

Family Council
Minutes of 32nd Meeting held on 21 March 2017

Date: 21 March 2017 (Tuesday)

Time: 2:30 – 3:55 p.m.

Venue: Conference Room 3, G/F, Central Government Offices,
2 Tim Mei Avenue, Tamar, Hong Kong

Attendance

Chairman

Prof. SHEK Tan-lei, Daniel

Ex-officio Members

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

Dr LAM Ching-choi, Chairman of the Elderly Commission

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

Non-official Members

Mrs CHU YEUNG Pak-yu, Patricia, Convenor, Sub-committee on
Family Support

Prof. LAM Tai-hing, Deputy Convenor, Sub-committee on Family
Support

Ms LAW Suk-kwan, Lilian

Prof. LEUNG Seung-ming, Alvin

Dr LI Sau-hung, Eddy

Ms LOO Shirley Marie Therese, Convenor, Sub-committee on the
Promotion of Family Core Values and Family Education

Miss TANG Pui-yee, Phoebe

Dr TSUI Luen-on, Gordon

Ms WONG Pik-kiu, Peggy

Official Members

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

Miss Annie TAM, Permanent Secretary for Labour and Welfare (PSLW) (*attended on behalf of Secretary for Labour and Welfare*)

Mrs HONG CHAN Tsui-wah, Deputy Secretary for Education (4) (*attended on behalf of Secretary for Education*)

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

Secretary

Ms Karyn CHAN, Principal Assistant Secretary for Home Affairs (Civic Affairs) 2

In attendance

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

Miss Iris MA, Chief Executive Officer (Family Council)

Dr Florence FONG, Senior Researcher (5)/CPU

(For agenda item 3)

Miss Annie TAM, PSLW

Mr LAM Ka-tai, Deputy Director of Social Welfare (Services), Social Welfare Department

(For agenda item 4)

The University of Hong Kong (Department of Social Work and Social Administration)

Dr LAW Chi-kwong, Associate Professor

Dr CHEUNG Chuen-yih, Amos, Lecturer

Ms WONG Tsui-shan, Jo, Senior Research Assistant

Absent with apologies

Mr LEE Luen-fai, Deputy Convenor, Sub-committee on the Promotion of Family Core Values and Family Education

Miss WONG Siu-ling, Gabriella

Ms YAU Oi-yuen, Irene

Ms YIP Lai-wa, Emily

Mr YIU Tze-leung, Ivan

Welcome Remarks

The Chairman welcomed all to the 32nd meeting of the Family Council (the Council).

Item 1 – Confirmation of Minutes of the 31st meeting of the Family Council

2. The minutes of the 31st meeting were confirmed with the amendments proposed by Mrs Patricia CHU and tabled at the meeting.

Item 2 – Matters Arising from the Previous Meeting

3. The Chairman noted that the Council Secretariat had circulated a progress report to Members for information, and invited Chief Executive Officer (Family Council) (CEO(FC)) to brief Members on the progress. CEO(FC) reported that the Pre-marital family education package was launched on 19 February 2017 with videos

starting to show on social media and public transport in the same week. Interviews of outstanding awardees of the 2015/16 Family-Friendly Employers Award Scheme were published by nine local newspapers in December 2016 and January 2017. The Council Secretariat was arranging for production of five experience sharing sessions by awardees in June to July 2017. While the final report of the study on “Parenting Practices in Hong Kong” would be uploaded onto the websites of the Council and Central Policy Unit for public information later upon completion of the final touch up by the Research Team, the reports of the Study on “Family Mediation Services in Hong Kong” and Family Survey 2015 were uploaded and shared with relevant bureaux and departments for information and follow up actions as appropriate. As regards the Pilot Scheme on Thematic Sponsorship to Support Family-related Initiatives, the Council Secretariat would invite proposals in March to May 2017 and a briefing session for interested organisations would be held on 7 April 2017. The Study on Family Impact Assessment was in good progress. Training sessions were held in January 2017 and the Steering Committee met on 15 March 2017 to discuss the draft interim report in details. Members were reminded to provide views on the Public Consultation on Hong Kong 2030+, if any, to the Council Secretariat by 7 April 2017 for preparation of a consolidated response to the Planning Department.

(Post-meeting note : A consolidated response was sent to the Planning Department on 26 April 2017.)

