



香港社會服務聯會
The Hong Kong Council of Social Service



Report of Study on Child Care Services for Low Income Families in Hong Kong



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May 2015



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- And other participants in the in-depth and focus group interviews.



In recent decades, we have witnessed significant socio-economic changes which have impact on the demand for child care services. Just take a few examples: there are more nuclear families than extended families; more and more women participate in the labour force; poverty problem persists and there is also a call for unleashing potentials of female home-makers to enter the labour force in the population policy etc. All these generate demand for child care.

However, child care provision does not match with the development. It is therefore not surprising to hear parents' voices about difficulties to find child care places in community. As a result, many parents (especially mothers) have to give up their employment or development opportunities to become full-time carer at home. For low income families, this also limits their choice to have both parents working in order to secure income for the family.

The existing child care problem results from lack of service planning and policy comparable with the social and economic development. The existence of service gaps also owes to different emphasis of Social Welfare Department and Education Bureau in child care and education.

We believe that policies should be well connected to the social and economic development and respond to the needs of families. This report maps out evidence based analyses on the current situation faced by grassroots families with children, child care provision and usage, and new initiatives. It also suggests possible enhancement to policies and services. The Council hopes that this study gives a solid background for understanding today's families and the importance of an integrated policy that responds to the needs of children, genders, family and community as a whole.

We are thankful to ZeShan Foundation for supporting this study and for sharing her vision to nurturing collective impact to tackle the problem of child care. We believe that the government, NGOs, schools, parents, corporate and charity foundations alike can all take part and contribute to create a better environment to enable every child and family to live and develop fully in Hong Kong.

Mr. CHUA Hoi Wai
Chief Executive

The Hong Kong Council of Social Service



Poverty alleviation is a corner stone of ZeShan's commitment to Human Services and Social Development in Hong Kong. One of the effective ways to create more opportunities for low-income families is reducing the burden of child care by increasing service provision both quantitatively and qualitatively.

Although Hong Kong has a long track record of providing children's services to low income families, the gnawing gap between service provision and service demand has given rise to great community concern in recent years. Yet, little comprehensive research has been conducted to survey the ecosystem of the existing service provision, to assess the service demand and to analyze ways to enhance existing services and bridge the gaps.

ZeShan hoped that this exploratory study could provide sufficient evidence to inform all stakeholders, including the government as well as NGOs and donors to reconsider the allocation of resources in addressing the issue. Hence, in addition to this comprehensive research report, a donor's guide on child care service provision in Hong Kong has also been published as a reference for the private and public donors.

This is just the beginning – we do hope that this study can facilitate a better exchange of knowledge, experiences and insights, which will lead to a clearer perspective for those who are keen in enhancing community resources, reducing poverty, and creating safer environment for children and lay a solid ground for further exchange and possible collaboration across sectors.

ZeShan Foundation



Although a range of services has been developed, many parents, especially parents of low income families in the community still find that their need for child care services has not been met. The difficulties in finding child care places have subsequently affected their (especially for mothers in low income families) opportunities to seek gainful employment to improve the household income and well being.

Why does there exist such a gap between service provision and service demand? How can we bridge the gap? These questions have aroused much community concern in recent years. It is in this light that this research was conducted. This mapping study on day care services for children aged 0-12 is to address the aforesaid issues on children's development, women's development, and specific situation of low income families in Hong Kong.

Child care relates not only to the developmental needs of the children, but also affects the position and well-being of women and the family as a whole. An integrated perspective is therefore adopted to map and analyze the child care policies and services. The values that reflect such integrated perspective include:

- childhood as a unique and valuable stage of learning and development be recognized;
- early childhood development as an investment for sustainable personal and social development be recognized;
- women's choice for active participation in workforce and personal development be respected;
- quality early childhood education and care be promoted irrespective of the socio-economic background of families; and
- effort to help families reconcile the work and child care responsibilities be promoted.

This study collected and examined the data obtained from government documents and statistics, quantitative data from a telephone survey of parents with children and in-depth interviews and focus groups with service providers, parents from low income families with children and other stakeholders.

Analysis of the demographic data shows that:

- although the birth rate has remained very low and the total number of children aged 0-12 is decreasing over the years, the total number is still substantial;
- today's families have fewer children, hence parents tend to have higher expectation on child care. With nuclear type of family being the dominant mode, more parents in the family have to rely on themselves to take care of the children;
- median age of the female at first childbirth is advancing over the years;
- more women participate in the labour force in the recent decades and an increasing trend is observed;
- poverty problem persists and the total number of children from low income households stood at 180,000 in 2012. The low income families face a dilemma of having one parent (usually the mother) to stay at home to take care of children and the pressing need to have dual earners; and
- neither the low income population is evenly distributed across 18 districts, nor the number of children aged 0-12 and that of children from low income households, implying a need to take regional variation into consideration in the planning of child care services.



Based on the data obtained from the telephone survey, responding households are grouped into 3 categories, namely, Poverty Households, Low Income Households and High Income Households. Analysis on their child care patterns and concerns shows that:

- a large proportion of respondents (81.2%) from Poverty Households Group and Low Income Households relied on mother to take care of their child(ren); whereas more families in High Income Households Group employed foreign domestic workers as the main carer (42.4%). Less significant in proportion though, grandparents were alternative carers for families in Hong Kong;
- more respondents from Poverty Households said that they lacked alternative carers. Over half of the Poverty Households (58.2%) reflected there was financial pressure from the existing mode of child care;
- 46.3% of Poverty Households Group and 38.6% of Low Income Households Group reflected that the existing mode of child care could not satisfy the need of their children; and
- over half (59.3%) of Poverty Households Group reflected “teach their children to do homework” as one major difficulty; for High Income Households Group, they concerned more about not having adequate time to take care of their children because of long working hours.

For in-depth interviews and focus groups, parents of low income families, service operators and related stakeholders provided insights to understand the gaps between service demand and supply:

- that there was weakening family and neighbourhood support in child care;
- that the legal liability resulting from leaving children unattended at home induced demand for occasional / emergency service;
- that parents appreciated and recognized the need for quality service to enhance the development of their children;
- that the service accessibility was affected not only by service capacity, but also by location, service operation hours, linkage between services and administrative procedures etc.;
- that parental education was inadequate in community; and
- that services had different issues which affected their accessibility to families. More significant ones include:

Services	Major Issue raised in interviews / focus groups
Standalone Child Care Centre	limited capacity available
Whole-day Kindergarten-cum-Child Care Centre	limited capacity available
Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project	supply of carers not stable and administrative procedures not sensitive to parents' needs
After School Care Programme	lack of linkage in between programmes / services



Service gaps are identified from two angles. Firstly, it relates to the availability and accessibility of existing services. For Standalone Child Care Centres for those aged 0-3, the utilization rate has reached 100% for some time. If examining service gaps by districts, several districts are without service provision. Also, there has been no change in the provision of two major types of child care services, the Standalone Child Care Centres and long whole-day Kindergarten-cum-Child Care Centres (for aged 2-6) in the past 10 years, despite the increase in demand arising from demographic changes. For other services, they are not fully accessible to parents as above-mentioned.

Secondly, there are also needs identified by operators as important for a quality service provision. They are the supporting service to parents (parent education) and the education on child care for carers from the extended family and for the community.

The study also unfolds the key issue of lack of planning on the child care service. Since the 1991 White Paper, the government has not made any attempt to re-assess the child care need arising from demographic and socio-economic changes. Many service providers in the interviews reflected that the policy assumption upheld by the government on child care still adhered to the belief of family responsibility, which often entailed a gender division of labour against women. Furthermore, these providers considered that the government tended to treat the education need and the care need of children as separate items and managed by different government departments while they should be conceived as a whole, as the term “educare” reflects.

From an integrated perspective that takes child development, women’s advancement and family well-being into consideration, the current dichotomies between family care and institutional care, choice and policy facilitation for promoting choice to women, education and care, formal and informal services, government and civic society initiatives etc. are questioned. This allows a more comprehensive angle to promote a reform in services and policies related to child care. Specific recommendations of this study include:

1. To review the philosophy, policy objective and planning mechanism of child care services.
2. To have clear policy objectives in enabling choices for women to enter employment.
3. To increase the provision of services that are in urgent demand. This refers in particular to the provision of Standalone Child Care Centres for aged 0-3 and long whole-day Kindergarten-cum-Child Care Centres for aged 2-6. The planning of provision should take note of the uneven distribution of children in need across districts.
4. To improve the existing child care facilities - to review the arrangement of after school services for primary students comprehensively so as to improve the service accessibility to families with primary students; to enhance the support to the Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project to make it an effective programme for meeting the child care needs of parents and to relieve part of the need for formal child care services in community.



5. To improve the fee subsidy schemes for children aged 0-6 in order to relieve parents' financial pressure, thereby ensuring that child care services are affordable to families of different backgrounds.
6. To develop a database on children and to encourage more researches on various aspects of child care and child development so as to facilitate effective and evidence-based planning and evaluation of child care services.
7. To provide supporting services for carers and for families with children in community e.g. parental education.
8. To support the development of new initiatives to meet new needs related to child care and to help fill in the service gaps.

From an integrated perspective, child care is more than a matter of child. It concerns with child development, women's advancement, and family well-being. It is an important social development agenda that requires the effort of family herself, government and the community as a whole to improve the existing situation. It is our shared hope that with the right policy and appropriate set of services, our young generation can be developed as pillars of society in future; women can enjoy more genuine choices in active participation in work force and development; and families can reconcile her child care and other socio-economic needs and responsibilities.

Chapter 1

Introduction



Child care arrangement is an important area of concern for families in many developed societies. In traditional societies, child care needs were mainly satisfied by families, kin and neighbours. Nowadays, child care services in community came into place with the emergence of families that could not provide care to their children because of the employment of both parents, lack of support from members beyond the nuclear family, and other reasons in our modernized way of living.

The availability of quality child care services, either formal or informal, has become a crucial factor in the decision of a family to give birth (Andersson, 2005; Begall & Mills, 2011; Castles, 2003). Moreover, child care does not only concern with providing education and care to children but also links to issues of the employment of women and equality of opportunity, and labour market supply. Above all, the availability of child care in society is about the interests of children, women, families and the society as a whole.

Moreover, even in affluent society like Hong Kong, there is still mounting challenge of poverty including persisting working poverty and child poverty. Families living with lower income would face a greater need for a dual income. Researches show that they often find themselves caught between immediate material subsistence and longer term development of children, women's status and family well-being (Zaslow & Emig, 1997; Henly & Lyons, 2002). Without pro-active government policy, it is harder for these families and their members to strike a well balance between these two inter-related sets of needs.

In response to the needs of families, availability of these services should be embedded in the policy objectives set by the government. It reveals the commitment of the government and the society to promoting childbirth (if there is such a need) and investing in the population, the right of children to quality care and healthy development, options for women in terms of work and family responsibilities. They also reveal the position or priority of the government and society with respect to the division of roles and responsibilities between genders, and those of the families, communities and the state in providing care to the young and the vulnerable. In view of all these, childhood care and education are not just a private matter concerning individual families and children, but also a public good to be widely promoted for the long-term development of the society. The accessibility, availability, quality, subsidies and required coordination of child care services determine the equality and equity among children from different socio-economic backgrounds, and between the genders.

In the Hong Kong context, there is an impetus to examine the gap(s) in the provision of child care services by juxtaposing it with the decline in fertility rate in the past decades and the recent policy direction suggested by the government of "unleashing the labour force of women" during its latest population policy consultation in 2013. Such an examination is of strategic importance also because of the increased emphasis on healthy child and family development that is of importance to long term social development.





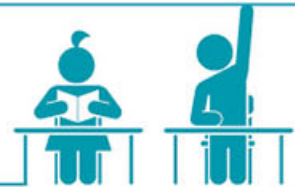
Child care policy and services, however, have been understudied for decades even though persistently, women's groups and social service organizations providing child care services have expressed the insufficiency and problems of different formal child care services. Despite the lack of an overall review of child care policies and child care service provision, there has been some new subsidized service development in the past decade, albeit slow, piecemeal and minimal. The Hong Kong Council of Social Service (the Council) has perceived that there is a pertinent need to comprehensively map the different child care services (in terms of its historical development, policy framework and objectives, types of services and utilization of services etc), identify the difficulties and service gaps of child care against the needs of low income families, and make recommendations for future research studies and policy development at this juncture.

With the generous support of ZeShan Foundation in providing the funding, the Council works together with Dr. Hung Suet Lin from the Department of Social Work, Hong Kong Baptist University to pursue the first foundation building study on child care services in Hong Kong in recent years, hoping to fill the knowledge gap which has existed for long.

Overall Objective of this Study

In general, this study concerns itself with the provision and demand of child care services for children aged 0-12 in the specific situation of the low income families in Hong Kong. Based on the findings of this study, we hope to identify a set of policy and service recommendations on child care in specific and social development in general.

An Advisory Group was set up right from the start to give advice on the conducting of the study. Representatives from child education and care services, family and community services, women and grassroots groups and a scholar were invited to join. The membership list of the Advisory Group is on page ii.



To understand the roles and forms of child care services and the relevant policies, some important perspectives would be reviewed when discussing different directions of service and policy development and policy priorities over other policy areas (i.e. why the society should care about providing child care services to families). This chapter discusses different prevailing perspectives this study concerns: child care and child development; child care and female carer (mothers); and the interface of families with low income to perform the role of child care. The discussion informs the later analyses on the study findings.

2.1 Child care and child development

Child development theories (Bowlby, 1966, 1980; Howes, et al., 1988) that suggest infants are best cared for by their parents / mothers have dominated the philosophies of child care policies in many places. Same is found in Hong Kong. Based on this assumption, families are expected to provide major care role, if not entirely, to infants and young children. Caring for young children is perceived as predominately the responsibility of families, and in particular, the mother, unless there are exceptional conditions that make it impossible for them to fulfill this responsibility, such as ill-health, imprisonment or other reasons of which the biological parents are not available, and / or have proven inadequacies in parenting. It is only under these exceptional circumstances that formal child care services are demanded, and the services are provided as a last resort.

The learning of children has also been emphasized in child development and falls into the ambit of education which is perceived as a separate area from child care. There are kindergartens and pre-kindergartens which usually run short hours of services to provide stimulus and learning skills that prepare children for schooling. The universal right of children to early development programmes and education have also been considered to be central under the ethos that 'skill begets skill'; that is, learning in one life stage will beget learning in the next stage (Cunha et al., 2005).

With universal right of children to receive early education, there is the need for quality childhood education and care. Integration of education and care in childhood services has hence been called upon to structure the child care policies. Instead of separating the services of education and child care, a synergy approach to early childhood education and care is recommended (OECD, 2006). This approach calls for integration of services, cooperation between different services, and a strong and equal partnership with the education system.



2.2 Child care and women's development

Gender perspectives which highlight the close link between child care services and options for women with regard to work and family responsibilities propose the need to examine child care policies from a gender perspective and develop policies to achieve gender equality (Saraceno & Keck, 2011). Studies in western European countries have revealed that the majority of women with young children would prefer a quality child care solution with a full-time job if they have access to one (European Foundation, 2003). "Traditional gendering" has been witnessed in childrearing patterns and the consequences include the prevalence of part-time work for women which raises the important issue of equality. There is a general consensus that equality of gender requires that child care and domestic tasks to be equally shared between the genders.



Studies in Hong Kong have repeatedly shown that child care responsibility has persistently fallen upon the shoulder of mothers, despite the increasing involvement of fathers who however mainly take part in non-routine caring tasks, such as outings and arrangement of other leisure activities (Chu & Leung, 1995; Lam, 1982; Lau & Wan, 1997). The choices for women in terms of education, employment and community participation have been an increasing concern of women's groups and organizations in Hong Kong. Mothers are more likely to stop working after giving birth and become the main caregiver of their children (e.g., Tam, 2008; The Hong Kong Council of Social Service, 1994; Lau, Ma & Chan, 2006) and mothers have to struggle between work and child care (Chan, 2005; Chan & Wong, 2005).

The traditional gender division of labour has been repeatedly re-enacted by government's emphasis on child care as the responsibility of individual families. The provision of child care support is deemed to be necessary for other life options for women to be realized. Besides, based on a review of family-friendly policies in Sweden, the UK and Singapore, Leung and Chan (2012) argued that the interests of women rather than those of the family in general should be the focus when developing family-friendly policies in Hong Kong. The provision of child care services is therefore an essential part of such policies to achieve equity between the genders.

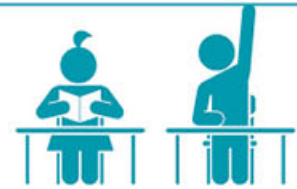
According to Organization For Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2006), the model of homecare by mothers with some marginal use of informal care provided by other family members or neighbours has no longer been the dominant one in the face of four broad contextual challenges, namely: i) the demographic challenges of falling fertility and increased migration; ii) the rise of women in salaried employment; iii) the necessary reconciliation of work and family responsibilities in a manner more equitable for women; and iv) the need to address child poverty. Therefore, the "male bread winner and female carer" (男主外、女主內) model has been transformed, which gives rise to expanding needs of child care services.

2.3 Child care and poverty

There has been the continual existence of poverty and educational disadvantages among a significant proportion of young children in affluent societies including Hong Kong. Poverty is linked to child care arrangements as it relates whether both parents need to work for income (as discussed above).

Childhood education and care services also affect equality in opportunity for children from different socio-economic backgrounds when obtaining access to appropriate quality services and therefore, in long term, the achievement of class equality and mitigation of cross-generational poverty. The degree to which parenting support and early childhood services are provided to low-income families is therefore crucial to promoting class equality for women and children.

Professor James Heckman, an expert in the economics of human development and is the Nobel Prize winner in economics, pointed out that quality early childhood development heavily influenced health,



economic and social outcomes for individuals and society at large. In his recent visit¹ to Hong Kong, he shared that quality early childhood programmes for disadvantaged children was worthy to invest, The benefit could be seen at the social, health and economic aspects in later life. He mentioned in his lecture² that “i) If society intervenes early enough and in a consistent fashion over the life cycle of a child, it can promote cognitive and socioemotional capabilities, as well as the health and well-being of the children born into disadvantage. ii) Through multiple channels, these effects percolate across the life cycle and across generations. iii) For example, high-quality early interventions reduce inequality by promoting schooling, reducing crime, and reducing teenage pregnancy. iv) They promote health and healthy behaviors. v) They also foster workforce productivity.”

In order to achieve class equality, a universal approach to have access to professional, centre-based services has been encouraged by the OECD with special attention to services that reduce child poverty and exclusion for those under 3 (OECD 2006, p.86). Public investment in services for young children is therefore essential. The larger issue of child poverty, of course, requires support at a more upstream and trans-policy level. Childhood education and care services should therefore be a core area of attention.

Most parents need to balance decisions about location, cost, and availability of early care with multiple work and family factors, and the choices available to families do not always match children’s or parents’ needs (Bäckman & Ferrarini, 2010; Chaudry, et al., 2011). However, the challenge is particularly acute for low-income working families for several reasons. These families’ choices are constrained by limited resources. In addition, the fluctuating work schedules, long and / or non-traditional hours, and inflexible work policies many low-income working parents experience can further limit their options (Henly & Lambert 2005). Finding good care is particularly challenging in some low-income communities.

2.4 An integrated perspective for child care for low income families

Acknowledging the fact that child care policies and services are affecting the well-being of families, genders / women and children, and the interests of whom are closely interlinked in most circumstances, the present study would need to take into consideration two central aspects of child care.

Firstly, whether child care arrangements are meeting the developmental needs of mothers and children in terms of accessibility, flexibility, affordability and quality. Secondly, whether children from low income families are equally provided with high quality education and care from a developmental perspective so that they are not deprived because of their lack of means. Putting these considerations into perspective, child care policy does not only have to meet the needs of the children but also those of the parents irrespective of their class status and financial position. Both child care and the needs of parents and families should be simultaneously met without jeopardizing the interests of one at the expense of the others.

