
Caring and Just Society

Preamble

Our vision for a Caring and Just Society celebrates the rich diversity of our community, recognising that each individual is endowed with different strengths. We aim to create an environment in which all people get every opportunity to develop their potential. Warm, supportive and stable families are what count most in nurturing the healthy development of individuals. We will strengthen family solidarity and foster mutual care and support in the community, so that all individuals are embedded in a network of care, trust, support and reciprocity. We will introduce health, social and housing policies and initiatives that enable individuals to enhance their community involvement. We will also ensure that there is a safety net so that those in need will also participate in economic and social life with dignity and self-reliance.

New Initiatives

We will:

- Introduce a Bill to extend the prohibition of racial discrimination to the private sector.
- Conduct a comprehensive review of the Quarantine and Prevention of Disease Ordinance (Chapter 141) and its subsidiary legislation to ensure that the legal framework for the prevention of infectious diseases is up-to-date and is capable of supporting our strategy and mechanism in the control of infectious diseases.
- Further enhance our infectious disease emergency response system by strengthening the work of the Centre for Health Protection and building up our surge capacity in dealing with infectious diseases.
- Explore the feasibility of developing a small to medium sized slaughtering plant for chickens to reduce the risk of human infection of avian influenza.
- Review strategies on health care services development and health care financing options in consultation with the revamped Health and Medical Development Advisory Committee.
- Introduce legislation to ban smoking in indoor work places and other public places to safeguard public health.
- Establish a statutory Specialist Register for dentists, to provide the registration of dental specialists with legal backing, and to facilitate development of specialist practice in dentistry profession.
- Explore the need to introduce a mandatory food recall framework in Hong Kong.

- Regulate restricted dining places to safeguard public health.
- Launch an accreditation scheme for seawater suppliers and introduce legislation to prohibit the abstraction of seawater from specified areas along the coast for keeping live seafood with a view to enhancing the quality of fish tank water for protection of public health.
- Introduce legislation to promote sustainable development of the fishing industry and to conserve fisheries resources in Hong Kong waters.
- Launch the \$200 million Partnership Fund for the Disadvantaged to promote the development of partnership between the business community, the welfare sector and the Government in helping the disadvantaged.
- Review the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme with a view to strengthening the assistance to able-bodied CSSA recipients to move into work. The review includes evaluating the intensive employment assistance projects introduced since October 2003 to help CSSA recipients and the “near-CSSA” unemployed move into work, reviewing CSSA arrangements and related services for single parents, and reviewing the provision of disregarded earnings.
- Provide a continuum of preventive, supportive and counseling services for needy families through the newly transformed Integrated Family Service Centres.
- Strengthen district welfare planning and coordination, including development of a protocol for the district welfare planning mechanism, review of the District Coordinating Committee mechanism and setting up of District Liaison Groups for handling domestic violence.
- Strengthen services and staff training relating to the handling of family crises and violence, and suicide; and review the Domestic Violence Ordinance.

- Provide more residential care placements for vulnerable children and youth coming from problem families to meet the demand for such services.
- Strengthen psychological support for children and youth suffering abuse and other problems, and enhance support for youth at risk and young offenders.
- Increase provision for District Social Welfare Officers to address the developmental needs of children and youth in the districts.
- Increase provision for additional fee-waiving places of After School Care Programme to facilitate members of low income families to work. Also, in collaboration with schools, to provide school-based after school learning and other support services for needy students.
- Strengthen the community support service for people with disabilities and their families to improve quality of life and to realise social inclusion.
- Strengthen the assistance to young people with disabilities: provide vocational rehabilitation to those with employment difficulties; provide specialised support service to those with early sign of mental health problem.
- Strengthen the rebus services through addition of new buses and rationalisation of service.
- Examine ways to improve accessibility of public transport to the disabled.
- Provide a monthly supplement of \$100 for those CSSA standard rate recipients who are not living in institutions but are 100% disabled or require constant attendance.
- Convert subvented residential places into long-term care places for frail elders to meet the growing care needs of elders.

- Relax the eligibility requirements under the Portable Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (PCSSA) Scheme by providing needy elders who have received CSSA for not less than one year (currently not less than three years) the option to retire in Guangdong or Fujian Province.
- Relax the permissible limit of absence from Hong Kong under the Social Security Allowance (including Old Age Allowance and Disability Allowance) Scheme from 180 days to 240 days a year to allow the recipients to spend more time with their relatives and friends outside Hong Kong.

Ongoing Initiatives

We are:

- Conducting specific studies to address various issues arising from the 2004-2033 population projections that impact on Population Policy, with a view to consulting the public and publishing a review report in 2005-06.
- Enhancing our network at district level, which has proved invaluable in combating SARS and implementing Team Clean initiatives.
- Providing continual researches, preventive education, remedial counselling and treatment services for addressing gambling-related problems.
- Implementing the improvement measures for the Pre-Sale Consent Scheme, following completion of a review.
- Working on measures to speed up the processing of application for small houses.
- Reviewing the mechanism for the determination of domestic rents for public housing.
- Maintaining supply of public rental housing for needy applicants with an average waiting time of around three years.
- Discussing with the franchised bus companies to develop a more objective and transparent process for fare adjustment.
- Developing a multi-pronged strategy to minimise the risk of avian influenza outbreaks.

- Improving overall food safety and control on agricultural and fisheries operations that have an impact on public health or the environment.
- Regulating and developing Chinese medicine and introducing Chinese medicine into the public health care system.
- Protecting the public from undesirable health claims through amendments to the Undesirable Medical Advertisements Ordinance.
- Safeguarding the health and safety of the public by developing a regulatory framework on the supply and use of medical devices.
- Enhancing primary medical care for the public to reduce reliance on hospital care through developing a pluralistic primary care mode and strengthening the community mode of health care delivery.
- Working out a sustainable long-term funding arrangement for the Hospital Authority to ensure the provision of quality public health care services.
- Reviewing the regulatory framework for animals, birds and fish for the purpose of enhancing public health and food safety.
- Evaluating the implementation of the concept of ‘from feed to table’ to ensure food safety.
- Operating the \$300 million Community Investment and Inclusion Fund to encourage mutual concern and aid, and encourage community participation.
- Implementing an effective and sustainable safety net, particularly through the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme, to assist the financially vulnerable.
- Overseeing the operation of the Trust Fund for SARS.
- Preparing the subsidiary legislation and the administrative procedures on child adoption under the amended Adoption Ordinance.

- Continuing to improve IT and communication support for people with severe disabilities.
- Creating an enabling environment to develop women's full potential and to build up their capability to face life's challenges and participate fully in all aspects of community life.
- Continuing the three-year Capacity Building Mileage Programme to encourage and facilitate women to pursue continuous learning.
- Continuing to gradually introduce the use of the Gender Mainstreaming Checklist in different policy areas, such that the gender perspective is taken into account in formulating and implementing our policies.
- Continuing to enhance the participation of women in the work of government advisory and statutory bodies.
- Developing a Fee Assistance Scheme for residential care of frail elders to allow them more choices and flexibility in using residential care services.
- Promoting active and healthy ageing.
- Conducting studies with a view to developing a sustainable financial support system that better targets resources at elders most in need.