4. As Members had no further comments, the progress report was endorsed.

Item 3 – 2017 Policy Address – Family-Related Policy Initiatives of the Labour and Welfare Bureau (Paper FC 2/2017)

5. The Chairman invited Miss Annie TAM, Permanent Secretary for Labour and Welfare, and Mr LAM Ka-tai, Deputy Director of Social Welfare (Services) of the Social Welfare Department (SWD), to brief Members on the Labour and Welfare Bureau (LWB)'s various new and on-going family-related initiatives in the Chief Executive's 2017 Policy Address. The salient points of the presentation were summarised as follows –

(a) Retirement protection

After consulting the public, the Government considered that the existing multi-pillar retirement protection system should continue. The Government would enhance the effectiveness of each pillar while maintaining the sustainability and financial viability of the system. Insofar as optimising the multi-tiered social security pillar was concerned, the Government proposed to add a higher tier of assistance under the Old Age Living Allowance (OALA) for eligible elderly persons with more financial needs who were eligible for the allowance and relax the asset limits for the existing OALA. As regards the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme, while maintaining the requirement that applicants under the CSSA Scheme must apply on a household basis, the Government had abolished the arrangement for the relatives concerned to make a declaration on whether they would provide the elderly persons who applied for CSSA on their own with financial

support (the so-called “bad son statement”). The arrangement took effect on 1 February 2017. To align with the direction of population policy to extend retirement age, the eligibility age for CSSA for the elderly would be raised from 60 to 65. Elderly persons aged between 60 and 64 who were receiving CSSA before the new policy took place would not be affected. To enhance the mandatory provident fund (MPF) system pillar, the Government also proposed that the existing offsetting arrangement of severance payment or long service payment with the accrued benefits of employers’ MPF contributions be progressively abolished.

(b) *Poverty Alleviation*

The Government would continue to roll out new projects under the Child Development Fund and to implement the Low-Income Working Family Allowance (LIFA) Scheme to provide support for underprivileged children and working poor families. The requirement for all household members included in a LIFA application not to be absent from Hong Kong for more than 30 days in any six-month period had been abolished since 6 December 2016. A comprehensive policy review on the LIFA Scheme would be conducted in mid-2017.

(c) *Care for the Elderly*

On top of formulating the Elderly Services Programme Plan, the Government would continue to implement a wide spectrum of measures to strengthen elderly services on all fronts which

included providing support for the carers of elderly persons (e.g. to implement Phase II of the Pilot Scheme on the Living Allowance for Carers of Elderly Persons from Low Income Families and plan to implement a pilot scheme to provide training for foreign domestic helpers with a view to enhancing their knowledge and skills in taking care of elderly persons), strengthening community care services (e.g. to introduce two pilot schemes, one providing transitional care and necessary support for elderly persons discharged from public hospitals after treatment, and the other providing home care and support services for elderly persons with mild impairment), providing better support for elderly persons with special needs (e.g. to launch a pilot scheme to provide specialised residential care services at designated residential care homes for the elderly), providing more choices for elderly persons (e.g. to issue 2 000 additional vouchers under the Second Phase of the Pilot Scheme on Community Care Service Voucher for the Elderly, and implement a new Pilot Scheme on Residential Care Service Voucher for the Elderly), facilitating the choice to retire on the Mainland (e.g. once again to exempt, on a one-off basis for a one-year period, eligible elderly persons already residing in Guangdong from the requirement of having resided in Hong Kong continuously for at least one year under the Guangdong Scheme; and to introduce the Fujian Scheme to provide monthly Old Age Allowance for eligible elderly persons who chose to reside in Fujian), etc.

(d) *Support for the Disadvantaged*

The Government would continue to strengthen the support for individuals and families with special needs and commence the work of formulating a new Hong Kong Rehabilitation Programme Plan. New initiatives in the pipeline included converting the Pilot Scheme on On-Site Pre-school Rehabilitation Services into a regular programme, preparing for the regularisation of the Pilot Project on Peer Support Service in Community Psychiatric Service Units, waiving the fees of special child care services, providing non-means-tested training subsidy for children on the waiting list for these centres, providing additional day care service places and strengthening outreaching services of district support centres for persons with disabilities to enhance support for ageing persons with disabilities, etc.

(e) *Helping Women Balance Family and Work Commitments*

Apart from commissioning a consultancy study to advise on the long-term development of child care services, the Government would provide additional resources for units of day/residential child care services and pre-school rehabilitation services in 2017-18 to enhance the remuneration for qualified child care staff with a view to relieving the recruitment and brain drain problem. Moreover, the Pilot Project on Child Care Training for Grandparents had been launched to reinforce family support between generations.