¹ Prof. Heckman spoke in the lecture “Investing in Early Childhood: A Conversation with Profession James J. Heckman, Nobel Laureate in Economic Sciences” which was held at The University of Hong Kong on March 30, 2015

² The lecture delivered at The University of Hong Kong, was entitled “Creating Opportunity and Promoting Social Mobility by Investing in Skills: A Life Cycle Perspective” slide 36 of powerpoint file from The University of Hong Kong



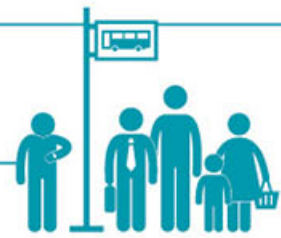
The crux of the issues, therefore, lies in the types / forms of child care that best meet the needs of families and children. In view of this, the following values would be visited in determining the improvement of existing situation:

- childhood as a unique and valuable stage of learning and development be recognized;
- early childhood development as an investment for sustainable personal and social development be recognized;
- women's choice for active participation in workforce and development be respected;
- quality early childhood education and care be promoted irrespective of the socio-economic background of families; and
- effort to help families reconcile the work and child care responsibilities be promoted.

With reference to this integrated perspective, while the initial concern of this study is on child care, we have to take full consideration of both child care and women's development in the specific situation of low-income families in Hong Kong. The objectives of the study shall therefore be restated as below:

- to stock take the existing services on child care and to understand the specific functions performed by different types of child care services and the obstacles faced by operators in running the services to meet the needs of the low-income families;
- to assess the needs for child care services from an integrated perspective as stated above by mapping them out onto the existing services, for meeting the integrated needs of child care of the low-income families; and
- to identify, if any, new initiatives tried out by local NGOs and relevant overseas experiences that aim to enhance child care services in communities.

From the aforesaid integrated perspective, the reconciliation of work and child care needs is not easy for low income families in Hong Kong. The current situation i.e. the difficulties faced by the low income families with children and what they could rely on for the benefits of families (including the benefits of both the children and the carer) and the society as a whole will be explored. In addition to their experiences and views, we shall also try to understand the views from different stakeholders on how to improve the present system.



This chapter will introduce the methodology including methods designed and used in data collection and analyses in this study. The limitations and terms used in the study would also be discussed.

3.1 “Service” and “Needs”: some methodological considerations

As stated in the previous two chapters, the study has the objectives of both service stock taking and needs assessment. Although it could be rather straightforward to stock take the existing services, the methodological issue involved is an operational definition of what is meant by existing services, and how to delineate the scope of research. It could be complicated when it comes to needs assessment on services, since it involves a careful discussion on the concept of needs and relevant services and how they are to be operationally defined and measured.

Child Care Services

Although we approach child care from an integrated perspective taking both the welfare or interests of children and women, and the family well-being into considerations, it is both conceptual flaw and practice infeasible to draw too wide a boundary of examination for this study. While it can be argued that services such as Integrated Family Service Centre can be included, the types of service recipients involved are too diverse to include. Likewise, services specifically for women are considered too narrow that sometimes may include those with limited implications to child care. For the purpose of this study, we shall include only services that are primarily set up for child care purpose of families while excluding residential services (for the reason that these children are not taken care of by parents but public institutions). In the service context of Hong Kong, we shall therefore operationally define the following terms:

- “Child Care Services” in this report refer to day care service for children aged 0-12, including both formal / institution services and informal / community services. For services for children under the age of 6, they are governed by Child Care Services Ordinance and Regulations (previously known as Child Care Centres Ordinance and Regulations). After school care service for children 6-12 is included but not the service for the disabled children (integrated programme and Special Child Care Centres).
- “Formal services” usually refer to child care for aged 0-6 other than that provided by families themselves (or domestic care). In recent years in Hong Kong, with the emergence of community / flexible child care services, formal services refer to services for children under the age of 6 operated in institutions like Standalone Child Care Centres and Kindergartens-cum-Child Care Centres. They have to follow the requirements stipulated in Child Care Services Ordinance and Regulations in terms of space, manning ratio and health and hygiene requirement etc. Occasional Child Care Service and Extended Hours Service which link to the centre service, are included here.





- “Informal services” are usually referred to as care by mother / kin / neighbours in the literature. In this study, we refer them to services for children under the age of 6 developed in recent years to meet the gaps from existing formal services. Mutual Help Child Care Centres and Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project (NSCCP) are included. The services emphasize mobilizing resources in community such as inviting / engaging volunteers to participate in the services to provide care to children.

Based on these broad definitions, seven types of services will be covered in this study, namely,

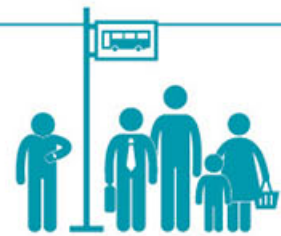
- Standalone Child Care Centre (CCC) (資助獨立幼兒中心)
- Kindergarten-cum-Child Care Centre (KG-cum-CCC) (幼稚園暨幼兒中心)
- Occasional Child Care Service (OCC) (暫託幼兒服務)
- Extended Hours Service (EHS) (延長時間服務)
- Mutual Help Child Care Centre (MHCCC) (互相幼兒中心)
- Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project (NSCCP) (鄰里支援幼兒照顧計劃)
- After School Care Programme (ASCP) (課餘託管服務)

More details of each of these services will be provided in chapter 5. Apart from the kindergarten part, all services are under the auspices of Social Welfare Department (SWD).

Needs

In literature of social service planning, there is a famous classification of needs by Bradshaw (Bradshaw, 1972). Based on Bradshaw, there are four types of needs, namely normative needs, felt needs, expressed needs, and comparative needs. No doubt, a more comprehensive assessment of needs will have to take all these types of needs into consideration. And in fact, even if we focus on one particular type of needs, it is not always easy to measure and assess precisely. For example, felt needs can be measured unless it is felt, but whether a need is felt sometimes depends on how informed the person is; it is not just about the normative judgement of the expert, but about the availability of service in question. In the case of child care service, it is always observed that many parents are indeed not very informed of what services are available. It is not always easy to ask them if they need a certain kind of services, though they may be able to tell whether they have a child care service need.

While it is not easy to arrive at a universally applicable definition of needs, it is still possible to try to capture data from different angles and sources to arrive at a profile of needs on child care that are reasonably objective. In this study, we fully acknowledge the importance of felt needs and normative notion of needs, as users and operators should render the most direct report and / or have an intuitive sense of child care needs in the community. Triangulating these views with some objective data on expressed needs / demand (vis-à-vis supply) of services will therefore enable us to conduct a relative objectively assessment.



In view of the above issues, it is reasonable to employ different strategies to collect data from different sources or target groups. Widely acknowledged in the research literature is that both quantitative and qualitative approaches have their own strengths and weaknesses (Bryman, 1988; Reichardt & Cook, 1979; Silverman, 2001). Some researchers have begun to appreciate that qualitative and quantitative research methods can and should be seen as part of the social researcher's 'toolkit' in order to use the strength of two methods while noting their weakness and try to offset them. As Creswell (2003) noted, "recognizing that all methods have limitations, researchers felt that biases inherent in any single method could neutralize or cancel the biases of other methods" (p.15) and "alternatively, one method can be nested within another method to provide insight into different levels or units of analysis" (p.16).

In view of this, the research team decided to adopt mixed-method approach. Concurrent procedures (Creswell, 2003) were adopted. Secondary data analysis, a telephone survey on services needs, and in-depth interviews and focus groups were employed. These few sets of data would be able to provide sufficiently comprehensive information to answer the research questions.

Target Population of Concern

The primary target of concern of this study is children living in low income families. Considering the scope of services outlined above, we target at those aged 0-12. They are at age ranging from new born to primary education.

Taking the integrated perspective spelled out above, the study will also take special consideration of women who are usually the primary care-takers in the families. That said, male care-takers will not be deliberately excluded in the study.

As a whole, we shall treat both the families and the children and women as equally important subject of concerns. As this study concerns the low-income families, an operational definition will be required. The Research Team of the study considered that those who were slightly higher the poverty line should also be the focus as their income might not be high enough to enable them to rely on alternative child care services including hiring domestic helpers for child care, or to allow one parent to give up work without jeopardizing their basic livelihood. They may equally be in need of formal child care services. Thus "low income" in this study refers to domestic households with monthly household income less than or equal to median monthly domestic household income of corresponding household size.

Two categories are further differentiated within the low income families i.e. "Low Income Households" and "Poverty Households", based on whether their income is lower than or equal to the median household income. Hence, three income categories for households are used in this study:

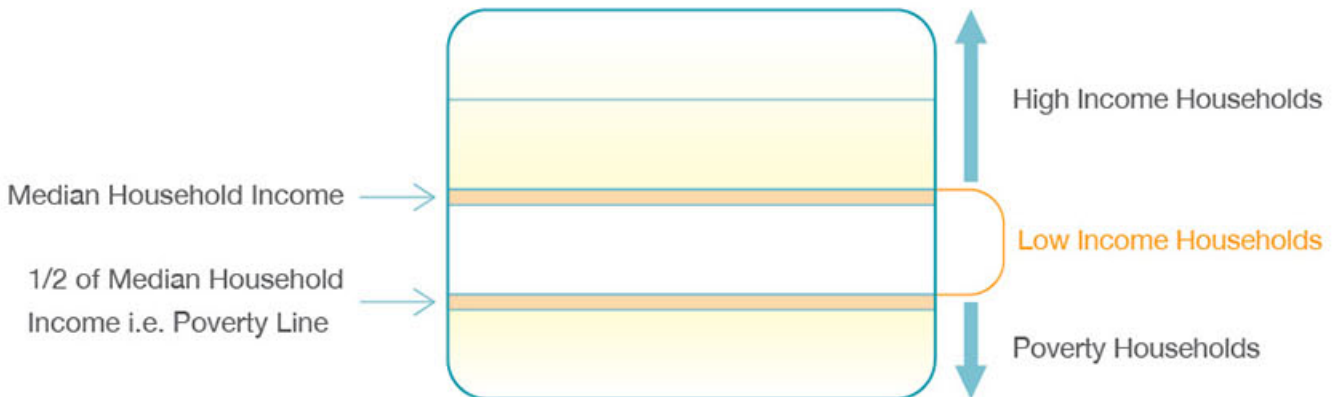
- High Income Households: Households with monthly income above the median monthly income of the corresponding household size.
- Low Income Households: Households with monthly household income less than or equal to the median monthly household income but higher than half of the median monthly household income of the corresponding household size.



- Poverty Households: Households with monthly household less than or equal to half of the median monthly household income of the corresponding household size.

It will be clearer if illustrated in the diagram below:

Figure 3.1 Household types by income



(Please refer to Appendix 1 for the income level of these 3 household groups)

Data Collection

Three methods were used to collect data for this study, namely, secondary data obtained from the government, in-depth interviews and focus groups and a telephone survey. They were used for different purposes and according to depth of information needed.

Quantitative Data Collection

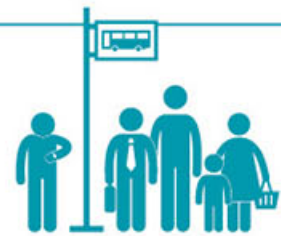
- *Secondary data analysis*

Population statistics from Census and Statistics Department, relevant policy documents from related government departments and service providers were collected to analyse the service capacity of various types of child care services and community needs for different types of child care services. The boundary of services concerned has been reported above.

- *Territory-wide telephone survey on opinion of parents*

In order to understand the child care service needs and gaps, a territory-wide telephone survey involving parents with children aged 0-12 was conducted, with the purpose of assessing community needs for different types of child care service.

The Council commissioned the Public Opinion Programme at The University of Hong Kong to conduct the captioned survey from June to August 2014. The target population was parents in low-income households. A sample of 941 parents who were Cantonese speaking, aged 18 or above and with at least 1 child aged 0-12 was selected by random sampling strategy and successfully interviewed. Among them, 501 were with a household income of less than or equal to the median monthly household income. Detailed survey method employed in this telephone survey is shown in Appendix 1.



Qualitative Data Collection

In-depth interviews and focus groups

In-depth interviews and focus groups were conducted involving:

- operators of existing child care services to collect views on the roles performed by different services and obstacles faced by them etc. Former child care service professionals (experts) who were experienced in operation / education and with prestige in the field were also interviewed;
- NGOs that tried out new initiatives to bridge service gaps identified in existing services;
- other stakeholders like schools, on their respective roles in providing child care services; and
- parents with young children from low income families on obstacles that hinder them from getting adequate service and any unsatisfied needs etc.

A total of 10 interviews and 12 focus groups were conducted involving 97 persons. They were conducted during the period from November 2013 to November 2014.

Interviews with different groups of informants were guided by different sets of interview guide (Appendix 2). Though with different emphases in different groups of informants, all questions pertain to their understanding and views on child care policy / provision and service development as well as the problems or difficulties they perceived and experienced.

In-depth interviews:

No. of interviews conducted	Categories of party (No. of participants attended)
4	Child care service operators (7)
2	Experts in child care services (2)
2	School personnel (3)
2	Policy makers (3)

Focus groups:

No. of focus groups held	Categories of party (No. of participants attended)
7	Parents with young children from low income families (31)
1	NGOs operating new initiatives (9)
3	Service operators and related stakeholders (17)
1	Other stakeholders (25)



With the permission of the interviewees, the interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis. An initial framework was established after the first reading of the transcripts, then first-level coding and followed by the second-level coding. Meanings and relationships were explored within and across cases. Triangulation of methods and different sources of data (in-depth interviews, focus groups, and telephone survey) could help to understand the reality of whether and how the child care services in Hong Kong could help the parents take care of their children.

3.2 Limitations

The methods used in capturing views on “needs” for child care services

While there are different methods in assessing the “needs” for different social services, the above methods were employed to collect quantitative and qualitative data in capturing views of different stakeholders. The child care “needs” of families, in this sense, could be portrayed by the existing child care arrangement and the choices available for families, with assessment on their affordability of different services. Therefore, the study does not aim to evaluate quality and performance of individual service programmes but the roles and coordination of different services in meeting the needs of different types of family. While we understand individual interviewees may not have the full knowledge of the existing systems, the data collected could help inform our inquiry on the existing situation by their knowledge generated from daily experience and see essential elements and components for better child care services.

Age range used for services for children aged 0-12

The current setting of different child care services and education is mainly divided according to the developmental stages of children (i.e. by their age). The present study also adopts these different age ranges of children (0-2/3; 2/3-6; 6-12) to show the possible needs of children / families in different stages of child development (i.e. infant, pre-school education, primary education etc.). The way to separate different services by age range, therefore, does not necessarily correspond to the actual developmental stage of individual children but more a reflection of the service segmentation / categorization. For example, children aged 3 are normally ready for kindergarten education, however, children entering kindergarten in September (commencement of school year) can be as young as 2 years 8 months in existing practice.

Other concerns

This study is on child care services as a whole to families, with focus on examining the provision in relation to the facilitation of choices of dual earners in low income families. The examination of child care programmes specifically targeted at the alleviation / eradication of intergenerational poverty like Head Start programmes in the States or Sure Start in the UK are not included here. The present study provides a general picture of the child day care services available for children while quality of individual services and facilities for children with particular needs shall be examined by further comprehensive research.



To explore the child care needs of the low income families, we shall start with analysing the demographic data to understand the changing needs of families with children aged 0-12. Most of the statistics shown in this chapter was obtained from 2001 and 2011 Population Census and 2006 Population By-Census. Some earlier years' data were also referred to. From this analysis, we shall be able to get an insight into how and what families may potentially be in need of child care services.

4.1 Changes in Hong Kong families

The demographic structure has gone under significant changes in the past 25 years. The key features are as below listed.

- **Drop and recent bounce back in birth rate and number of births**

The crude birth rate was becoming lower and lower in the past 2 decades, but there was a bounce back in 2011 and 2012 which was considered to be the result of having more mothers from China to give births in Hong Kong. It decreased from 12.0 in 1991 to 8.1 in 2000 but bounced back to 13.5 and 12.8 in 2011 and 2012 respectively. In 2013 it dropped back to 7.9, which was also considered as the result of the administrative measure to control the said phenomenon.

Table 4.1 Number of births and birth rate 1991-2013

Year	Number of Births ('000)	Crude birth rate
1991	68.3	12.0
1996	63.3	9.9
2000	54.1	8.1
2006	65.6	9.6
2010	88.6	8.1
2011	95.5	13.5
2012	91.6	12.8
2013	57.1	7.9



The number of children aged 0-12 also fluctuated accordingly. It decreased from 939,617 in 2001 to 675,680 in 2011. However, due to the bounce back of birth rate in 2011 and 2012, the number of children aged 0-2 (150,129 in 2011) was 26.3% higher than that in 2006 (118,866), while it was 149,092, in 2001.



Table 4.2 Number of households and no. of persons in households from 2001 to 2011

Year	Number of Households (%#)	Number of persons in households (%#)
2001	602,985 (29.4%)	2,456,944 (39.1%)
2006	546,814 (24.6%)	2,124,698 (32.9%)
2011	487,417 (20.6%)	1,862,954 (28.1%)

#% of total population

Table 4.3 Number of households with children aged 0-12 and breakdown of children aged 0-12 in these households from 1991 to 2011

Year	Number of children aged 0-12	Number of children by age*	
		0-2	200,966
1991	990,972	0-3	268,515
		0-6	489,318
		6-12	578,049
		0-2	195,165
1996	968,683	0-3	267,224
		0-6	486,170
		6-12	556,503
		0-2	149,092
2001	939,617	0-3	209,934
		0-6	435,162
		6-12	584,420
		0-2	118,866
2006	770,007	0-3	165,902
		0-6	325,238
		6-12	501,131
		0-2	150,129
2011	675,680	0-3	201,539
		0-6	346,317
		6-12	375,681
		0-2	150,129

* The age ranges of "0-2" / "0-3" / "0-6" / "6-12" are specified to fit in the age ranges served in existing child day care services

- **Fewer children aged 0-12 per households**

Families tend to have fewer children over the years, hence, the number of children that has to be cared for by each family is also decreasing. In 2001, among the families with children aged 0-12, 60.1% of them had only one child. In 2011, this percentage increased to 69.5%.



Table 4.4 Number of households with children aged 0-12 in 2001, 2006 and 2011

Number of child(ren) aged 0-12	2001		2006		2011	
	Number of households	%#	Number of households	%#	Number of households	%#
1	362,687	60.1%	369,143	67.5%	338,873	69.5%
2	203,677	33.8%	159,018	29.1%	134,307	27.6%
3	31,676	5.3%	16,537	3.0%	12,775	2.6%
4 or above	4,945	0.8%	2,116	0.4%	1,462	0.3%

#% of total population

- **Less extended families**

The need of child care does not only depend on the number of children in households but also on the family structure. The structure of the family has also been changing in the past 20 years. The form of nuclear family has been on the increase while the form of extended family decreases. In 1991, 61.6% of the households was nuclear family households. In 2011 it changed to 66.3%. The fading out of extended families also sheds light on the support that families can get from extended family members in child care.

Table 4.5 Households by household composition 1991-2011

Household by household composition	Year				
	1991	1996	2001	2006	2011
One person households	14.8%	14.9%	15.6%	16.5%	17.1%
Nuclear family households	61.6%	63.6%	66.2%	66.9%	66.3%
Relative households	21.6%	19.2%	16.5%	14.3%	14.5%
Other households	2.0%	2.2%	1.7%	2.2%	2.1%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: 2006 Population By-census and 2011 Population Census, Census and Statistics Department

- **Median Age for first marriage and for first childbirth is advancing to later ages**

The age of first marriage for both female and male was deferred to later ages in the past 2 decades. For female it was 26.2 years old in 1991 while it became 28.9 in 2013. For male, the age changed from 29.1 in 1991 to 31.1 in 2013. Same pattern appeared in the median age of woman at first childbirth. The median age was 28.1 in 1991 while it became 31.3 in 2013.



