate and support health and medical research to inform health policies, improve population health, strengthen the health system, enhance healthcare practices, advance standard and quality of care, and promote clinical excellence, through the generation and application of evidence-based scientific knowledge in health and medicine.

- (a) given the lack of longitudinal dataset on family-related subjects in Hong Kong, a steady and sustainable funding support would help fill data gaps and be conducive to creating a pro-family environment; and
- (b) the setting up of a dedicated family fund would demonstrate the commitment of the Government in creating a pro-family environment in Hong Kong.

To study the issues further, the Chairman invited the Support Sub-committee to follow up and report in due course.

(Action: Support Sub-committee)

21. There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:05 p.m.. The next meeting would be held on 26 November 2015 (Thursday) at 2:30 p.m. in Conference Room 5, G/F, Central Government Offices, Tim Mei Avenue, Tamar, Hong Kong.

**Family Council Secretariat**  
**October 2015**