(f) *Children and Family Services*

The Government would enhance after-school care services and provide more after-school learning and support programmes for primary and secondary school students from grassroots families. The level of various foster care allowances would be increased and an additional 240 foster care places would be provided in phases. Promotion and public education work in respect of the new “parental responsibility model” would continue.

6. Deliberations of the meeting after the presentation were summarised as follows –

- (a) a Member enquired if the the Pilot Project on Child Care Training for Grandparents would become a regular Government programme;
- (b) a Member considered that raising the eligibility age for CSSA for the elderly from 60 to 65 would counter the Government’s efforts in poverty alleviation and was inconsistent with the age line adopted for the dependent parent and grandparent tax allowances at 55. She expressed worries that persons retiring at 60 might suffer a lacuna of no protection under the new arrangement as withdrawal of accrued benefits under MPF could only be allowed at the age of 65; and
- (c) a Member suggested lowering the eligibility age for the Government Public Transport Fare Concession Scheme for the Elderly and Eligible Persons with Disabilities (Public Transport

Fare Concession Scheme) from 60 to 55 to facilitate those grandparents with child care responsibilities, and reviewing the eligibility of chronically ill persons suffering from terminal diseases. She also urged the Government to consider reserving more land for developing welfare facilities.

7. Miss Tam thanked Members for their comments and responded that the Pilot Project on Child Care Training for Grandparents and the Public Transport Fare Concession Scheme would be reviewed in the light of experience. She also explained that the eligibility for the latter was linked to that for Disability Allowance.

8. The Chairman thanked Miss Tam for her presentation and response. The initiatives to enhance child care services and abolish the “bad son statement” were welcomed. He considered it necessary to ensure consistency among different policies. Regarding the initiative of converting the Pilot Scheme on On-Site Pre-school Rehabilitation Services into a regular programme, he would like to invite LWB to brief the Council on its review at the next meeting.

(Action : Council Secretariat)

Item 4 – A Study on Family Impact Assessment in Hong Kong : A Checklist Approach – Draft Interim Report (Paper FC 3/2017)

9. The Chairman invited Dr LAW Chi-kwong, Associate Professor, Department of Social Work and Social Administration, the University of Hong Kong, to update the Council on the progress of the

Study on Family Impact Assessment (FIA).

10. Dr Law took Members through the PowerPoint presentation. The salient points of the presentation were summarised as follows –

- (a) the Consulting Team had interviewed government officials, met relevant advisory committees, and conducted five stakeholders engagement forums to collect views before drawing up the draft Checklist Tool;
- (b) in January 2017, three training workshops for the draft Checklist Tool were conducted and 87 participants from 12 bureaux and nine departments attended the workshops. The feedbacks were generally positive with around 80% of participants found the training useful in various aspects;
- (c) based on the views collected, the Consulting Team was mindful of the controversy over definition of family which was ultimately a question of values, assumptions and priorities. Under the proposed approach, policymakers might adjust and select the type of definition to suit the goal of a specific policy or programme;
- (d) four dimensions, namely family responsibility, family stability, family relationships, and family engagement were adopted as the core framework of the draft Checklist Tool;
- (e) diversity of family by family stage, family structure and family context was featured in the draft Checklist Tool to assist

policymakers to determine which family type(s) might be affected;

- (f) the checklist at Form C of the draft Checklist tool comprised 24 questions under six principles which aimed to raise awareness of the four dimensions that public policy might impact on families;
- (g) the Consulting Team had drawn up flowcharts for the detailed steps of conducting FIA for different types of policy proposals. For subsidiary legislative proposal involving primarily technical amendments, it was suggested that an option of seeking exemption from conducting FIA on similar amendments in future be included; and
- (h) the Consulting Team would finalise the interim report and user manual in the next few weeks with a view to launching the trial run of the draft Checklist Tool shortly. It would then review and refine the draft Checklist Tool by the last quarter of 2017.

11. After the presentation, a Member enquired about the timing of conducting FIA in the policy making process. She quoted the proposal of raising the eligibility age for CSSA for the elderly from 60 to 65 and asked if FIA had been done and whether there would be any change to the procedures after the refined Checklist Tool was implemented. Another Member expressed that FIA was not only part of the policy making procedures, but also involved value judgement.

12. In response, Dr Law explained that since 1 April 2013, all policy papers had to include an FIA statement and the draft Checklist Tool aimed to assist policy makers in making the assessment.