Table 4.6 Median age of first marriage and median age of women at first childbirth 1991-2013

Year	Median age for first marriage		Median age of women at first childbirth
	Female	Male	
1991	26.2	29.1	28.1
2001	27.5	30.2	29.4
2011	28.9	31.2	30.0
2012	29.0	31.1	30.5
2013	28.9	31.1	31.3

Source: Demographic Statistics Section, Census & Statistics Department

- **Rise of women in salaried employment**

Another factor that has significant impact on the demand for child care service is the labour force participation rate of women. From 1985 to 2013, the labour force participation rate of women increased from 48.5 to 54.5. If the effect of the aging population during the period was taken into account, the increase in the labour force participation rate of women aged between 15 and 49 (as child bearing years in international statistical usage) was even more drastic.

Table 4.7 Labour force participation rate by sex

Labour Force Participation Rate by Sex (%)			
Year	Male	Female	Both sexes
1985	80.4	48.5	64.8
1991	78.9	47.9	63.5
2001	73.0	50.8	61.5
2011	68.4	53.0	60.1
2012	68.7	53.6	60.5
2013	69.1	54.5	61.2

Source: Census and Statistics Department



4.2 Low income³ families with child(ren) aged 0-12 in Hong Kong

Child poverty persists

In recent years, poverty problem persists. The overall poverty rate⁴ stood at 17.1% in 2012, child (aged 0-14) poverty rate was also high, it was 22.2% in 2012.

Table 4.8 Poverty rate and child poverty rate

Year	Overall		Child (aged 0-14)	
	Poverty Population ('000)	Poverty Rate	Poverty Population ('000)	Poverty Rate
2001	1,150	17.7%	240	22.3%
2002	1,190	18.3%	250	23.7%
2003	1,140	17.6%	220	21.6%
2004	1,180	18.1%	230	23.1%
2005	1,140	17.4%	210	22.0%
2006	1,160	17.6%	210	22.4%
2007	1,180	17.7%	210	22.4%
2008	1,170	17.6%	210	22.8%
2009	1,190	17.7%	190	22.3%
2010	1,210	17.9%	200	22.9%
2011	1,150	17.1%	180	22.3%
2012	1,160	17.1%	180	22.2%

Source: Poverty Statistics, HKCSS

About 22.5% of the families with children aged 12 and below were with income less than or equal to half of the median monthly household income (i.e. Poverty Households as explained in paragraph 3.1). This was higher than that in 2006 & 2001. For low income families (household income less than or equal to the median monthly household income of respective household size), 51.9 % of the families with children aged 0-12 was with income less than or equal to the median monthly household income.

³ As this study mainly concerns itself with the child care needs of the low income families, a definition of low income families is needed. The most convenient and publicly intelligible definition will be the poverty line adopted by the Commission on Poverty. However, the Research Team considered that that definition might not be entirely relevant to the service context in which this study was situated. While those with income below the poverty line were the targets of our attention, those who were with income slightly higher than the poverty line should also be given attention to as their income might not be high enough to enable them to have alternative child care like hiring domestic workers to take care of the children, or to allow one parent to give up work without jeopardizing their basic livelihood. They were equally in need of formal child care services and were therefore included.

⁴ The Hong Kong government adopted poverty line in 2013. Before that, The Hong Kong Council of Social Service (the Council) compiled and publicized the poverty rate using statistics from Census & Statistics Department. The definition of poverty (low income) adopted by the Council was: low income households refer to those domestic households with monthly household income less than or equal to half of the median monthly domestic household income of the corresponding household size. As this report discussed poverty situation as early as 2001, poverty data of the Council were used here.



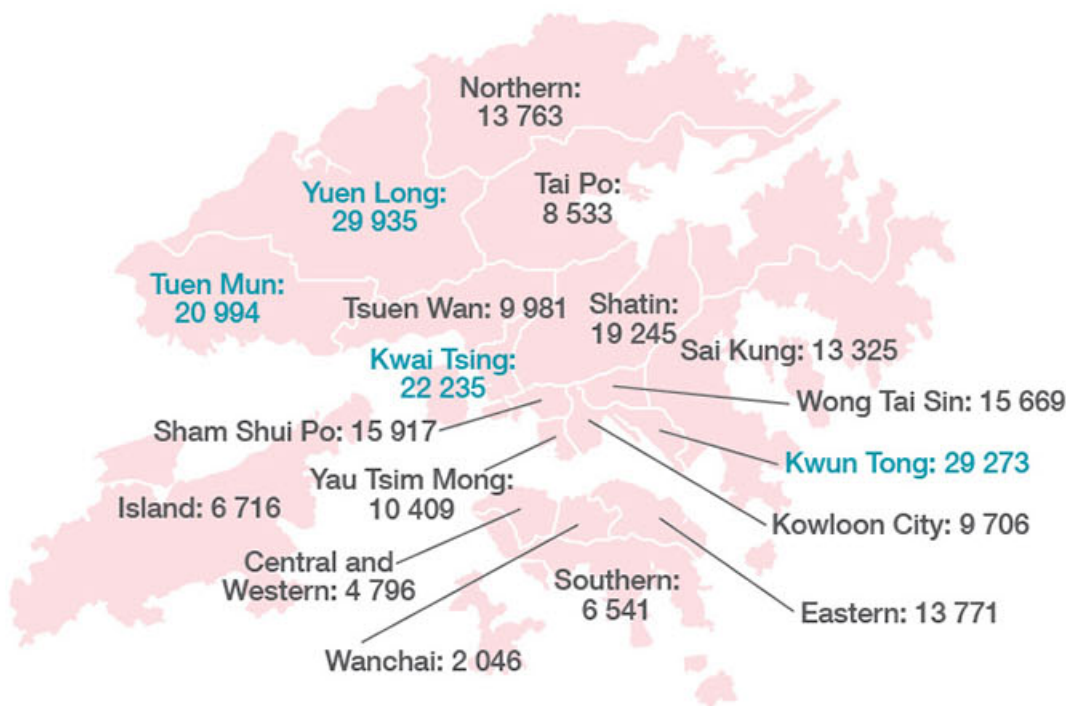
Table 4.9 Number of households with child(ren) aged 0-12 by income group in 2001, 2006 and 2011

Year	Number of households with at least 1 child aged 0-12	Number of households with household income less than or equal to the median monthly household income of respective household size	Number of households with household income less than or equal to half of the median monthly household income of respective household size
		(%)	(%)
2001	602,985	331,901	123,550
		(55.0%)	(20.5%)
2006	546,814	291,293	121,498
		(53.3%)	(22.2%)
2011	487,417	252,873	109,592
		(51.9%)	(22.5%)

Child poverty by district

Figure 4.1 below shows the number of low income households with children aged 0-12 by district in 2011. Data showed that these children were not evenly distributed among districts. Yuen Long was the district with the highest number of low income households with children in poverty among the 18 districts. Followed by Kwun Tong and Tuen Mun. Compared to Wanchai (district with the lowest child poverty figure), the number of low income households with children in poverty in Yuen Long was almost 15 times higher.

Figure 4.1 Low income households with child(ren) aged 0-12 in 18 districts, 2011





Summary and Observation

- Though the birth rate becomes lower and the total number of children aged 0-12 is decreasing over the years, the total number is still substantial. It was 675,680 in 2011. The child care responsibility for the related families and the community to take is still of concern. Moreover, there was a bounce back in birth rate in 2011 and 2012. The possible increase in service needs should be noted.
- Today's families have fewer children. Parents tend to have higher expectation on child care. On the other hand, with nuclear type of family dominates, more families have to rely on themselves to take up the child care function.
- More women participate in the labour force in recent decades. It is believed that the trend will continue. This also means that leaving of employment to take care of the child(ren) will affect more women and their family and that it will have greater impact to the labour force. The need for taking care of the child(ren) other than the mother herself is becoming more prominent.
- Poverty problem persists and the total number of children from low income households stood at 180,000 in 2012, a situation that the community should give attention to. The low income families will face dilemma of whether to have one parent to stay at home to take care of the children or to have both parents working so as to secure income for livelihood.
- Low income population does not distribute evenly in 18 districts. The number of children aged 0-12 and that of children from low income households are not evenly distributed in districts. Some districts have more low income households (and hence the number of children). Service planning and development have to take this into consideration.



To understand the service gaps, an overview of the policy development and provision of child care services is required. In this chapter, the policy, the provision of different services and their utilization, and also the provision of subsidy to parents would be highlighted.

5.1 Policy of child care services

Philosophy behind the policy

The existence of child care services dated back to the post war period. However, the services have not been developed in a pace that child care field and parents expect all these years. An examination on the philosophy behind the services will help explain the phenomenon.

Parents are responsible for child care and government plays a residual role

In the policy papers, Hong Kong government emphasizes the importance of family on child care and development:

“In the course of the future development of welfare services, emphasis will continue to be placed on the importance of the family unit as the primary provider of care and welfare, and thus on the need to preserve and support it”⁵ (1991 White Paper on Social Welfare into the 1990s and Beyond).

“The overall objectives of child welfare services are to support and strengthen families so that they can provide a suitable environment for the physical, emotional and social development of their children”⁶ (The Five Year plan for Social Welfare Development in Hong Kong – Review 1998).

“Parents are responsible for taking care of their young children...”⁷ (Third Report of the HKSAR of the People’s Republic of China under the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women).

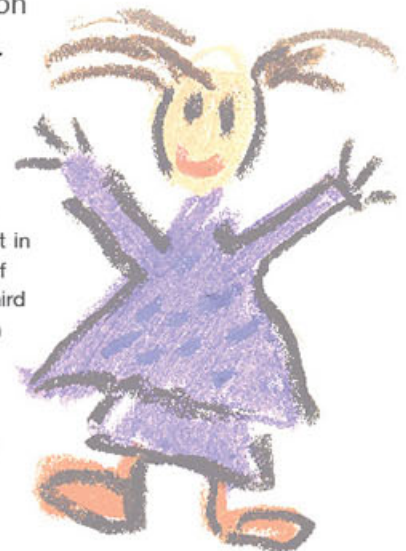
In recent years, there is public call for measures to facilitate women to join the workforce. The government had responded⁸ that the administration was aware of the demand of working parents on child care support.

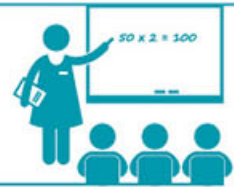
⁵ Working Party on Social Welfare Policies and Services (1991) “Chapter 3” White paper : social welfare into the 1990s and beyond Hong Kong : H.K. Government Printer

⁶ Social Welfare Department, Government of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (1998) “Chapter 4 Family and Child Welfare Services” The Five Year Plan for Social Welfare Development in Hong Kong – Review 1998. Retrieved from: http://www.swd.gov.hk/doc/pubctn_ch/e5yrplan.pdf

⁷ Labour and Welfare Bureau, Government of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (2012) Third Report of the HKSAR of the People’s Republic of China under the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. Retrieved from: http://www.lwb.gov.hk/UNCEDAW/documents/CEDAW_3rd_report_E.pdf

⁸ “Women Employment” and Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat for the joint meeting of the Panel on Manpower and Panel on Welfare Services on 9 December 2013. LC Paper No. CB(2) 438/13-14(01) and CB(2) 438/13-14 (02)





That the SWD “has been subsidizing non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to run a variety of child care services for children of different ages” and government noted the need to increase flexibility (e.g. extend the service hours during weekday nights, weekends and public holidays) of the services.

Though with such move / measures in recent years, there is no sign that the underlying philosophy has been changed. As the policy assumption guides the provision and service design etc, there is a need to review the philosophy or ideology behind the child care services, in light of the changing socio-economic needs.

Overseas experience

While noting Hong Kong’s situation, it is worthy to take a look at some overseas countries’ policy goals in child care. These countries place importance in child care and formulate policy goals that acknowledge the complexity of child care needs of families.

OECD raised the importance for the government to forge a broad but realistic vision of early childhood services to which all relevant ministries, local authorities and parents could subscribe⁹. The policy makers can organise children’s services “in a manner that serves important social and economic objectives, such as, ensuring labour supply, equality of opportunity for women, family well-being and social inclusion. Well-organised services will support parents in child-rearing, provide opportunity to women to work and help to include low-income and immigrant families in the community and society”. Therefore, the policy on child care support to families does not only function as a service itself but that other social objectives could be embedded in the system so that it could be one of the major areas population policies can lie on.

In **Sweden**, female and maternal employment rates are among the highest in the European Union, and child poverty is among the lowest. The country’s family policy aims at supporting the dual-earner family model and ensuring the same rights and obligations regarding family and work are for both women and men. Generous spending on family benefits, flexible leave and working hours for parents with young children and affordable, high-quality child care are the main factors for success. The aim of the Swedish financial family policy is to contribute to improved conditions for good living standards for all families with children, increased freedom of choice and empowerment of parents¹⁰. Although the tax system of Sweden is different from Hong Kong (i.e. with higher level of taxation), its policy goal in enabling employment choices for both the mothers and fathers are worthy to note.

In **Singapore**, the Early Years Development Framework (EYDF) was set up by the Ministry of Community Development in 2011¹¹. It adopted a “Unifying Approach to the Provision of Care, Development and Education” and with vision of ‘Children being Secure, Confident, Safe and Healthy’, ‘Children being Involved, Engaged and Enquiring’ and ‘Centres, Families and the Community Connecting and Relating’.

⁹ OECD (ed.) 2006 “Executive Summary,” pp. 11–18 in, *Starting Strong II: Early Childhood Education and Care*. Paris: OECD.

¹⁰ European Platform in Investing in Children. http://europa.eu/epic/countries/sweden/index_en.htm

¹¹ Early Childhood Development Agency. <http://www.eoda.gov.sg/PressReleases/Pages/Early-Years-Development-Framework-%28EYDF%29.aspx>



5.2 Types of child care services

(An overview of different types of child day care services and their operation duration is mapped out in Appendix 3)

5.2.1 Services for children aged 0-6

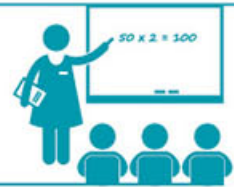
There are traditionally two types of child care service, that is, day crèche for under two and day nursery for children between two and six years of age. There are also ancillary services to these two services i.e. the Occasional Child Care and Extended Hours of Service. A major development in recent years was the harmonisation of day nurseries with kindergartens in 2005. Day crèche service was named as Standalone Child Care Centre and covered children aged 0-3 and the day nursery was re-named as “Nursery School” or “Kindergarten-cum-Child Care Centre” for children aged 2-6. The formal and informal child care services for children under 6 with their usual operation duration, consist of the following:

Formal Services

- Aided **Standalone Child Care Centre (CCC)**
 - provides care and enhances the development of children below the age of 3; and
 - operation duration: 8a.m. – 6p.m. (Monday – Friday) and 8a.m. – 1p.m. (Saturday)
- **Kindergarten-cum-Child Care Centre (KG-cum-CCC)**
 - provides education and care and enhances the development of children aged between 2 and under 6 years old; and
 - operation duration: 8:45a.m. – 4:30p.m. (Monday – Friday)

The KG-cum-CCC that used to operate service with longer service hours is called “**long whole-day Kindergarten-cum-Child Care Centres**”. The total number of these centres remains at 246 since 2005. The operation duration is 8a.m. to 6p.m. (Monday – Friday) and 8a.m. – 1p.m. (Saturday).

- **Occasional Child Care Service (OCC)**
 - most of the CCCs and long whole-day KG-cum-CCCs provide occasional child care for children whose carers are unable to take care of them for brief periods due to various commitments or sudden engagements; and
 - service’s operation duration is the same as the centre it adheres to.
- **Extended Hours Service (EHS)**
 - most of the CCCs and long whole-day KG-cum-CCCs provide extended hours service to meet the social needs of families and working parents who need longer hours of child care assistance; and
 - operation duration: 6:00p.m. onwards with 8:00p.m. being the latest and the operating hours in Saturdays vary amongst the programmes.



Informal Services

Although the portion of formal / institution service constitutes the major bulk of child day care services, there emerged other modes of service in the past decade. The SWD had explored the development of more flexible types of alternative child care services such as foster day care (a pilot 2-year project had been tried out in April 2003) and day small group home (a new service was tried out in Dec 2007) in 2000s. Operators of these services reflected that as they were not district-based, parents found difficult to use them. Both of these two services were terminated soon and a 3-year pilot Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project was launched in 2008-09. Mutual Help Child Care Centre was also tried out in early 2000s. There leave two services now:

- **Mutual Help Child Care Centre (MHCCC)**
 - community based service whereby parents are encouraged to help each other in child care; and
 - flexible in operation duration

- **Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project (NSCCP)**
 - the service was tried out in 2008-09, with one project in each of the 11 districts. It became regular service in 2010-11 and was extended to 18 districts in 2011-12. It was originally for children aged 0-6 and the serving age was extended to under 9 in 2014-15. There is centre-based service and service at community nanny's home. The community nanny is a volunteer offering the service with incentive payments from service operators; and
 - operation duration: 7a.m. – 11p.m. all year round for home-based service. For centre-based service, it is 7a.m. – 11p.m. for Monday to Friday / Saturday / public holidays.

5.2.2 Services for children aged 6-12

There is **After School Care Programme (ASCP)** for children aged 6-12

- the programme is run by the social service centres on self-financed mode and is a fee charging service. Services include tutorial class for school work, education, skills learning and social activities. SWD provides fee waiving places for needy families.
- starting 2014-15, with government input, some of the programmes extend the service hours till 9p.m. (originally till 6/7p.m., from Monday to Friday) and in Saturdays, Sundays and school holidays.

(It should be noted that the Community Care Fund under the Commission on Poverty launched the Community Care Fund – After-school Care Pilot Scheme since the 2012/13 school year. The Education Bureau (EDB) implements the Scheme. The Scheme provides after school care to needy primary one to secondary three students from low-income families for integrated after school learning and supplementary activities. There were 98 schools / NGOs participated in this project in 2014/15 school year¹².)

The EDB has also implemented the School-based After-School Learning and Support Programmes. It supports the disadvantaged students to participate in after school activities with a view to facilitating their whole-person development and personal growth¹³.)

¹² Community Care Fund website (2015). Retrieved from: http://www.communitycarefund.hk/download/Progress_of_Assistance_Programmes_to.pdf

¹³ The website of Education Bureau. Retrieved from: <http://www.edb.gov.hk/en/student-parents/support-subsidies/after-sch-learning-support-program/index.html>



5.3 Provision and utilization

It was stated in the 1991 White Paper that the planning ratio for day nurseries (for children aged 2 to 6) at that time was 100 aided places for every 20,000 of the general population. However, the standard has not been reviewed all these years. In fact both the day nursery service and day crèche service had undergone freezing and / or reduction in capacity in the past decade (see below). Nowadays, no planning standard could be quoted for the service provision of the child care services. The provision and utilization of different child care services in recent years are listed out below.

5.3.1 Services for children aged 0-6

Formal services

The following table contains the provision and utilization rate of the aided day care service for children (centre-based) from 2001 to 2013-14.

