

Commission on Children convenes fifth meeting

The Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung, chaired the fifth meeting of the Commission on Children today (August 16).

The Commission approved 43 applications from child care groups, non-governmental organisations and schools seeking funding support of about \$9.1 million from the Funding Scheme for Children's Well-being and Development.

"About half of the applications aim to promote the healthy development of children, while others focus on the development of children's potential and talents, raising public awareness of children with special needs and promotion of child protection. The Scheme attaches great importance to children's participation, and the awarded projects are able to provide children with a wide range of participation opportunities, including participation in the design of games to boost their creativity as well as theatre training and performance to nurture their communication and problem-solving skills. Most projects also involve parents, teachers and other stakeholders in order to enhance their understanding and communication with children," Mr Cheung said.

The Commission has also endorsed the proposal to rename the "Working Group on Children with Special Needs" as "Working Group on Children with Specific Needs" to reflect better its scope of work which covers children with special educational needs and ethnic minority children.

The Commission took note of the screening, assessment, diagnosis and early intervention services provided by the Department of Health (DH) and the Hospital Authority (HA) for children and adolescents with developmental disabilities from birth till they enter secondary schools. The Child Assessment Service provided by the DH has adopted a triage system to ensure that children with urgent and serious conditions are given priority for timely assessment. To improve its services, the DH has started preparation for the establishment of a new Child Assessment Centre. HA has also strengthened manpower for multi-disciplinary teams to provide psychiatric services for children and adolescents in need.

In addition, members offered views on the outline of the proposed thematic report on children to be published by the Census and Statistics Department in 2023. To promote public debate on children-related issues and facilitate planning for government and non-governmental organisations' services, the report will present through statistics certain characteristics of local children from the demographic, education, economic, household, housing and geographic perspectives. Statistical analyses are specifically developed to reveal the specific features of issues such as children's family background, adequacy of care, living conditions, access to education, transportation to and from schools, household income and other

characteristics of the household to which the children belong.