Miss Tam confirmed that the proposal had been deliberated by the Commission on Poverty and the policy paper concerned had included an FIA statement. The Secretary supplemented that under the existing arrangement, the Family Council Secretariat was responsible for processing family impact assessment set out in policy papers, and would identify and arrange relevant bureaux and departments to consult the Family Council on proposals with significant family impact as appropriate. The Council Secretariat would also prepare and issue a summary of policy papers that had been processed for information of the Council before each Council meeting.

13. The Chairman thanked Dr Law for the presentation. He considered that both procedures and values were important. Noting that some policy proposals might have time constraint and issue of confidentiality, it was not practicable for all policy proposals to be examined by the Council and hence the Council Secretariat had to continue to play the gatekeeper role in the process.

Item 5 – Progress of Work of the Sub-committees under the Family Council (Paper FC 4/2017)

14. The Chairman invited the Convenors of the Sub-committee on the 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.

15. On the work of the Promotion Sub-committee, Ms Shirley LOO reported that “intergenerational communication” and

“extended family support” were adopted as the themes of 2017-18 publicity campaign. The Radio Television Hong Kong would be engaged to roll out several programmes including an inter-generational family day in May 2017, and three radio programmes covering touching stories and expert advice relating to intergenerational communication, heart to heart talks hosted by children, and guests’ sharing of stories on their communication and relationship with family members, as well as video episodes, promotional programmes trailers, etc.

16. At the invitation of Ms Shirley LOO, CEO(FC) also briefed the meeting on the proposal of organising a snapshot competition entitled “Happy Moments of Family” to collect photos to create photo mosaics that would showcase the family core values advocated by the Council and would be exhibited during a large-scale publicity event scheduled for November or December 2017 to mark the 10th anniversary of the Council. The competition would leverage on various activities to be organised by the Home Affairs Department as well as the Leisure and Cultural Services Department with collecting booths set up at the venues of their designated activities. Online submission of photos would also be available. To encourage participation, a specially designed board game would be distributed to entrants and public voting of the photos would be arranged. Families of all shortlisted entries would be invited to attend the large-scale publicity event and coupons of “poon choi” would be awarded to the top entrants for use during family gatherings.

17. Members supported the proposed snapshot competition and made several suggestions regarding the arrangements such as

requesting the entrants to provide captions for their photos.

(Action : Promotion Sub-committee)

18. Mrs Patricia CHU reported that the Support Sub-committee had deliberated on the proposed objectives, scope and work plan of two studies, namely Family Survey 2016-17 and Further In-depth Study on the Phenomenon of Divorce in Hong Kong at the meeting on 15 March 2017. The Family Survey 2017 would largely follow the previous surveys with addition of some items as suggested in the report of 2015 Survey as well as Members' views thereon. To cope with the expanded scope and to facilitate in-depth study, the sample size would be increased from 3 000 to 4 000. The whole survey was expected to be completed in the second quarter of 2018.

19. Mrs Chu briefed the meeting that the in-depth divorce study would cover various matrimonial issues including the compatibility of the judgment summon proceedings with the rights enshrined in Articles 10 and 11 of the Hong Kong Bill of Rights Ordinance, the suggestion of reducing minimum age of marriage without parental consent from 21 to 18 years, the need to improve the mechanism on maintenance payments, and the proposed reciprocal recognition and enforcement of judgments on matrimonial and related matters between Hong Kong and Mainland China. The Support Sub-committee had endorsed the proposed framework prepared by the Council Secretariat and it was expected that the study would be commissioned in the second half of 2017 for completion by end 2018. A working group comprising Council members as well as representatives from relevant bureaux and departments would be set up to monitor the progress of the study.

20. The Chairman suggested that the Family Survey 2017 could include an integrated analysis of the findings of previous surveys. Mrs Chu responded that there would be tracking of the previous survey results. The Chairman considered it worthwhile to explore the feasibility of a Member's suggestion of opening up the survey data for reference and shared use of stakeholders.

(Action : Support Sub-committee)

Item 7 – Any Other Business

21. Noting that it was the last meeting of the current term of the Council ending 31 March 2017, the Chairman suggested recording a vote of thanks to six Members who had served the Council for six years, namely Ms LAW Suk-kwan Lilian, Dr LI Sau-hung Eddy, Ms LOO Shirley Marie Therese, Mr WONG Pik-kiu Peggy, Ms YAU Oi-yuen Irene, and Mr YIU Tze-leung Ivan.

22. There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:55 p.m.. The next meeting would be held on 6 June 2017 (Tuesday) at 2:30 p.m.

**Family Council Secretariat
May 2017**