Table 5.1 Utilization of child day care services (2001 – 2013-14)

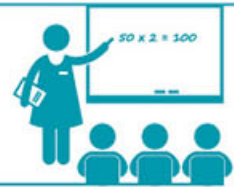
Year	Aided Day Nursery (DN) ¹⁴	Aided Day Creche (DC) ¹⁵	Standalone CCC (for aged below 3)	Occasional Child Care Service	Extended Hours Service
	No. of Places (No of Centres) [Utilization Rate / Average Enrolment Rate*]	No. of Places (No of Centres) [Utilization Rate / Average Enrolment Rate*]	No. of Places (No of Centres) [Utilization Rate / Average Enrolment Rate*]	No. of Places (No of Centres) [Utilization Rate / Average Enrolment Rate*]	No. of Places (No of Centres) [Utilization Rate / Average Enrolment Rate*]
2001	29,314 (258) [88%]	1,153 (18) [83%]	N.A.	738 (236) [64%]	1,610 (112) [48%] [#]
2002	29,283 (258) [87%]	1,113 (17) [84%]		726 (232) [62%]	1,680 (118) [54%]
2003-04	28,973 (257) [83%]	944 (14) [84%]		717 (222) [47%]	1,518 (108) [56%]
2004-05	28,781 (256) [82%]	952 (13) [87%]		708 (219) [65%]	1,504 (107) [64%]
2005-06	N.A. (The service statistics have been categorized under the provision of KG-cum-CCC).	N.A. (The service statistics have been categorized under the provision of Standalone CCC).		694 (13) [92%]	556 (223) [69%]
2006-07			685 (13) [91%]	550 (221) [73%]	1,244 (104) [88%]
2007-08			666 (12) [95%]	548 (220) [70%]	1,244 (104) [88%]
2008-09			682 (12) [97%]	547 (219) [56%]	1,244 (104) [85%]
2009-10			690 (12) [98%]	545 (217) [49%]	1,230 (103) [77%]
2010-11			690 (12) [98%]	545 (217) [59%]	1,230 (103) [80%]
2011-12			690 [99%]	434(217) [62%]	1230 [84%]
2012-13			690 [100%]	434(217) [71%]	1230 [81%]
2013-14	690 [100%]	434(217) [71%]	1230 [78%]		

Source: Social Welfare Department Annual Report 2001; 2002; Social Welfare Department Review 2003 & 2004 to 2009-10 & 2010-11; replies to initial written questions raised by Finance Committee Members in examining the Estimates of Expenditure 2013-14, 2014-15, 2015-16, Secretary for Labour and Welfare

* the rate was Utilization Rate in 2001 & 2002, it was Average Enrolment Rate in 2003-04 & 2004-05 and back to Utilization Rate in 2005-06 and onwards
[#] up to Dec 2001

¹⁴ Statistics on Aided Day Nursery were up to Aug 2005 before harmonisation of pre-primary services. Thereafter, all day nurseries & day nursery-cum-day crèche centres were converted to Kindergarten-cum-CCCs under the then Education & Manpower Bureau (EMB)

¹⁵ Upon implementation of the 2005 harmonisation exercise, EMB (now Education Bureau (EDB)) supervises institutions providing education services to children aged 3 to 6, whereas SWD (through Child Care Services Ordinance and Regulations) supervises centres providing child care services to children aged below 3 and pre-primary institutes for children aged 0 to 6 with special needs. The number of places before the harmonization consisted of standalone day crèche places and also day nursery-cum-day crèche centre places. As stated in footnote 14, day nursery-cum-day-crèche centres were converted to KG-cum-CCCs after harmonization and the number was therefore not included after that.



The information above shows that

- Aided Day Nursery for aged 2-6 (renamed as “KG-cum-CCC” after harmonisation in 9/2005 and they are the long whole-day KG-cum-CCC):
 - the total provision was decreased since 2001, from 29,314 (258 centres) in 2001 to 28,781 (256 centres) in 2004-05, with reason of shrinkage in child population and declined in enrolment.
(please see below for further analysis of KG-cum-CCC after harmonization)

- Aided Day Creche for aged 0-2 (renamed as Standalone CCC after harmonisation of pre-primary services, the serving age covered is aged 0-3)
 - the total provision was decreased in the period covered; and
 - the Standalone CCC provision was cut in 2005-06. The figure of 690 was kept in 2009-10 till 2013-14 and the utilization rate was 100% or near 100% all these years.

- Occasional Child Care Service
 - the total number of places had been decreased since 2001. It decreased from 738 in 2001 to 545 in 2010/11. In 2009/10, the utilization rate had turned to its lowest point of 49%, but it bounced back to 71% in 2012-13 and 2013-14; and
 - the number of centres is kept at 217 centres since 2009/10.

- Extended Hours Service
 - the number of places has kept on decreasing since 2002. It decreased from 1,680 in 2002 to 1,230 in 2009/10 and stagnated since then. The utilization rate keeps on increasing from 48% in 2001 to 88% in 2006/07 and 2007/08. After 2007/08, the utilization rate decreased a little bit but kept between 77% to 84% these years.

Long whole-day KG-cum-CCC after harmonization

Among the services for children aged under 6, statistics for long whole-day KG-cum-CCCs are most difficult to obtain. Upon harmonisation of pre-primary services in September 2005, information on KG-cum-CCCs is included in government statistics on “Kindergartens”. Currently, there are different forms of kindergartens in existence –some are kindergartens only but some are kindergarten and child care centres; some are profit making and some non-profit making; some offer half day service (around 3 to 3.5 hours service per day) and some whole-day service (around 7 to 7.5 service hours per day including time for lunch and afternoon nap) etc.

In this study, we focused on non-profit making KG-cum-CCCs. From the information Labour and Welfare Bureau (LWB) supplied to the Legislative Council¹⁶, the total number of non-profit making kindergartens (including KG-cum-CCCs) which provided whole-day service was 626 in 2012/13, 635 in 2013/14 and 629 in 2014/15. The Joint Office for Kindergartens & Child Care Centres of EDB and the LWB provided the following information on number of students enrolled in non-profit-making KGs & KG-cum-CCCs.

¹⁶ Legislative Council paper No. CB(2)1319/14-15(04), April 28, 2015



Table 5.2 Number and enrolment of non-profit-making Kindergarten-cum-Child Centres by operation session and extended hours service from 2012/13 to 2014/15 school year

	School Year		
	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
No. of Non-profit-making KG (including KG-cum-CCC)			
- Operation whole and half day	393	393	386
- Operation whole-day only	233	242	243
Total:	626	635	629
Whole-day Places (a)	46,395	47,684	47,817
Whole-day Enrolment (b)	43,168	45,082	45,527
Utilization rate (%) (b) / (a)	93%	94.5%	95.2%
No. of Non-profit-making KG-cum-CCC			
- Operation whole and half day	123	118	116
- Operation whole-day only	226	232	233
Total:	349	350	349
Whole-day Places (a)	28,891	29,334	29,404
Whole-day Enrolment (b)	26,825	27,778	28,060
Utilization rate (%) (b) / (a)	92.9%	94.7%	95.4%
Extended Hours Service			
No. of centres	97	97	97
No. of places	1,182	1,182	1,182

The above table tries to delineate the places, enrollment and utilization rate of kindergartens and KG-cum-CCCs. It shows that there are only 47,817 non-profit making whole-day Kindergarten (including KG-cum-CCC) places for children aged 2-6 in Hong Kong in 2014/15 school year. For long whole-day KG-cum-CCCs, no exact data on number of places can be obtained. The best estimation is, the number should be less than 29,404 places (which is the closest figure showing whole day places including long whole day in non-profit making KG-cum-CCC) in 2014/15.

Informal Services

There are two community based child care services - the MHCCC and NSCCP. It can be seen from the table below that the utilization of MHCCC was extremely low – below 10%. The administration's explanation was that it was because of the availability of NSCCP - both had same concept of neighbourhood support and target group for serving .

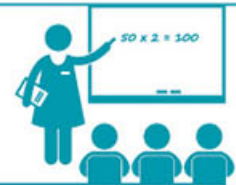


Table 5.3 Alternative child care services implemented by SWD

Year	MHCCC	NSCCP
	No. of Places (No of Centres) [Utilization Rate]	Minimum No. of Places
2001	434 (22 in SWD, 9 in NGOs) [Not Available]	/
2002	364 (15 in SWD, 11 in NGOs) [Not Applicable, N.A.]	/
2003-04	434 (13 SWD, 18 NGOs) [N.A.]	/
2004-05	364 (5 SWD, 21 NGOs) [N.A.]	/
2005-06	333 (5 SWD, 19 NGOs) [7.8%*]	/
2006-07	389 (6 SWD, 22 NGOs) [6.3%#]	/
2007-08	305 (22) [7.8%]	/
2008-09	314 (23) [8.4%]	(3-year pilot project)
2009-10	314 (23) [8%]	(pilot project continued)
2010-11	300 (22) [8%]	(pilot project continued)
2011-12	314 [7%]	720
2012-13	314 [8%]	720
2013-14	314 [8%]	720

Source: Social Welfare Department Annual Report 2001; 2002; SWD Review 2003 & 2004 to 2009-10 & 2010-11; replies to initial written questions raised by Finance Committee Members in examining the Estimates of Expenditure 2013-14, 2014-15, 2015-16, Secretary for Labour and Welfare

* It was stated in SWD Review 2005-06 & 2006-07 that since the MHCCCs operated by SWD were located at the Integrated Family Service Centres (IFSCs) and their operating hours followed those of IFSCs or on a need basis, it was not appropriate to calculate the utilization rate of MHCCCs operated by SWD according to the operating session of the MHCCCs operated by the NGOs. Hence, the figures on the Utilization rate were only reflecting the position of the places provided by the NGOs.

This refers to NGO centres only, same applies to subsequent years

5.3.2 Services for children aged 6-12

The below table shows the service provision of the subsidized ASCP under SWD.

Table 5.4 After school care programme

Year	Service Provision
2001	6,000 subvented places
2002	6,000 subsidised places
2003 & 2004	830 full fee waiving places
2005-06 2006-07	1,540 full fee waiving places
2007-08 2008-09	1,540 full fee waiving places
2009-10 2010-11	1,540 full fee waiving places
2011-12	1,425
2012-13	1,520
2013-14	1,606.5

In 2005-06, recurrent funding increased from \$10M to \$15M, for provision of fee-waiving places to parents who cannot afford the service and are unable to take care of their children after school as a result of being engaged in open employment or employment related retraining/attachment programmes

Source: Social Welfare Department Annual Report 2001; 2002; SWD Review 2003 & 2004 to 2009-10 & 2010-11 and replies to initial written questions raised by Finance Committee Members in examining the Estimates of Expenditure 2013-14, 2014-15, 2015-16, Secretary for Labour and Welfare



5.4 Hidden service gaps and needs in districts

As parents will only use the child care services that are easily accessible to them, child care is a district specific service. Just comparing the total sum of service provision and service need can give us a general idea but this is not enough for analysis. Statistics have to be broken down into district level for study.

For example, the table below shows that there were over 150,000 children aged 0-2 in Hong Kong in 2011. However, the total capacity for CCCs was only 676; also, some districts did not even have such service provision (e.g. Kwun Tong, Wong Tai Sin and Sai Kung etc). As shown in Table 5.1, the utilization rate had already reached 100% in recent years which means that there was demand, but the provision had not been adjusted accordingly these years. Accessibility including availability is issue of concern.

Table 5.5 Number of children aged 0-2 and service provision of Standalone Child Care Centres in 18 districts in 2011

Districts	Number of children aged 0-2 in Hong Kong, 2011 (a)	Service quota of Standalone Child Care Centres (b)	Ratio (b): (a)
Wanchai	3,572	96	1 : 161
Eastern	11,921		
Southern	5,190		
Central & Western	6,407	40	1 : 382
Island	3,680		
Yau Tsim Mong	8,567		
Kowloon City	8,157	144	1 : 116
Sham Shui Po	8,264		
Sai Kung	10,533	0	0
Wong Tai Sin	6,634		
Kwun Tong	12,367	0	0
Kwai Tsing	9,577		
Tsuen Wan	7,738	102	1 : 170
Tuen Mun	10,321		
Yuen Long	12,785	64	1 : 200
Northern	6,562	48	1 : 253
Tai Po	5,576		
Sha Tin	12,262	70	1 : 175
Overall	150,113	676*	1 : 222

* The figure of 676 refers to places for children aged 0-2 and does not include places for age 2-3

As for long whole-day KG-cum-CCCs, no information on provision by district could be obtained from related government office. The following table shows by-district population of children aged 2-6 could shed light on the difference in demand in 18 districts.

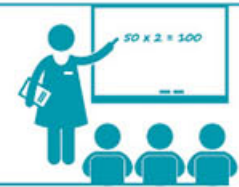


Table 5.6 Number of children aged 2-6 and service provision of long whole-day Kindergarten-cum-Child Care Centres in 18 districts

Districts	Number of children aged 2-6 in Hong Kong, 2011	Service Provision of long whole-day Kindergarten-cum-Child Care Centres
Wanchai	5,413	Less than 29,404*
Eastern	18,809	
Southern	8,936	
Central & Western	9,304	
Island	6,240	
Yau Tsim Mong	12,567	
Kowloon City	13,139	
Sham Shui Po	13,162	
Sai Kung	17,136	
Wong Tai Sin	11,740	
Kwun Tong	21,342	
Kwai Tsing	17,123	
Tsuen Wan	12,488	
Tuen Mun	15,793	
Yuen Long	21,112	
Northern	10,989	
Tai Po	9,043	
Sha Tin	20,290	
Overall	244,626	

* see Table 5.1

5.5 Assistance to families with financial need

Affordability is another important factor affecting the utilization of the service. What is the fee level of different services now and whether there are effective assistance schemes to parents are important determinators.

Fee assistance in ASCP and NSCCP

There is Fee Waiving Subsidy Scheme for children using After School Care Programme. Families with monthly income at or below 55% of Median Monthly Domestic Household Income (MMDHI) will receive full fee-waiving. Families with monthly income above 55% but not exceeding 75% of MMDHI will receive half fee-reduction. The number of full fee waiving places in past years was shown in previous section (Table 5.4).

Fee charging of NSCCP is determined by service operators and approved by SWD. There are full or half fee waiving for low income families with social needs.



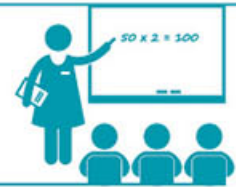
Fee assistance for formal services for children aged below 6

The fee assistance scheme in day crèches and day nurseries dated back to 1970s. At the beginning, the eligibility was set at 1-1/3 of Public Assistance. The eligibility criteria were later relaxed and replaced by a sliding scale mode. The harmonisation of pre-primary services in September 2005 was a watershed for changes in the fee assistance schemes to parents.

There are two schemes for parents cover the cost of services (including the Kindergarten and Child Care Centre Fee Remission Scheme (KCFRS) and Pre-primary Education Voucher Scheme (PEVS)). The existing schemes of fee assistance are spelt out in Table 5.7.

Table 5.7 Schemes of financial assistance to needy families (using child care centres and KG-cum-CCCs service)

Type of Child Care Service	Fee Assistance / Remission to Needy Families
Child Care Centre (group aged 0-2) / Child Care Centre (group aged 2-3)	<p>Kindergarten and Child Care Centre Fee Remission Scheme (KCFRS)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - aims to provide assistance to low income families receiving whole day care services in child care centres (day crèches, day nurseries or relevant age groups in Kindergarten-cum-Child Care Centres) registered with Education Bureau / Social Welfare Department, therefore it is means-tested and parents have to demonstrate social needs (e.g. both parents go out to work; children whose parents are chronically ill / disabled etc) - the monthly fee remission will be three levels, namely 50%, 75% and 100% of the actual fee charged by the child care centre or the fee remission ceiling, whichever is the less
Kindergarten-cum-Child Care Centres (KG-cum-CCCs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-primary Education Voucher Scheme (PEVS) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - introduced since 2007, to provide direct fee subsidy for parents with eligible children attending Nursery (K1), Lower (K2) and Upper (K3) classes in local non-profit-making kindergartens / Kindergarten-cum-Child Care Centres / schools offering kindergarten classes under the Scheme - Government holds the view that, a half-day kindergarten programme will suffice for children aged 3 to 6. The assistance is therefore calculated on the basis of school fee for half-day kindergartens • Kindergarten and Child Care Centre Fee Remission Scheme (KCFRS) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 3 levels of assistance (100%, 75%, 50% remission) and a common means-testing mechanism that applies to all student financial assistance schemes from pre-primary to tertiary level - the percentage of fee remission under KCFRS will be calculated after deducting the voucher subsidy. The actual fee remission will be 50%, 75% or 100% of the difference between the actual fee charged by the kindergarten or the fee remission ceiling, whichever is the less, and the voucher value dedicated towards fee subsidy



It is worthy to note the following two observations in relation to PEVS and KCFRS

1) Many families still need to pay substantial fee on top of voucher subsidy

For example, for children entering kindergarten education, they can apply for the PEVS to finance the tuition fee. Table 5.8 shows the situation of parents under subsidies of PEVS. In 2014/15, 84.7% and 99.1% of families with child(ren) under PEVS needed to pay extra amount on top of the voucher subsidy. Referring to Table 5.8 (b), 99.2% of families with child(ren) in whole-day kindergarten under PEVS paid \$4,000 or above per school year¹⁷.

Table 5.8

(a) The number of whole-day and half-day kindergarten students under the Pre-primary Education Voucher Scheme (PEVS)

	2012/13 school year		2013/14 school year		2014/15 school year (Provisional)	
	Half-day	Whole-day	Half-day	Whole-day	Half-day	Whole-day
Number of students under PEVS (a)	90,166	41,272	89,204	42,516	91,350	43,920
Number of students paying school fee on top of the voucher subsidy(b)	77,871	41,201	78,454	42,456	77,404	43,508
Percentage of (b) over (a)	86.4%	99.8%	87.9%	99.9%	84.7%	99.1%
Average amount of school fee on top of the voucher subsidy	\$4,614	\$15,941	\$4,923	\$17,081	\$4,762	\$17,654

(b) The number of whole-day kindergarten students under PEVS

Range of annual school fee above the voucher subsidy	2012/13 school year	2013/14 school year	2014/15 school year (Provisional)
	No. of students (%)	No. of students (%)	No. of students (%)
Below \$1,000	0 (0%)	32 (0.1%)	0 (0%)
\$1,000-less than \$4,000	72 (0.2%)	0 (0%)	342 (0.38%)
\$4,000 or above	41,129 (99.8%)	42,424 (99.9%)	43,166 (99.2%)

2) Families with median income might not be eligible for fee remission to use appropriate services

Table 5.9 lists out the income thresholds for 3-person and 4-person families in KCFRS. For eligible low-income families, they could apply for the KCFRS to get either one of the 3 levels of assistance (100%, 75%, 50% remission) according to their “adjusted family income (AFI)”¹⁸. By the formula that calculates the “adjusted family income” (for 2014/15 school year), families with income level exceeds \$22,038 for a 3-person family and \$27,548 for a 4-person family would exceed the income threshold and receive no subsidies under this mechanism.

¹⁷ Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2015-16 Replies to initial written questions raised by Finance Committee Members in examining the Estimates of Expenditure 2015-16 Director of Bureau :Secretary for Education (Member Question No. 4092 L Reply Serial No.EDB446

¹⁸ Please refer to Student Finance Office, Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency, the government of HKSAR. Website: <http://www.wfsfaa.gov.hk/sfo/tc/schemes/kinder.htm#6>



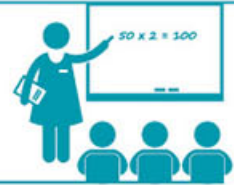
Table 5.9 The income threshold for 3-person and 4-person families for KCFRS, 2014/15 school year

Level of remission	Total monthly income of a 3-person household (AFI x (3+1) / 12 months)	Total monthly income of a 4-person household (AFI x (4+1) / 12 months)
Full remission (100%)	\$ 0- below 13,398	\$0- below 14,247
3/4 remission (75%)	\$13,398 - 13,961	\$14,247 - 17,451
1/2 remission (50%)	\$13,962 - 22,038	\$17,452 - 27,548
No remission	Above \$22,038	Above \$27,548

Comparing the threshold and the median household income, the threshold actually reaches 80% income level of 3-person and 4-person families¹⁹ in the fourth quarter of 2014. Therefore, 3-person or 4-person families earning median household income might not be able to get the subsidies.

The above shows that a high proportion of parents has to pay extra cost on top of PEVS. For students enrolled in whole-day classes, 99.2% of students needed to pay over \$4,000 per year. To finance this extra amount, the eligible families can apply for KCFRC to release their financial burden. However, for families (earning median income) which could not be eligible after the income test of the schemes, they will have to pay full cost. Affordability can be a concern to some families.

