

Commission on Children convenes fourth meeting

The Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung, chaired the fourth meeting of the Commission on Children today (May 23).

The Commission agreed to implement the public engagement plan on child development-related matters. Mr Cheung said, "The Commission will gather views of stakeholders, in particular those of children, on matters related to child development. It is expected that the public engagement activities will start from the fourth quarter of 2019 and be held about every quarter thereafter, covering various topics including special needs, health, welfare, child protection, education and general child development issues such as a central databank on children."

In addition, the Commission set out details of the publicity plan, including a publicity campaign under the theme "Caring for Our Kids" to be launched in the third quarter of 2019 with a view to raising public awareness on children's rights and well-being.

The meeting also noted the measures for prevention of student suicide and promotion of students' mental health by the Government. In collaboration with different bureaux/departments, the Education Bureau (EDB) provides appropriate support services to cater for the diverse needs of students through three levels of strategies, namely the Universal Tier targeting all students, Selective Tier targeting vulnerable students and Indicated Tier targeting students with suicidal risk.

The Government has already strengthened professional support and services to schools. The EDB has enhanced the School-based Educational Psychology Service at public sector ordinary primary and secondary schools with a larger number of students with special educational needs. Starting from the 2018/19 school year, the Government has also provided public sector primary schools with additional resources through the New Funding Mode to enable them to implement "one school social worker for each school" as soon as possible according to school-based circumstances in order to better cater for the needs of students. To enhance teenagers' mental health and stress resilience, the Government will implement the "two school social workers for each school" measure in more than 460 secondary schools in Hong Kong and increase the supervisory manpower accordingly.

School social work services for primary and pre-primary school children provided by the Government aim to identify and help students whose academic, social and emotional development are at risk, and provide assistance to families in need. The Government has launched a three-year Pilot Scheme on Social Work Service for Pre-primary Institutions in three phases since February 2019. It is also trying out an appropriate mode to form a basis to assess the possibility of regularisation of the service in future.

The meeting also noted the mental health services for children and adolescents. Cross-sectoral and multi-disciplinary support and care are provided for those with mental health needs through collaboration among different bureaux and departments. The services cover healthcare, education and social services, etc. The Government has established the standing Advisory Committee on Mental Health to assist in developing policies, strategies and measures to enhance mental health services. It also follows up on and monitors the implementation of the recommendations of the Mental Health Review Report.