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24.9.2022

Wish list for the 2022 Policy Address

Child abuse is an overwhelming subject and it has become an agenda of precedence for the government. Children are vulnerable. Policy, practices, guidelines and mechanisms abound, yet statistics are alarming. Tragedies are repeating.

On **2022 Policy Address Public Consultation**, the following wish list is sent to the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region for his kind consideration.

1. **Total Banning of Corporal Punishment** – there is sturdy scientific evidence of the long-term harm on children, perpetuating violence in the society. We need prompt consensus building in the community, exploring and working towards legislation for a total banning of corporal punishment, joining the current 63 countries in the world that do so.
2. **Territory-wide Institutional Child Protection Policy** in child-related institutions – the incident of abuse in a child institution at the end of 2021 is scandalous. Institutional Child Protection Policy is a set of internal policies, code of conduct, rules and procedures in organizations rendering services for children. The Policy ensures that children's safety and interests are taken as first priorities. In practice, staff preemployment check is performed, training on child protection is carried out, situations that make child abuse difficult to detect avoided, and the management and the frontline practitioners are alerted to respond timely and appropriately to alleged child abuse in the organization. The Policy is regularly reviewed, evaluated and revised responding to the needs of child clients. Such Institutional Child Protection Policy, although established in a number of organizations, should be widely promoted in Hong Kong.

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3. **Existing Child Fatality Review mechanism** is to be given mandate to make prompt and responsive reviews of deaths, to draw practical and enforceable recommendations, rather than the ones which are general, modest, and mostly educational in nature.
4. **Setting up a Serious Case Review mechanism** – there is no mechanism to promptly review and learn from incidents of children abused badly who survive with handicaps and disabilities. Prompt review and responsive changes could help to avert harms to children.
5. **Establishing a Data Bank on Childhood Vulnerability** to inform setting up child policies. Data on vulnerable children is needed for revising child welfare policies and allocation of resources. Childhood vulnerability describes the group of children at risk. The well-being of looked-after children needs to be closely examined.
6. **Evidence-based Home Visitation Services for At-Risk Children and Families** to strengthen support and render early intervention for at risk children and families. There is sturdy scientific evidence showing benefits of such services.
7. **Law** – the “Causing or Allowing the Death or Serious Harm of a Child or Vulnerable Adult” offence should be the next main agenda after the **Mandatory Reporting Responsibility** legislation. There are many areas in the legislation where children could be better protected, to name two, the strengthening of criminal laws to enhance **Cyber-Safety** and to protect children from **Psychological Abuse**, are two subjects needing quick address.

Dr CHEUNG Chi-hung Patrick
Chairman
Against Child Abuse