¹⁹ The median monthly household income of 3-person household and 4-person household in 2014 4th quarter is \$27,600 and \$34,500 respectively



Summary and Observation

- The philosophy behind the service guides its policy, provision and service mode etc. The philosophy for child day care services upholds family care and that government plays a residual role only in the service provision. How far this is still valid in light of changing socio-economic needs has to be reviewed.
- Formal child care service provision had been reduced in early 2000s due to the shrinking children population and utilization situation. However, there is no adjustment on child care service these years though there is increase in the number of children aged 0-2 and the utilization of service. This is especially obvious for Standalone Child Care Centres, the utilization rate of which stays at 100% in recent years.
- The SWD had tried out flexible (in term of service hours) types of child care services in early 2000s including foster day care and day small group home. Operators' feedback revealed that as these services were not district based, the accessibility became a problem to parents. This shows that accessibility is a crucial factor in developing child care services.
- Service needs can be very different among districts. There are obvious service gaps in certain districts. Accessibility (including availability) is an issue of concern.
- By examining the service types and operation duration, it seems that the services are quite comprehensive, but how far they can effectively meet the service need is a question and this will be explored in chapters that followed.
- Statistics on the demand and utilization of different services are difficult to be obtained e.g. there is no system on waiting list for services (and in fact parents can wait list in more than one centre); and the data on provision and utilization of long whole-day KG-cum-CCCs is not publicly accessible. It is hence difficult to analyse the need and usage of the services. An effective and easily accessible system needs to be built up so as to facilitate effective and efficient review and planning of the services.
- The fee level of different services and the availability and effectiveness of fee assistance are crucial factors affecting the affordability of the service to needy families. The existing income threshold in KCFRS, if sets too high, will deter many needy families away from using the service.



The previous two chapters map out the changes found in Hong Kong families and the current system of child care services and its development. This chapter will examine the needs of families on child care according to the findings of the telephone survey and the in-depth interviews and focus groups which interviewed the parents from low income families, the service operators and related stakeholders.

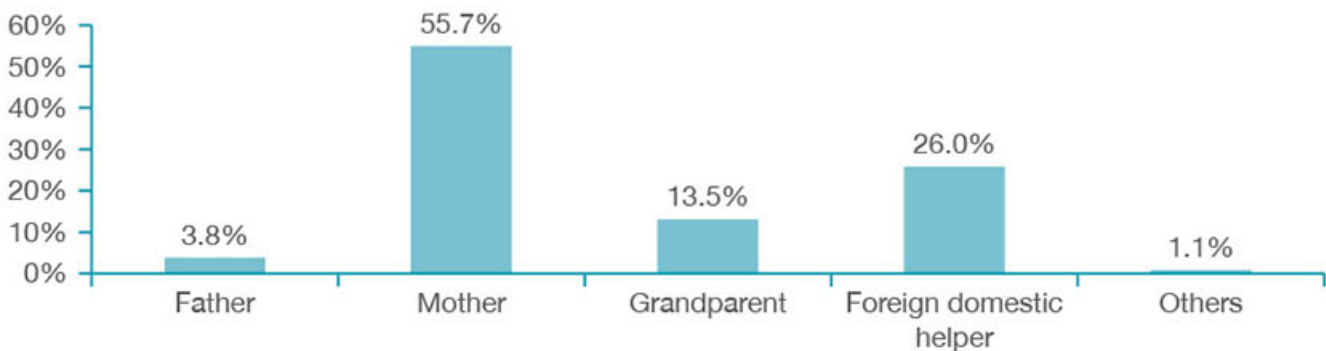
6.1 Findings from the telephone survey

In order to further investigate the parents' child care patterns and their satisfaction level on existing child care arrangements etc, a territory-wide telephone survey was conducted. The followings are the main findings.

6.1.1 Child care arrangement – the main carer

Mother as the main carer: Findings showed that the primary child care arrangement for children aged 0-12 was having the mother as the main carer. 55.7% of the respondents said that mother was the main carer taking care of the children. Foreign domestic helper seemed to be the main resort for the mother, with 26.0% of the respondents said that foreign domestic helper was the main carer.

Figure 6.1 Main carer taking care of the child(ren) (%)



Interview question — 'The following question is about your child care arrangement. Who is the main carer of your child(ren) usually?'

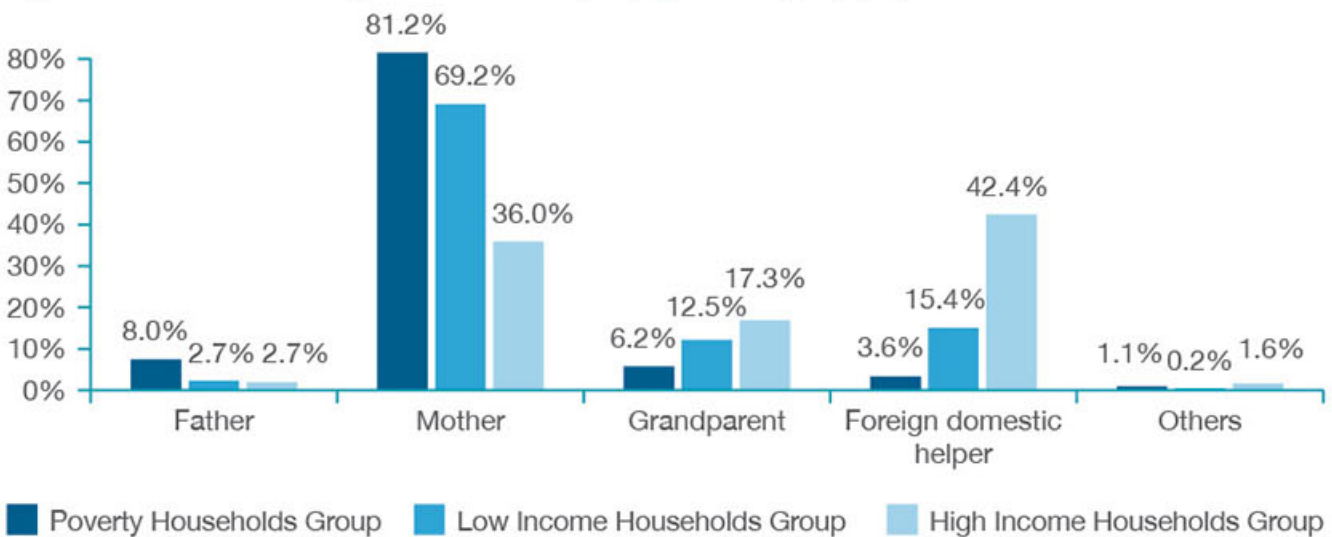




However, findings also showed that the child care mode was different among different income groups:

- For Poverty Households, 81.2% of them reported that mother was the main carer while 8% reported that it was the father. For Low Income Households, 69.2% of them reported that mother was the main carer while 15.4% reported foreign domestic helper as main carer. For High Income Households, foreign domestic helper was mostly reported as the main carer (42.4%) while mother being the second (36.0%).

Figure 6.2 Main carer taking care of the child(ren) by income group (%)

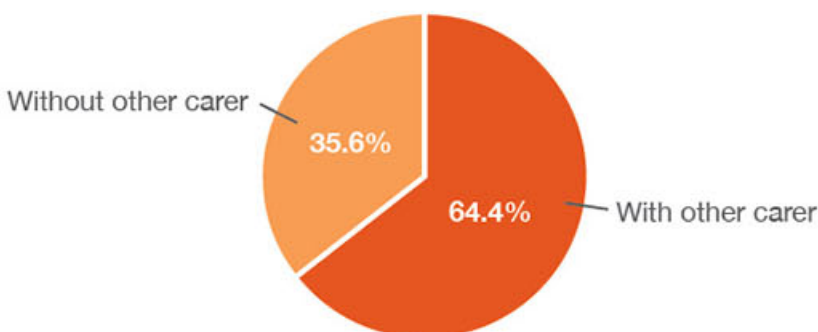


Interview question — 'The following question is about your child care arrangement. Who is the main carer of your child(ren) usually?'

6.1.2 Child care arrangement: support from other child carer

Less support from other carer for lower income families: When asked about other arrangement on child care (other carer), 64.4% of respondents replied that they had other carer taking care of the child(ren), while 35.6% of them replied no other carer for their child(ren). In other words, one third of them said that they had no one to turn to for child care support.

Figure 6.3 Availability of other carer (%)

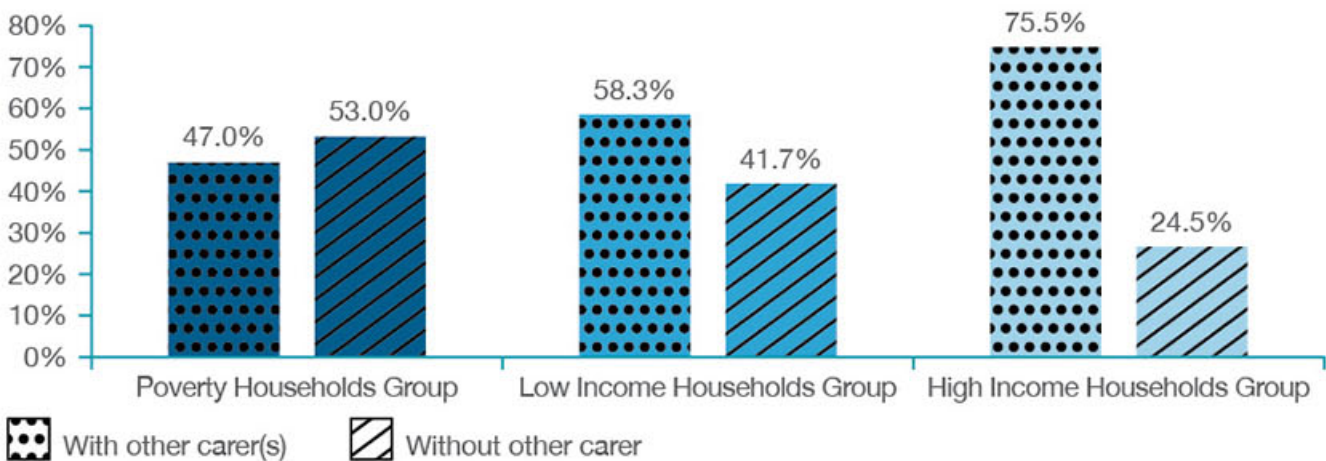


Interview question — 'Besides (reply of previous question), did you arrange others to take care of her / him / them?'



Further analysis showed that the availability of other child care support was different among different income groups. Findings showed a pattern that the lower the income level, the lesser support in child care the household would have. For Poverty Households, more than half (53%) reported that they did not have other child care arrangement. For Low Income Households, the figure was slightly lower but still with 41.7% reported that they had no one to turn to. For High Income Households, however, only 24.5% of them said that they had no other child care arrangement.

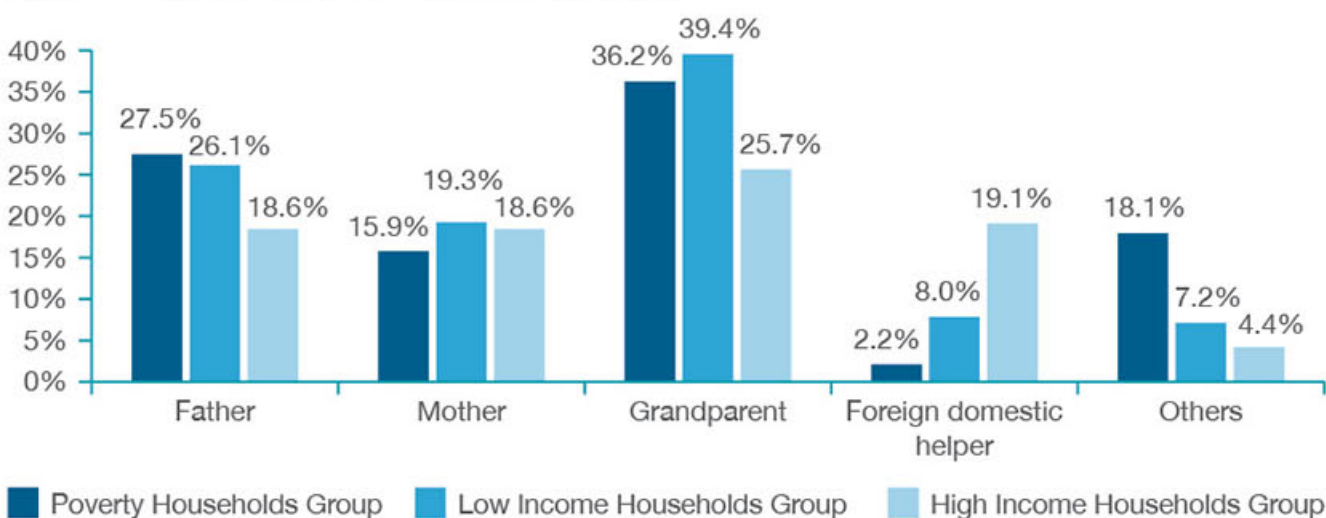
Figure 6.4 Availability of other carer by income group (%)



Interview question — 'Besides (reply of previous question), did you arrange others to take care of her / him / them?'

Grandparents were “other carer” to support the main carer in many households: For respondents who reported that they had other carers to help, grandparents were the most popular alternative choice across different income groups.

Figure 6.5 Types of other carer by income group (%)



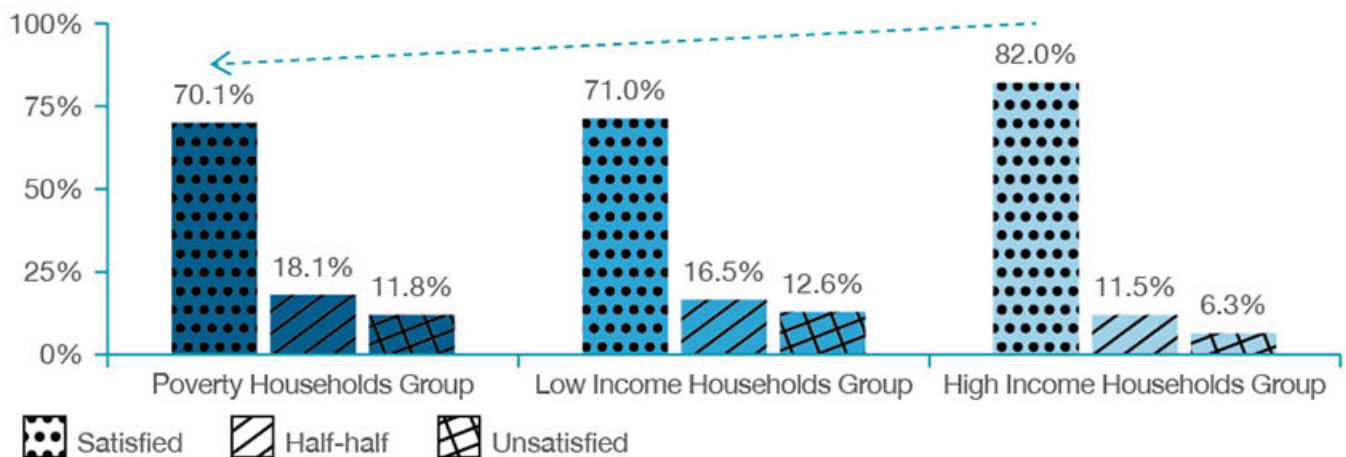
Interview question — 'Besides (reply of previous question), did you arrange others to take care of her / him / them?'



6.1.3 Level of satisfaction on current child care arrangement

Lower Income Households were less satisfied than the High Income Households with the current child care arrangement: Overall speaking, more than 70% of the respondents reported that they were satisfied with the current child care arrangement. Comparing different income groups, however, the level of satisfaction was much lower in the two lower income groups. For Poverty Households and Low Income Households, around 30% of respondents rated “half-half” and “unsatisfied” while less than 20% of the High Income Households rated so.

Figure 6.6 Parents’ satisfaction on current child care arrangement by income group (%)

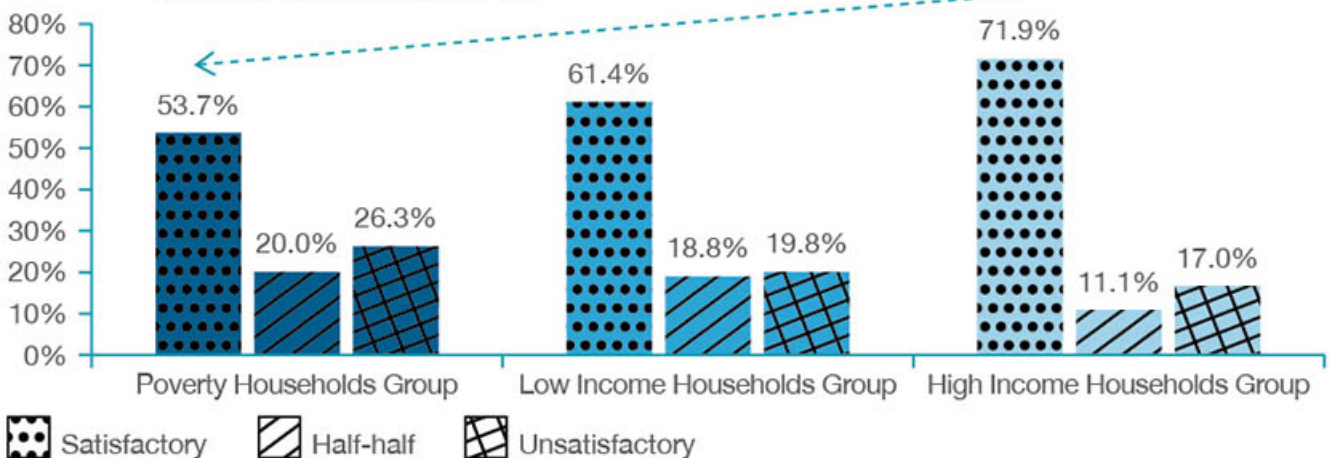


Interview question — ‘How satisfied or dissatisfied you are with the present mode of child care?’

Less households satisfied with present mode of child care in relation to their child(ren)’s needs:

However, when the respondents were asked how far they thought the present mode of child care satisfied the needs of their child(ren), a drop was found in the level of satisfaction. Comparing different income groups, Poverty Households and Low Income Households, 46.3% and 38.6% rated “half-half” or “unsatisfied” respectively while for the High Income Households, only about 28% rated so.

Figure 6.7 Parents’ satisfaction on whether current child care arrangement satisfied the needs of their child(ren) by income group (%)



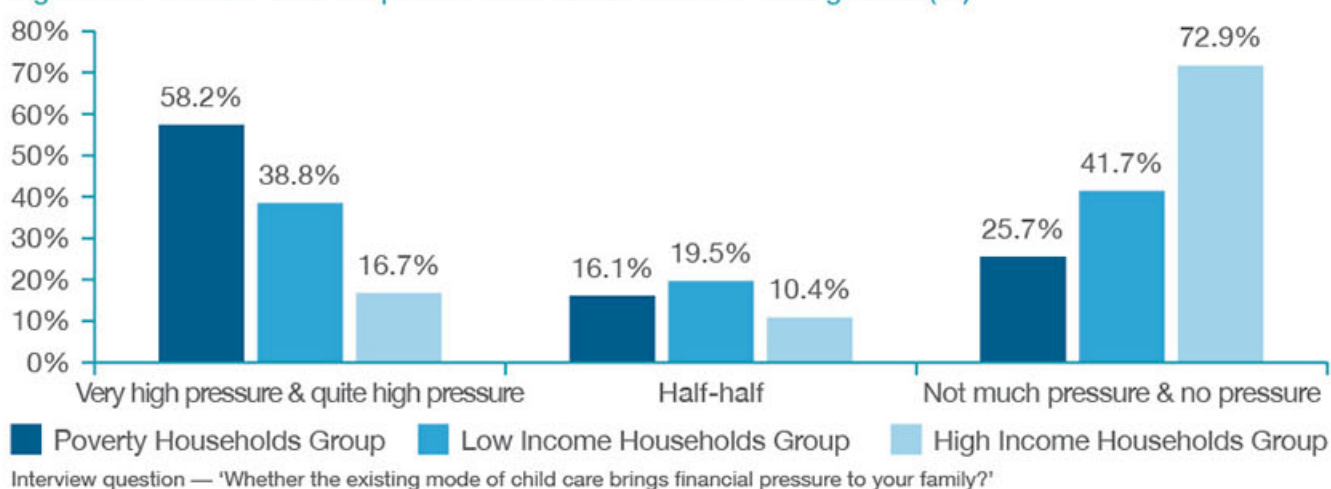
Interview question — ‘Do you think the present mode of child care satisfies your children’s needs?’



6.1.4. Financial stress of current child care arrangement

Lower Income Households found it more stressful to finance the present mode of child care: Over half (58.2%) of Poverty Households reported that there was financial pressure from the existing mode of child care while 38.8% of Low Income Households reported so. For High Income Households, more than 70% said that they did not have much pressure or with no such pressure at all.

Figure 6.8 Parents' financial pressure on current child care arrangement (%)



6.1.5 Difficulties in child care

Different income groups encountered different types of difficulty in child care: Among all respondents surveyed, 73% reported that they encountered at least one or more types of the difficulty as listed in the table below in the past year.

When grouped by level of income, there were obvious differences among the 3 groups in terms of the difficulties they experienced.

Table 6.1 Difficulties in child care encountered by parents by income group (%)

Difficulties encountered in child care (n=941)	Poverty Households (n=189)	Low Income Households (n=308)	High Income Households (n=440)
Conflicts in time allocation to meet different children's needs	32.3%	29.5%	30.9%
Unable to teach children to do homework	59.3%	42.2%	20.9%
Difficult to find someone else or child care service to take care of the child(ren) temporarily when being sick	49.2%	39.0%	23.4%
When child(ren) is(are) sick and cannot go to school, difficult to apply leave from employer	21.2%	19.5%	17.5%
When child(ren) is(are) on school holiday, difficult to apply leave from employer	18.0%	24.7%	17.3%
Respondent or spouse work long hours, unable to take care of the children	30.7%	41.9%	43.9%
None of the above	19.3%	24.3%	32.3%

Interview question — 'Did you encounter the following child care difficulties in the past year?'

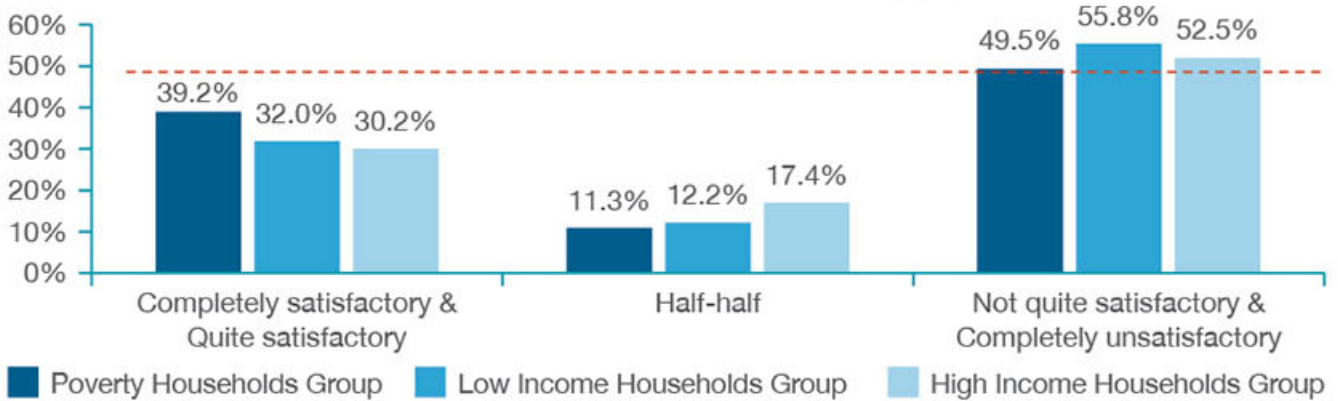


6.1.6 Satisfaction on existing provision of child care services in community

The survey asked respondents on their satisfaction on the existing provision of child care services in their community. Surprisingly, nearly half (47.9%) of the respondents replied “Don’t know / Difficult to reply”. Possible reasons could be that they did not have sufficient information on what were the services now available in the community; or they did not know how these services could help them if they had child care needs.

For the valid cases (i.e. excluding respondents replying “Don’t know / Difficult to reply”), there were more respondents from all three income groups replied that they found the service could not satisfy or completely could not satisfy their child care needs.

Figure 6.9 Satisfaction on provision of child care services in community (%)



Interview question — ‘Do you think the existing child care services in your community can satisfy your child care needs?’

6.1.7 Parent’s perception on responsibility of child care

For parent’s perception on responsibility of child care, respondents were asked if they agreed that “taking care of children is the responsibility of parents” and “responsibility of child care should be shared between father and mother”. Most of the respondents from three income groups agreed or completely agreed to these two statements. It reflects that parents in Hong Kong are willing to take up the child care responsibility and believe in shared role in child care between couples. However, the actualization in daily life may be constrained by different factors, e.g. their financial capacity to take care of the child(ren) by themselves.



Figure 6.10 Parents' response towards "taking care of young children is the responsibility of parents" (%)

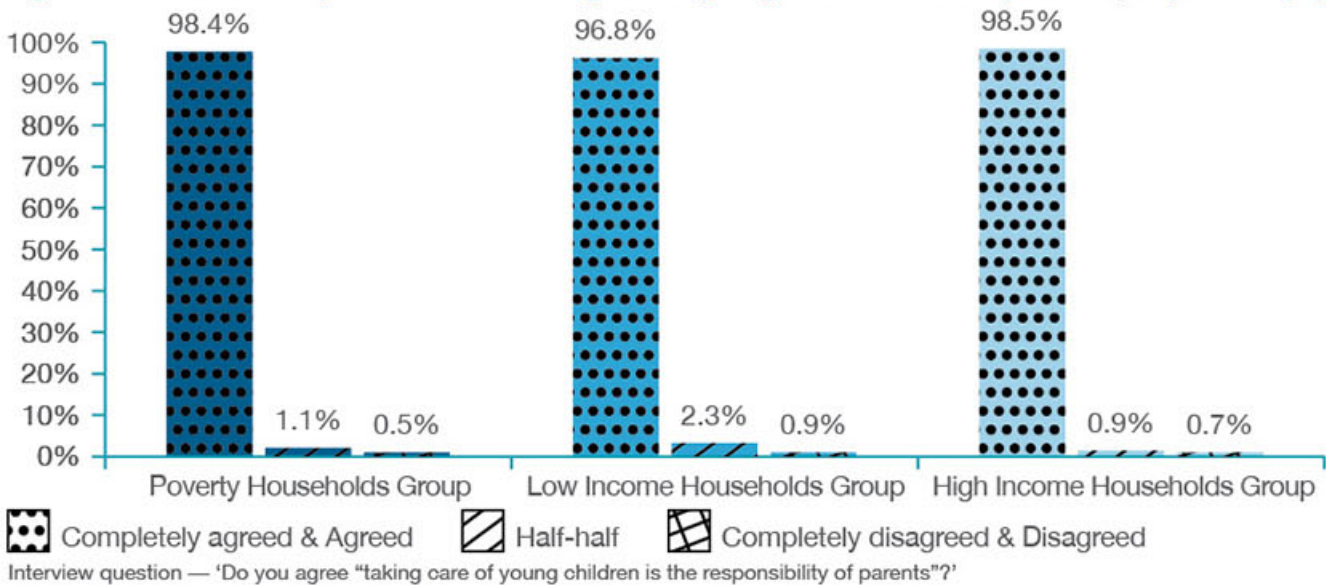
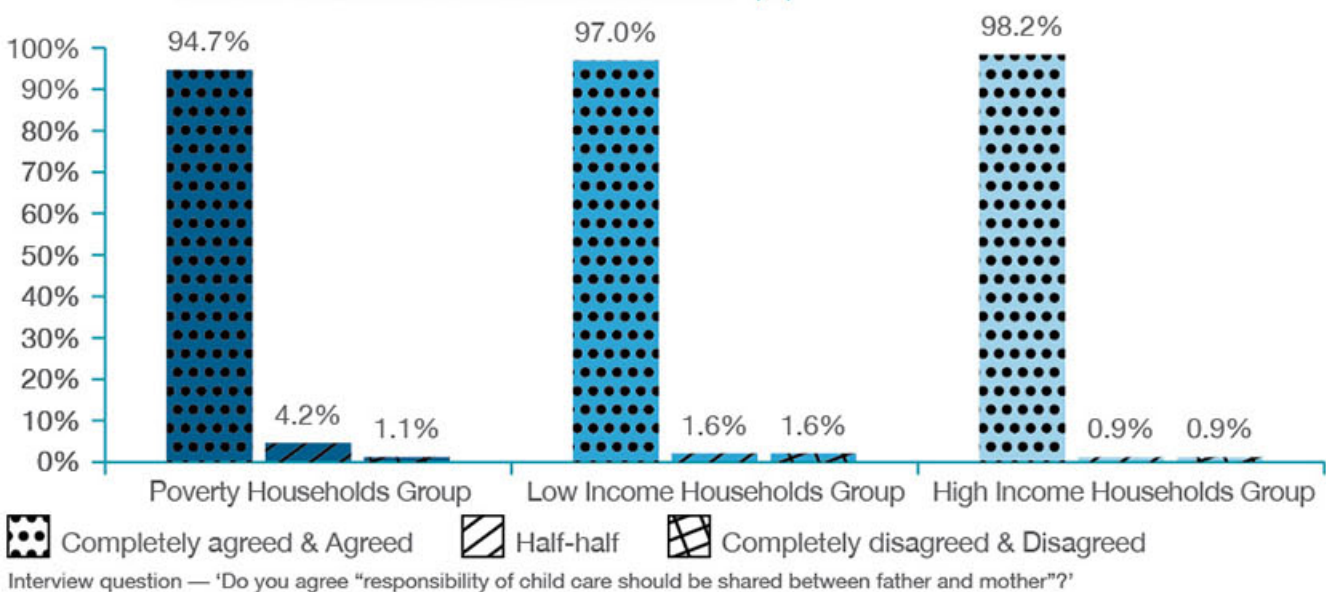


Figure 6.11 Parents' attitude towards "responsibility of child care should be shared between father and mother" (%)



6.2 Findings from interviews and focus groups

Why current child care services could not meet the community need

As stated in chapter 5, although government has already established quite a variety of child care services, there is still shortage in some services (those with full or nearly full service utilization). There are also services that are not being fully utilized (e.g. the MHCCC). One of the foci of this study is to investigate the discrepancy between the needs of parents and the current provision of service. The study, therefore, would further investigate the reasons of the widening gap between service demand and supply by inviting views from the parents, service providers and other stakeholders.



6.2.1 Change in service demand

Weakening family and neighbourhood support

Parents who participated in the interviews pointed out the major changes in family and community and also the liability resulting from leaving children unattended at home, had directly or indirectly increased the need for child care services.

The diminishing of family members' support in child care led to greater need for child care service. Without appropriate child care service, many mothers were left with the only option of quitting the job (if they were in employment before giving birth to their child) and became full-time carer.

I had been working for over 10 years, before having the younger son, my mother-in-law helped me to take care the children, but she doesn't help now, I need to take care of them, I cannot work full-time, can only work part-time, sometimes I cannot work at all.

-- A mother from low income family

(我)做左十幾年嘢，(即係)我之前未有細仔之前，嗰時我奶奶(只係)幫我湊(住大嗰個)小朋友...但係宜家冇...(細仔)一歲之後，我自己湊(番晒兩個小朋友)，就返唔到全日，只可以兼顧做小小嘢，有時就做唔到嘢。

-- 一名來自低收入家庭的母親

I worked in night shift and the work ends in the morning, so I need to sleep in day time. I cannot continue working after I give birth, no one can help me to take care of the children. My mum needs to work, other relatives and friends cannot help, so my only choice is to quit work and take care of my children.

-- A mother from low income family

我嗰陣都返夜晚...朝早先收工，日頭就要瞓覺。咁生左就唔可以繼續呢樣嘢，真係冇人湊，(因為)我阿媽要返工，同埋其他親戚朋友都唔可以(幫手)照顧，咁唯有唔做嘢去照顧小朋友。

-- 一名來自低收入家庭的母親

While family support was not available, weakening bonding among neighbours in the urban city of Hong Kong was another reason explaining the need for formal or organized community child care support.



I am not close with the neighbour living next door, I have been living here for few years, I don't even know what is their family name. Their door is closing all the time, I close my door, too. I don't know her, and I would not knock the door and try to know them more. It (the community relationship) is very alienated.

-- A mother from low income family

同隔黎嗰個都傾唔埋，好似我住左喺宜家租緊嗰度幾年，我連隔黎嗰個姓乜都唔知。全部長期都關門呀根本就，當然我自己都關門啦。我又唔識佢，我又唔會搵佢個門鐘話認識佢。(社區個關係)已經變得疏離左。

-- 一名來自低收入家庭的母親

The neighbourhood relationship was better in old days, now neighbours' doors are usually closed. You take care of yourself only. If they have time to "help" you take care of the children, don't you need to pay them back? In old days we would not talk so much about money, we all opened the doors. "I help you take care the children if you have urgent matters". Nowadays, sometimes the neighbour would not even talk to you. The relationship was much close in the past, in fact, I would not think about money if we were in good relationship.

-- A mother from low income family

以前嗰啲隔黎鄰舍關係好啲，宜家隔黎鄰舍關埋門，你有你。「得閒幫你湊，錢呢？」...以前嗰啲唔係講錢，例如日日開住門，「你有事，我幫你睇住」。宜家，隔黎鄰舍唔會睬你呀有時。以前嗰啲關係邊度會分你、我。講真，同你好，真係唔會計錢。

-- 一名來自低收入家庭的母親

Need for occasional and emergency service

For some of the interviewees, although they were full-time housewives, the weakening of family and community support coupled with the concern on liability resulting from leaving children unattended also generated need for occasional child care service, in case of emergency.

In old days it was not against the law when you left children at home... the elder brother could help take care of younger brother and sister when the mum went to market, now it could be liable for negligence of care, it is different now.

-- A mother from low income family

以前冇話擺低細路仔會犯法，宜家一擺低幾個鐘，俾人知道左就會犯法。...以前擺喺屋企，例如阿哥，幫我手睇住，我去買麩，大的睇細的。宜家大的睇細的，等陣俾政府知道，(就話你)疏忽照顧，(即係已經)又唔同。

-- 一名來自低收入家庭的母親



When I was young, my elder sister took care of my younger brother and me when my mum went to doctor or market. There was few child care service. It can't be like that now, we would be charged by the government.

-- A mother from low income family

我細個...都係我家姐睇住我同我細佬咁樣，我阿媽譬如去買餸或者睇醫生。嗰陣都有咁多託兒服務嘅啲。宜家緊係唔得啦，宜家真係俾人告。

-- 一名來自低收入家庭的母親

The experiences of the parents revealed that NSCCP had been performing the role of supplementing formal child care services which were constrained particularly in terms of flexibility in service hours and fulfilling emergency needs. A father who had a full-time night shifting job, talked about the helpfulness of the NSCCP for him and his wife. He thought that it was safer for his son to stay at the nanny's home while he could get enough sleep at home in day time.

"I work night shift and need to take rest during daytime... as I am a driver... The kid is young (nearly 3), it can't help as he likes walking on the bed, up and down the bed...he would ask for your attention and play with him..., you can't tie him up, child care service would be the best option. If there is no child care service, my wife will take him outside wandering around, but I don't want them staying outside all the time, I found myself really need the service at the moment.

-- A working parent from low income family with child using "community nanny" service

我返夜班，我日頭要瞓覺...，因為我係做揸車...個小朋友細個 (就黎三歲)，冇辦法，佢嚟張床度走黎走去，例如可以嚟張床上面走落去張床下面，再由下面走返上上面，佢會搵你玩...，唯有最好託管。如果託管唔到，我太太就帶佢周街走，但係我唔想佢成日嚟個街度，呢個時間好需要託管呢類服務。

-- 子女正使用「社區保姆」服務的在職低收入家長

Another mother whose husband had suffered from a stroke, began to use the service either at the centre or at the nanny's home when she had to visit her husband at the hospital or to take him for medical appointments.



I have a 4 years old child. I would use this service when my husband goes to hospital for medical appointment. Previously my husband was hospitalized and I needed to use this service everyday. After that I would make booking to use this service after I confirmed the date of my husband's medical appointment. Sometimes I used 2 hours' or 3 hours' service, not a fix one. Sometimes my husband had to go hospital, I then used 3 hours' services.

-- A parent from low income family with child used "community nanny" service

(我)一個小朋友，四歲。老公覆診嗰陣或者可能有時要去醫院，咁所以要用呢個服務。之前老公嚟醫院嗰陣就日日用，跟住之後可能要等佢覆診有個期，然後再book呢個服務黎用...有時候兩個(鐘)、有時候三個(鐘)，唔一定。有時候先生入院，我又要探下佢，三個(鐘)又攞過。

-- 子女曾使用「社區保姆」服務的低收入家長

Change in need for quality child care to facilitate child development

In addition, she found that the training at the day crèche facilitated the intellectual development of her twin daughters.

Here they have teachers with different activities and toys...different toys are useful to stimulate the intellectual development of children... For these twin girls, I am busy to do the household and have no time to play with them, it takes few hours for me to prepare meals for them and clean them etc. So I have no time to play with them, but they know how to play with themselves. The younger girl always plays like a little teacher, and even teaches the elder sister how to play... For their learning, I would tell stories to them, although they don't know how to give response in words, but they are like "older guys" and give me response like "uh..uh", they respond quite seriously.

-- A parent from low income family with child using day crèche service

依度有啲老師...有唔同嘅活動，啲玩具又多啦...唔同嘅玩具對啟發啲小朋友嘅智慧...都有用嘅。家陣呢對子女，雖然佢哋平時返到屋企，我真係好少時間同佢哋玩囉，因為我多數...搞掂佢食飯、搞掂佢嘅清潔，呢啲嘢對我來講已經要用幾個鐘啦，所以好少同佢玩。但係呢每一個玩具，有陣時星期六日嚟屋企嘅時候，同(細仔)玩嘅時候，佢好似個小老師一樣嘞，就會教埋(大仔)... 嚟學習上面都好好...食完飯沖完涼呢，我就同呢幾個講故事嘅，佢講故事嘅時候...雖然佢唔識講，但佢會好「老積」咁話「嗯！...有啲反應...都唔會話顧住...玩...好認真嫁。

-- 子女正使用育嬰園服務的低收入家長

Similarly, there were parents who observed that their children learnt to take care of themselves through the training in whole-day nursery schools (KG-cum-CCC). Some of them thought that their children were better than other children of the same age in self-care and being self-disciplined.



When I compare my child to the children of my friends, for the same age, she knows how to wear the shoes (with velcro), she knows how to clean up, to fold the bed sheets... self disciplined, very obvious of this...she knows how to tidy up her hair when she gets up in the morning.

-- A working parent from low income family with child using "long whole-day" KG-cum-CCC service

我同我啲朋友嘅小朋友...即同齡計啦，佢起碼會識得自己...癡啲啲(鞋嘅魔术貼)，即係會自己執頭執尾啊，起身會摺下被啊...自律啲囉，呢個明顯嘅。...起身佢都自己會紮辦啊...

-- 子女正使用「長全日制」幼稚園暨幼兒中心服務的在職低收入家長

Change in mother's participation in employment

Statistics show that the labour participation rate of women has been increasing all these years. For many low income families, they need to have dual earners to secure enough income to meet the basic need of the whole family²⁰.

Many interviewees reflected that working parents with pre-school age children could stay in employment if there was stable child care support. A father talked about the importance of being able to place his daughter in a day crèche at the time of losing family support and that had made it possible for the couple to keep their employment.

My daughter... started (entering to the creche service) at 8 or 9-month old...for working parents, if you could enroll your child into this service..., parents can work at daytime. I think the service is meeting with some actual demand...(at that time) my family had some sudden changes, then I sought help from the school master...it happened that there was vacancy for my daughter, ...otherwise I didn't know what I could do, really confused, ... if there was no place in the crèche, I could not work definitely. Actually, at that time, both my family and my husband's family had new born babies, they were not available to take care of my baby, therefore we really needed to place the baby in the creche.

-- A working parent from low income family with child using day crèche service

我個女大概係...差唔多8至9月到啦(開始入育嬰園)...對雙職家庭...你擺到佢入來...日頭時間可以返到工。我覺得呢個服務係有咁嘅需要。...(當時係)突然間屋企有啲改變，咁我就搵阿園長幫手...就啱啱好有個位就可以俾到我個女，如果唔係，嗰陣我都唔知點，真係好徬徨... 如果(當)時(無位)，一定有一個做唔到嘢。...因為其實嗰陣時呢...我哋兩面「親家」呢，啱啱都有BB出世，...(親家)要返佢屋企照顧(另外一個BB)，...咁我哋就要需要放個BB入育嬰園。

-- 子女正使用育嬰園服務的在職低收入家長

²⁰ Report on Basic Needs Study in Hong Kong, The Hong Kong Council of Social Service, 2005. The study examined the basic needs of different target groups in the community e.g. child, elderly, adult, family and the disabled etc.



6.2.2 Limited accessibility to child care services for different age groups

Accessibility of child care services is determined not only by the total capacity available but also the hours of service, escorting arrangement and other conditions that are essential for facilitating the use of the services. It is therefore not just about quantity but how the services are organized in terms of operation duration, physical location, coordination / linkage among services, and the administrative procedures for booking etc.

The sharing of participants in the focus groups revealed that there were different types of difficulty affecting service accessibility for different age groups of children.

In relation to Standalone Child Care Centre for aged 0-3 – insufficient capacity

Participants of the focus groups shared the difficulties in getting a place in a day crèche (for age 0-2) as the location and service capacity were extremely limited (the provision of day crèche has been discussed in Chapter 5).

“we started to look for creche place when the baby was 6 months’ old. They told us that we are on waiting list with 100 persons in front of us. I have registered but still cannot get a place now. If there is only 1 member working in a family to support 4 members, it is difficult for living. We had searched for place at Mongkok next to here but they said there were 400 babies in front of us. Mongkok is too far, services in these 2 districts are more suitable for us to use.

-- A low income parent waiting for child care centre service

「佢6個月大就開始搵(育嬰園)啦，佢話有成100個人排喺我前面囉，要等半年至一年。我宜家登記左，不過都未有位。咁你一個家庭得一個人搵野做，4個人都需要使錢肯定開支唔夠。搵過隔離旺角個邊囉，佢都話仲有400個排喺我前面。太遠冇辦法，都係呢兩區先啱。」

-- 正輪候使用育嬰園服務的低收入家長

In relation to long whole-day Kindergarten-cum-Child Care Centre for children aged 2-6 - insufficient places and service time

For parents with children aged 2-6, they might want to work on regular basis but they could not do so since it was not easy for children to enroll in whole-day child care services. If the children went to half day kindergarten, it was not feasible for them to work even in part-time jobs. As such, some of the mothers had no alternative but to give up the plan of work.

It is really not feasible for working part-time if the kid goes half day kindergarten, the school time is only around 3 hours. You take the kid to school and soon you would need to take him home.

-- A mother from low income family

返半日(幼稚園)真係做唔到(兼職)，三個鐘，好趕時間。妳湊完佢返去，跟住返黎就接。

-- 一名來自低收入家庭的母親



It is not possible for working part-time. You need to take half an hour (for going to work) and another half an hour for getting back.

-- A mother from low income family

根本就做唔到(兼職)，妳冇可能。出去又要半個鐘，返黎又要半個鐘。

-- 一名來自低收入家庭的母親

One common problem many parents who were users of kindergartens faced, was that they found it hard to get child care service in Sundays or public holidays.

The kindergarten opposite can have service until 8p.m... but no school for Sundays and public holidays. If there is no school for Sundays and public holidays, how can I work?

-- A mother from low income family

對面幼稚園就係話...可以返到夜晚八點...禮拜日、紅色假期就冇得返，咁禮拜日、紅色假期冇，我點(返工)呢?

-- 一名來自低收入家庭的母親

In relation to Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project (NSCCP) for children aged 0-9 – service rely on volunteers and administrative procedures not user friendly

The NSCCP service was started in 2008, it provides informal child care service in community, and the running is based on mutual help of volunteers whereby the service operators recruit a pool of volunteers and match them with the service requests of parents. However, many parents had concern on the instability of the care providers (the nannies) and the quality of care provided.

A common concern raised by parents from the focus groups was that, they wished the nanny carer could be stable carer. They worried about the frequent change of nannies which might have negative impact on their children.



The centre told me that, it may not be the same nanny everytime, then I think, maybe it is this nanny for this month and another nanny in another month, the kid is young, just 2 years old, may affect my child much. She will cry if she sees unfamiliar face; when you just start to get used to this environment, you need to change to another place, it would affect the child psychologically, she would be bad temper, throw things away, fear, feels insecure, many things would happen, wouldn't it?

-- A parent from low income family

當時中心同我講，可能係唔同姨姨湊，咁我自己諗，呢個月可能呢個姨姨湊、下個月又係另外一個姨姨湊，咁個小朋友咁細，都係得啲兩歲，對個小朋友咪好有影響囉。即係佢見到呢個陌生人都喊啦，你啱啱適應左佢，又要轉換第二個，咁佢個心理影響好大。佢咪發脾氣、掙嘢、恐懼、唔安全，好多嘢衍生出黎係唔係？

-- 一名來自低收入家庭的家長

The service operators also recognized that the quality of the service was one of the challenges that NSCCP had to tackle. As the NSCCP is run on volunteer basis, the quality of which is difficult to maintain.

The NSCCP service system is complicated, as the volunteer nannies can have their own schedule, that means they have option to participate or not. They can even refuse to serve some families. You cannot force them, because it is not a formal work. Therefore, there is difficulty to maintain this volunteer system, you are managing volunteers the users also have service expectation, then you need to think how you can do better matching?"

-- An operator of NSCCP service

「(社區保姆)個制度好複雜，因為個個保姆佢都有自己時間表，保姆係義工，義工就係話我可以做，我可以唔做，甚至呢你配對到我有時間，我一聽到係呢個家庭我唔想做，都可以唔做...個選擇權喺個義工身上，冇得逼，唔係返工，所以義工喺個社區保姆制度上，營運會有好大困難，你管理班係義工，使用者又有佢期望，有要求，你點樣去配對呢？」

-- 「社區保姆」計劃營辦者

At the same time, the service was supposed to meet emergent requests. A mother opined that it did not make sense to require advanced booking for emergency use of the service, e.g. when she was too sick to look after her children.



I think for emergency service, it has to be in place when you need it. If the service is to meet emergent needs but it cannot help you when you need it and that, you still need to register before hand and wait...I would have already recovered (from sickness) while waiting!...What does it mean by “urgent”? It means “immediately for use”, “immediately helping” me! I still need to make appointment? How do I know when I would get sick (and then register for it)?

-- A parent from low income family

我覺得緊急呢樣野呢，妳隨時有需要(就)會幫到妳。如果一個緊急(嘅服務)妳隨時需要佢幫妳唔到，妳要登記仲要等，咁我都好返啦! ...緊急係咩呢? 就係即刻要用! 即刻幫到我! 我仲要同妳預約，我點知我幾時病呀!

-- 一名來自低收入家庭的家長

In relation to After School Care Programme (ASCP) for children aged 6-12 – no escorting service and insufficient service time

For children in primary school, the use of after school programme was made difficult by a number of obstacles. Firstly, there lacked escorting service to bring the children from school to location of the programme and from school back home etc.

Now we are talking about after school care in school, e.g. the school ends at 3:20p.m. and after school care programme is from 3:25p.m. to 5p.m., there are 1.5 hours staying in school. But if you need to take the school bus, other students would take school bus after school ends at 3:20p.m., you cannot take the school bus at 5p.m. You can choose go home alone or the parents to pick them up. Especially for primary 1 student, the parents need to pick them up, the school would not let them leave school alone.

-- A low income parent using school-based after school care service

宜家就係講緊課餘託管係學校，譬如學校三點二十分放學，佢就三點二十五分到五點鐘，個半鐘嘍學校。當然啦，妳小朋友如果係坐車，人地三點二十分放左學就要全部坐車返去，但係你五點鐘陣就有車坐...自行行返黎，一係就要家長去接。特別係一年級一定要家長接，如果有家長接，學校一定唔會放人。

-- 使用學校課餘託管服務的家長



"I could not get a place for the after school care programme in school so I needed to find place outside. I found the place in a centre, the fee is \$100 per month after subsidy. The difficulty is, I need to pick up my children from school and escort to centre. You need to do it yourself.

-- A low income parent using centre based after school care service

「抽唔到(學校課餘託管計劃)...我就係出面搵中心，跟住搵到課(餘)託(管)，減免左之後一百蚊一個月，都比較麻煩，要自己接送，成日不停要自己接啦，放學又要接送，全部都係自己。」

-- 使用中心課餘託管服務的家長

Another problem was, the service hours of the programmes did not cover public holidays and Sundays. For example, one mother who worked part-time, pointed out the service gap in the community-based after school child care service, that it did not provide service on public holidays and Sundays²¹.

The after school care programme.... I have work, but it is not civil servant work, ... for public holidays, Sundays, many of them (the programme) cannot help you take care of children.

-- A parent from low income family

啲課餘中心...咁我就有工，但係唔係政府工...紅色假期、禮拜日，好多呢啲都話唔幫你手。

-- 一名來自低收入家庭的家長

6.2.3 Other gaps not explicitly expressed by the parents

There could be normative needs, besides the felt need expressed by the service users, as some of these service needs are not commonly aware of by the parents. In the study, further opinions were identified by the service providers during the interviews.

Gap in parental education

Many stakeholders suggested that a successful child care policy should include support to families. A stakeholder further explained that parents needed to learn to be a parent; that schools and child care centres alike should all worked together for the healthy development of children in Hong Kong. (the quotations below were raised by experts / professionals in the focus groups)

²¹ Some of the ASCPs started to extend the service hours to Saturdays and school holidays in 2014-15.



Another assumption is that parents are the best carer for their children. This is a very important rationale behind, it means mothers are “all the best”. Do we need to adjust this line of thinking? Mothers have their roles but not every one of them are all rounded, and not every mother can perform that well. No matter it is school, family or child care centre, how to build capacity more comprehensively to enhance the healthy development of children in Hong Kong, no matter it is for 0-3 years old or 3-6 years old, we are talking about this.

另一個假設就係父母係最好，呢個都係一個好大背後嘅理念，都係一個另外嘅假設，即係媽媽 all the best，其實係唔係需要...調校下呢一種諗法？媽媽有佢嘅角色，但係佢都唔係全能，亦都唔係個個媽媽都好叻做到佢要做嘅所謂稱職，...無論係學校，家庭或者 child care centre 又好，點樣可以全面嘅 build 個 capacity 令到小朋友嚟香港成長，成長得健康啲，無論佢係零歲至三歲或者三歲至六歲，其實都係講緊呢樣野。

Families that claim to know how to take care of the children may not necessarily mean that they know it well. They may meet with different challenges at different times, therefore the service should be flexible and provide choices for them.

其實家庭話識湊唔係代表佢識晒，唔同時間，佢可能遇到唔同嘅挑戰，困難，佢咪會學多啲，(所以服務)一定要有彈性，(俾D家庭)有選擇。

Such parental education is extremely important to the parents from low income families. It helps ensure that the parents will know how to guide their children spend quality time with them. One stakeholder also pointed out that as low income families lacked of resources, high quality care should be provided by schools and child care centres in the low-income districts. This could help the children from low income families have more stimulation and close up the gap among different income groups.

More specifically, some stakeholders suggested that parent education should begin from mother's pregnancy period so as to prepare the parents with proper knowledge of child development for caring and nurturing their children.



In fact in Hong Kong nowadays, no one would teach you how to be parents. I think there is curriculum provided by the Maternal and Child Health Centres and it focuses more on nutrition and hygiene but limits on behavioral discipline and developmental needs, for instance, to advise parents to note babies and young kids for their body development and brain development etc. Furthermore, there are some wrong messages spreading through the internet, and parents read and spread these messages...we are talking about some support ... that parents could be “hands on”, these are what lack in the society.

其實宜家嚟香港黎講呢，當然冇人教你點樣去做父母，我諗母嬰健康院其實都有一套課程嚟度，佢就會嚟營養、衛生嗰方面，佢哋會着力多啲，但係行為管教或者一啲發展上，點樣能夠幫到個細路仔，譬如你細個嘅時候就好應該多啲體能發展，腦部潛能嘅發展，呢啲呢其實真係少。同埋而家網上講緊呢啲就唔係一啲好正確嘅訊息，家長去傳閱嘅訊息，呢啲我哋講緊一個...，家長可以容易 hands on，呢個係整個社會都欠缺。

Gap in supporting other carers

Besides parental support, some stakeholders also noted that grandparents and other relatives could play an important role in child care if relevant support could be provided to integrate the extended family to help the domestic child care in the community.

Chinese people is talking about family care; the children are used to be cared collectively by the family as a group, not only by parents, and not only by the mother alone. Now without collective support, the responsibility goes to the parents in nuclear families, and the responsibility usually goes to the mother. This is a change, what does the government do to help the family take good care of the children? For example, if grandparents live closer to the family, they can help the child care. In fact, it is the whole set of measures, and it is child care quality. I am not only talking about services but quality. We are concerning how to coordinate and match with different parts, to help the family (as a group) take care of the children.

中國人講緊係家庭嘅照顧，照顧細路仔從古到今唔係一定要父母，其實係一個群體嘅照顧，唔係淨係父母，唔係淨係媽媽。...但係宜家nuclear family，冇左集體就去左父母嗰度，反而會多左俾呀媽照顧。咁呢個就係一個轉變，究竟政府做左啲乜嘢幫家庭以致佢好好照顧啲child? 例如親人住得近啲爺爺麻麻可以睇住啲細路仔。其實成套嘅措施，我覺得係child care quality裡面，所以我唔係講service，我係講緊一大堆嘅quality，互相點樣配合，令到個家庭(作為一個群體)可以照顧到(個細路仔)。



Summary and Observation

Major findings of the telephone survey:

There are interesting findings from the survey on the child care patterns and concerns of families on child care in Hong Kong. As our study focuses on low income families, it is worthy to note the followings which would shed light on the child care needs of the lower income households:

- a large proportion (81.2%) of Poverty Households Group and Low Income Households relied on mother to take care of their child(ren); more families in High Income Households Group employed foreign domestic helpers as the main carer (42.2%); grandparents were also important alternative child care support for families in Hong Kong;
- more (53%, while it was 41.7% and 24.5% in the other 2 income groups) Poverty Households lacked alternative carers. Mothers became the main carer of children; over half of the Poverty Households (58.2%) reflected there was financial pressure for their family under this mode of child care;
- 46.3% of Poverty Households Group and 38.6% of Low Income Households Group reflected that the existing mode of child care could not satisfy the need of their children; and
- over half (59.3%) of Poverty Households Group reflected that “teach their children to do homework” as one of the difficulties; for High Income Households Group, they concerned more the difficulty of having adequate time to take care of their children because of long working hours.

Major findings of in-depth interviews and focus groups:

Parents of low income families, service operators and related stakeholders reflected the reasons for the existence of gaps between service demand and supply:

- that there was weakening family and neighbourhood support in child care;
- that the liability resulting from leaving children unattended at home induced demand for occasional and emergency service;
- that parents appreciated and recognized the need for quality service to enhance the development of their children;
- that in low income families, there was a need for mothers to participate in employment and hence in demand for child care;
- that the service accessibility was affected not only by service capacity, but location, service operation duration, coordination / linkage amongst different services and administrative procedures etc. ;
- that different types of child care services faced different issues which limited their accessibility to families. More significant one identified by parents and operators for individual services included:

Services	Major issue raised in interviews / focus groups
Standalone Child Care Centre	limited capacity available
Whole-day Kindergarten-cum-Child Care Centre	limited capacity available
Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project	supply of carers not stable and administrative procedures not sensitive to parents' needs especially for urgent needs
After School Care Programme	lack of linkage in between programmes / services

- that parental education was needed.



Facing all the challenges mentioned in preceding chapters, what do the service operators think and respond? In this chapter, we try to list out some attempts tried out in local and overseas countries to filling in the service gaps and building up a more effective support system to children and their families.

7.1 Local experience: Meeting service gaps and integrating support to the family

In examining child care and education, especially on meeting the service gaps, one would usually focus on the public subsidized services. However, there are in fact many other stakeholders involved in the promotion of better child care and well-being of parents / families. The emergence of many new initiatives in the community has reflected this.

With gaps found in the existing provision of child care services, many NGOs partnered with different stakeholders (e.g. schools and charitable foundations, etc) to start initiatives in recent years to meet the unsatisfied needs. In this study, a focus group was conducted to collect views from operators of these new initiatives in order to understand the objectives behind, the difficulties and limitation they faced in operating these projects. This could inform us what were the common urging needs they identified of families with young children and thus what support they delivered to help improve the situation. The below table shows some of the new initiatives found in the community.





For age group of 0-6:

Table 7.1 Some of the new initiatives for children aged 0-6

Agency Name of the Programme / Project	Brief introduction on the programme / project
Caritas-Hong Kong - "Walk with B" - Simon K.Y. Lee Children's Fund – FLY Project	Runs the following two projects which target at low income families with infant (aged 0-3), a comparatively long term and in-depth service for the development of babies and their families. For infant and young kids (0-36 months) from low income and deprived families for supportive measures including parental education, child development and guidance activities. Partner with tertiary education institutes (HKU & HKPoly U) and provides 16-20-month infant and young children development and parental education course for low income families / families receiving Comprehensive Social Security Assistance.
Hong Kong Federation of Women's Centres Caring Nanny Childcare Service	A newly operated mutual help service aiming to enhance child care and women employment in community to address the rising need of women carers seeking personal fulfillment either through gainful employment or further study, or the occasional need to take care of personal matters (or simply taking some time off). Also provides child care service to mothers who try to work part-time / full-time and have regular child care needs.
Hong Kong Society for the Protection of Children Pre- School Social Work Services at Nursery Schools	Provides school social work services for nursery schools. Social workers station on weekly basis and provide consultations, casework follow up and tailor-made programmes for children and their families, and support to school teachers.
The Boys' and Girl' Clubs Association of Hong Kong Sunshine Family	Programme for children aged 18 months to 3 years old to enhance their all-rounded development. A variety of programmes is available to cultivate parents' understanding on the developmental need of their children. There is also programme to meet the needs of children with special needs.

It should also be mentioned that Hong Kong Christian Service had been for long time operating work based child care service – the Wayfong Nursery School (with a bank) and the United Christian Medical Service Nursery School (with a hospital). There are difficulties to replicate the service all these years - including the centre has to follow the fire regulations, there needs enough children from staff of the corporate and the financing aspect (e.g. has to be self-financed if privately run) etc.



For age group of 6-12

Table 7.2 Some of the new initiatives for children aged 6-12

Agency Name of the Programme / Project	Brief introduction on the programme / project
Baptist Oi Kwan Social Service Kiddy Heart Canteen	Provides child care and nutritious meals, homework guidance, community support and family counseling in a setting of community canteen that offers nutritious meals.
Hong Kong Society for the Protection of Children Board Game Library	A Board-Game Library was set up in the Children and Family services centre. Parent-child play sessions are provided to teach working parents how to play board-games with their children and to enhance their parent-child relationship.
S.K.H. Lady MacLehose Centre Early Start Project for Infants and Preschoolers	Provides services to children from low income families by volunteers; mobilizes women volunteers and university students to provide child care service and home work guidance.
Social Ventures Hong Kong Playtao Education	Offers continuous after school learning activities; homework guidance and extra-curriculum exposure for students from low income families; also with element of parental education.
Society for Community Organization SoCO New World	Customizes the needs of parents with long working hours and provides services in holidays / odd hours as only limited services are available in current services.
St. James' Settlement Teens' Group	Makes use of "idle" campus at hours after school to run school-based after school programme for providing longer hours services (till 9pm) to cope with needs of parents with long working hours.
The Boys' and Girls' Clubs Association of Hong Kong - Family Milestone - Caltex Project Chance - Learning Academy 2014-2015	<p>The programme provides supportive and developmental service for children from low income families in Sham Shui Po area, so that they could have equal opportunities for development. Services include after school care, parent education and participation and community service.</p> <p>Helps children from low income families and their parents to build up assets, enhances their all-rounded development and resilience, enables them to face difficulties arising from poverty. Service content includes tutorial classes, subject learning classes, Emotional and Cognitive Development courses, and parents education.</p>
The Salvation Army Family-friendly Community-Based Project	Maintains a neighbourhood support network to provide child care services for families with urgent child care needs and promotes mutual help child care in community.



7.1.3 The needs identified and the limitations in providing the service

Although these initiatives are different in objectives and scale, they have the following shared functions / features:

- meeting the service gaps: inadequate / lack of escorting service from school to the centre for joining the programmes; providing more flexible and longer service hours to meet the needs of working parents;
- (many of them) targeting at needs of children from families of low income and children with specific needs e.g. children with special educational need (SEN children). For serving SEN children, usually extra resources are needed e.g. they need more designed programmes;
- partnering with different stakeholders: mobilizing cross-sectoral support and building up volunteers network e.g. mobilizes the schools (to provide venue), the charitable foundations (to provide funding and research support), and the volunteers (to provide tutorial service and childminding etc.) in community;
- integrating child care service with other services e.g. include tutorial service, meal service and make referrals to other services if needed; and
- engaging the family in the activities so as to engage them in the upbringing of children.

Although many community initiatives are proved to be effective and are welcomed by families, there are operational difficulties which have impact on the continuity and / or scaling up of these programmes. Below are the major difficulties reflected by the operators in the focus group:

- administrative and other concerns in school-based after school care programme: in school-based model, parents did not have to worry about the escorting from school to social service centres for the after school care programme. However, so far, just limited number of schools opened the school premise for afterschool care programme. Operators learnt from schools that they faced administrative concerns, like liability issue and extra workload involved; some schools also queried the need and appropriateness for them to take up the “caring” function, and schools needed to purchase insurance to cover childminders etc.
- staffing concern: many of these programmes would involve volunteers to provide the services. However, service operators reflected that it was not easy to rely on volunteers to provide stable services e.g. to maintain stable supply for tutorial service as these projects were usually not long term and were operated in odd hours (e.g. 4p.m. - 9p.m.); and
- sustainability of the projects: for privately funded projects, the sustainability was not ensured. Many projects were started as pilot but were terminated by the end of the project even though they were found to be effective.



7.2 Overseas experience: building up comprehensive integrated systems of support and care

Can overseas' experiences shed light on the direction for developing child care in Hong Kong? The section below takes reference from overseas experience in providing flexible private child care arrangement with child care subsidies, building up parent-child friendly community and links to other family policies.

Integration of different systems seems to be the main theme. The integration of other systems, e.g. community support initiatives, more flexible provision of child care services, parent-child friendly initiatives in community and links to other family friendly policies are also important to the well-being of the family in upbringing children. With a well coordinated and comprehensive integrated system of support, family / parent / children can “find appropriate support as soon as possible, well tailored to the individual family’s or parent’s situation. Comprehensive integrated systems of support and care, therefore, should incorporate low threshold ‘finding places’ or ‘front offices’, where parents can express their questions, worries and problems freely. These places of contact with families should be connected with a broad array of specialised services (‘back office’), so that efficient quick referrals and, whenever needed, combined support efforts can be guaranteed.” (Leseman, 2002)²².

7.2.1 Parent-child centre in community

Some overseas cities / countries develop neighbourhood based child care settings that are located near the residential areas, so as to increase the opportunities that children play with peers, and for parents to get together. Noting that the family size in Hong Kong is growing smaller with near 70% of the households were with children aged 0-12 in 2011, and many were with one child only, the development of such parent-child centre overseas can be one of the relevant directions to be considered for development.

In **Sweden**, parent-child centres usually combine different functions for babies, infants, toddlers and pre-school children in one building in the centre of the community. Services include pre-natal consultation and home visitation; vaccination; post-natal infant health care education and general family practice; playgroups; ‘drop in care’; parent discussion groups and meeting places for parents²³. An advisory and referral function to specialised help and care, or to pre-schools and bilingual programmes, is included. Similar examples are also found in other countries including the Early Excellence Centres in the UK (a pilot was initiated in 1997).

²² Leseman, P.P.M. *Early childhood education and care for children from low-income or minority backgrounds*, OECD, 2002. Downloaded from <http://www.oecd.org/education/school/1960663.pdf>

²³ Gunnarsson, Korpi & Nordenstam (1999) *Early Childhood Education And Care Policy in Sweden Background report prepared for the OECD Thematic Review* Stockholm: Ministry of Education and Science. Retrieved from: <http://www.oecd.org/education/school/2479039.pdf>



In **Taiwan**, child-parent centres have been in government's plan in recent years with the aim to provide more space and facilities to enhance the parenting for families, especially those who are deprived (e.g. living in small space / lack of stimulus to young children etc). The Taipei government launched the policy of "One Parent-child Centre per District" in 2011²⁴. The plan was to build parent-child learning and playing space for families with 0 to 6 years old children. The objective of the policy is to "provide children and their chief caretakers with free and quality recreation space in Taipei". One characteristic of the parent child centre is that it is on public-private partnership, which commissions non-profit foundations or organizations to operate parent-child centres. The target of "One Parent-child Centre per District" had been achieved by 2014²⁵. The service includes:

- i) venues for different parent-child interactive games (parent-child game rooms, Green House, parent-child picture book sections); child-care and parent-child workshops and activities and child-care knowledge presentations; child- care counseling.
- ii) outreach services (including mobile library and toy room, child-care guidance team, etc., train volunteers to make exchanges of second-hand toys / books etc²⁶).

7.2.2 Flexible child care service with child care subsidies

As pointed out in preceding chapter, for informal service NSCCP in Hong Kong, there are concerns from both the parents and operators about its quality. Australia's experiences in developing a network of accredited service providers and subsidies to eligible parents for using the service, will be of reference use.

²⁴ Taipei City Government (2014) "Chapter 5 Social Welfare" in Year Book Taipei 2013

²⁵ Department of Social Welfare, Taipei City Government Retrieved from <http://english.dosw.gov.taipei/ct.asp?xItem=90087582&ctNode=15839&mp=107002>

²⁶ Taipei City Government (2014) "A Friendly City for Raising Children" in Year Book Taipei 2013



The system of Family Day Care (FDC) services in **Australia** is a similar type of service but delivers accredited flexible home-based education and care for children via a network of FDC educators²⁷. The NSCCP project is characterized by its “mutual help” and “volunteer involvement”, the FDC, however, is developed to be a fee-charging profession service that can be obtained by parents with needs. As the majority of FDC services are approved child care services, families using the service may be eligible for Child Care Benefit and the Child Care Rebate, which are subsidies to parents for child care purpose. Through this way, a market of child care service providers can be developed with trained and accredited nannies, which enhances women employment. On the other hand, such system can accommodate the particular or irregular needs of child care for families.

FDC services including recruiting, training and supporting educators; monitoring care provision; and providing advice, support and information for parents. The service can provide flexible care, including all-day care, part-time, casual, overnight, before and after school care, and care during school holidays.

FDC educators and services must meet their obligations under the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care, which can give consistent and dependable information to help families assess individual education and care services across Australia. The educators also have to comply with the Early Childhood Services Education and Care National Law and National Regulations.

7.2.3 Information and co-ordination of services

The study shows that many parents may not be fully aware of the services available to them and may find it difficult to get help from different services. Some countries develop one-stop shops for carers and their families to tackle the problem. Such information centres “help carers be in touch with others having similar experiences and acquire information on sources of help (financial, physical, emotional and social)”. Besides public services, the programme can also link up efforts of private, voluntary organisations and community associations with public authorities to reduce fragmentation and improve co-ordination of services²⁸.

As per-school education and care relate to different policies and government departments, Singapore set up a unit to coordinate the policies and services.

²⁷ Australian Government, website of mychild.gov.au Retrieved from: <http://www.mychild.gov.au/sites/mychild>

²⁸ OECD (2011) Help wanted? Providing and Paying for Long Term Care. Retrieved from: <http://www.oecd.org/els/health-systems/47884889.pdf>



In **Singapore**, the government sets up The Early Childhood and Development Agency (ECDA) in 2013 to serve as the regulatory and developmental authority for the early childhood sector. It oversees all aspects of children's development below the age of 6, across both kindergartens and child care centres²⁹. ECDA is an autonomous agency jointly overseen by the Ministry of Education (MOE) and the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF), and is hosted under the Ministry of Social and Family Development. The key responsibilities of the ECDA include: overseeing measures to raise quality standards of early childhood programmes; facilitating the training and continuing professional development of early childhood professionals; and conducting public education and outreaches to raise parents' awareness and support for their children's development³⁰ etc.

With a central body to co-ordinate the different areas regarding the provision of quality child care services and subsidies, it is hoped that the Agency can take a comprehensive overview and drive improvements for the early childhood sector more effectively. Parents, operators, and early childhood professionals can deal with ECDA as a single point of interface for their queries and feedback.

The ECDA also run a website of Child Care Link³¹ to provide general information on child care services and child care subsidies for parents, service operators and early childhood professionals. The website helps bringing different information in a one-stop point.

²⁹ <http://www.moe.gov.sg/media/press/2013/03/launch-of-the-early-childhood-development-agency.php>

³⁰ https://childcarelink.gov.sg/ccls/home/CCLS_HomeAboutUs.jsp

³¹ https://childcarelink.gov.sg/ccls/home/CCLS_Home.jsp



Summary and Observation

- Facing the service gaps, there are quite a number of new initiatives launched in the community in recent years to meet the unmet needs. These new initiatives involve different stakeholders including the NGOs, private sector funders and scholars etc.
- The new initiatives try their way to tackle various service gaps including those
 - in relation to service availability: to offer service to meet needs in Saturdays and school holidays etc;
 - in relation to serving children with special needs e.g. to run programme for deprived children, and to offer service for SEN children etc;
 - in relation to support to families: to involve parents more intensively and to provide parental education; and
 - in relation to linking up of the services: to involve more schools in trying out school-based after school care programmes.

The experiences show that

- NGOs, with support from private sector, continue to play their pioneering role in addressing the community need;
- civil society is willing and can help solve the social problems; and
- the involvement of different stakeholders, to help tackle the child care problem, will be one of the ways ahead.
- New initiatives in civil society also face obstacles in development, including:
 - the sustainability of the projects (lack of funding to continue)
 - operational difficulties faced in individual programmes e.g. insurance issue in school-based after school care programmes
 - fragmented efforts: while there are attempts in different types of programmes, there needs consolidation of these efforts for moving ahead including the scaling up of effective projects and the replication in other districts.
- Experiences in selected overseas countries show that community based, integrated approach in providing child care support is feasible. Other experiences include efforts to ensure quality of informal care and mechanism to improve the coordination of policies and services within government departments. These can be referred to in developing support to families in child care in Hong Kong.



The impetus for starting this study came from the concern on the service gaps as raised by grassroots organizations and parents groups - that grassroots parents faced difficulties to find child care facilities for their children and this affected mothers' chance to seek external employment. The original concern was on low income families as dual earnings will be of significant importance to these families for maintaining daily living. The study unfolds various issues of concern including the philosophy, planning and provision etc of the child care services as a whole.

8.1 Discrepancies in demand and supply

In the past few years, while the parents voiced out difficulties to find child care places, government's usual reply was that the services' utilization showed that there was still capacity to serve. The question arising is, why is it so and where is the discrepancy?

8.1.1 Changing needs of child care

The study shows that there are changing needs in relation to child care. These were expressed by parents / users and operators and also revealed from secondary data. Major needs include:

- demographic changes such as more nuclear families, weaker support from extended families; marriage in later ages and giving birth to first baby at later ages (have implication on possible support from grandparents and on mothers' employment including either to leave employment or to return to work after certain period of child rearing); lower fertility rate and parents' high expectation on child care quality;
- more women joining the employment and / or would like to join the employment, resulting in higher demand for child care;
- high poverty rate persists, the need for dual earnings is important for low income families; needs for accessing quality early childhood education and care for children from deprived families are also important to ensure sure start for these children;
- long working hours of parents especially the grassroots, many of them are in service industry which has very long working hours, this increases the demands for child care service with longer operation duration; and
- parents' preference: parents prefer to have stable service and with quality guaranteed





8.1.2 Government's response to child care need

From the government side, the study shows that the child care provision has not been developed to effectively addressing the socio-economic changes and hence the changing service needs.

At present, there is no planning mechanism for providing the service. The ratio of 100 places for every 20,000 population set at 1970s is no longer in use. Basically, there was a halt in service increase since 2005 (which was the year for harmonisation of pre-primary services), for both the CCC (for under 3) and the long whole-day KG-cum-CCC (for aged 2-6). The usual reply from the government is that they have to consider a basket of indicators for planning new centres. The planning and service provision is hence become passive and fall behind from the demand.

Looking ahead, government and community have to address the socio-economic development to plan for child care planning and provision. Several dilemmas have been identified in the study and they should be seriously looked into for moving ahead.

8.2 Tools for better planning – data collection and research need

First of all, before examining the dilemmas, it should be pointed out that for efficient and effective service planning, there should be systematic collection and close monitoring of information related to changing needs, service utilization and profile of the children and families using the services. At the moment, statistics spread around. The situation is complicated by the fact that there are two government units (Social Welfare Department and Education Bureau) monitor the services; that there are different types of child care services with overlapping ages for serving, and that there are no accurate waiting list data (this is complicated by the fact that parents can waitlist in more than one centre and they can waitlist their child at centre near their working place or residential area) etc.

In recent years, there is hardly any service review or mapping on child care services. There is a need to conduct more studies in relation to child care, so as to facilitate our understanding, in more comprehensive and in-depth way, the changing needs of families in child care, the effectiveness of various service modes / types to meet parents' and children's needs.

During this study, it is found that there are still lots of areas that need further examination. For instance, there requires more in-depth studies on the subjects listed down below regarding various dilemmas, child care programmes for children from low income family and impact of different programmes to the development of children etc.



8.3 An integrated perspective on child care policy for low income families

This study adopts an integrated approach to analyze the child care services for low income families. That child care will be examined for the well-being of children, of parents (especially refer to women's development) and of the family as a whole. Taking this perspective, various issues of concern could be grouped as several dilemmas for seeking ways ahead. Both the government and the civil society have to break through the following dichotomy and seek for synthesis on these different concepts.

8.3.1 Family responsibility and government's role

The government's thinking behind the child care service is, family should take up the child care role, child care facilities are for those families that are not able to fulfill this responsibility. Hence, government used to take up a residual role in child care. This is the belief underlying the provision of providing child care services in the past decades. It is believed that this is one of the reasons accounting for the slow pace in developing the child care services in the past years. How far can this still be upheld in light of socio-economic changes (e.g. there is a need to unleash the potentials of female homemakers into the labour force) needs to be re-examined.

Even for families that are taking the full responsibility of child care, the study finds that they still need some degrees of institutional support on quality child care. In addition, parental education will ensure that proper care is provided by the parents. As institutional support can provide professional assistance to enhance holistic development of children, such institutional support is especially important for low income families. Moreover, occasional support, in case of emergency is in need by many families.

8.3.2 Respect for choices and policy facilitation

One of the objectives about child care policy embraced by the public is to provide choices to women. Under such discourse, child care service have to be provided so that the mother can choose whether to engage in employment or becoming a full-time or part-time carer.

However, whether such free choice is available is queried. For women in the low income families, they can hardly sustain their living without a second earner. Without enough provision in subsidized child care services, their only choice to pick is to leave their job to take care the child(ren) at home and probably living with a comparatively lower standard of living. Only the family who can afford the child care service in private market (which is usually more expensive than the aided ones) or with domestics helpers, can have the choice. Hence, to ensure class equality in child care service, there should be sufficient and affordable child care service for the low income families.

Moreover, the current discourse about choices only focuses on the choice of women. It is assumed that mothers should be the main carer of the children. Findings of the telephone survey did show that most of the child caring responsibility was borne by the mothers (especially in low income families). Future child care policy should take promoting gender equality into account. Service should also be provided to facilitate fathers to take the responsibility as a carer.



Meanwhile, there should also be a review on the existing subsidy schemes on child care and education and see if they can ensure families with needs could access to appropriate services. For example, the policy objective of promoting labour participation of child carers (i.e. mothers) should be aligned with the system and that the criteria including income criteria of related services should accommodate the needs of families with one or both working parents.

8.3.3 Formal and informal child care

In the past decade, government developed a number of informal services such as MHCCC and NSCCP. However, the development reveals the following issues :

- the services try to respond to parents' needs (such as the long working hours and need for time off for training / interviews / taking another child to seek medical consultation etc) but whether needs of children have been taken into full consideration in designing the programme;
- the most apparent objective of these services is on child safety and for not leaving children unattended rather than focuses on child development. If the informal service is used on an ad hoc basis, the above objective can be accepted. However, operators reflected that there was a tendency for parents to use these services as regular ones because of shortage in formal services. In such case, the role, objective and programme content have to be reviewed, so as to meet the children's developmental need and the changing family needs;
- formal and informal services are performing different functions. The current trend of using informal service as a substitute of formal services by parents should not be a long term solution. Needs of children and families should be based on to map out the respective roles of formal and informal services and hence the proportion of services to be developed; and
- informal services will continue to play an important role. The improvement in their service quality should be seriously looked into. For instance, there is a lack of comprehensive and systematic training for community nannies; the accreditation of these childminders had also been raised by interviewees and should be considered.

8.3.4 Educational need and care need

The findings of this study have revealed that existing child service provision has separated the education and child care functions and put it under the supervision of two different bureaux i.e. Education Bureau and Labour and Welfare Bureau.

No matter from the perspective of the parents or from the service providers who are experts in early child education and care, they have clearly expressed that these two functions could not be separated from each other. Parents aim at finding quality child care for their children and help their children to have proper development. For service providers, under the global trend of "educare", they offer education and care for the young children at the same time.



The separation of these two functions in both the pre-primary and child care settings affects the effective utilization of important resources and also has implication on policy areas. For instance, the Pre-primary Education Voucher Scheme counts only 3 hours of education and this will directly or indirectly create a need to have other child care services to support the education policy. The education policy should also take into account the child care needs of families after the school hours.

8.3.5 Government provision and civil society initiatives

This study shows that government has important role in formulating policies that support families with children and thus provides sufficient measures and child care services in community. In fact, many NGOs have also taken initiatives to try out different projects in meeting the changing and urgent child care need or engaging new resources in recent years. Such initiatives serve as pilot projects to leverage community resources with the hope that government will support them and turn them into regular service. They exercise more flexibility to meet the service need of the deprived or the marginal groups.

8.4 Collective impact to address the social problem of child care

Child care is more than a child matter, it is an important social development agenda. It requires the effort of family, government and community as a whole to improve the existing situation. During the study, the notion of collective impact approach to tackle the child care problem was raised. Collective impact approach, which is being tried out in some overseas countries, brings people together, in a structured way, to solve social problems and to achieve social change. Whether this can be experimented in Hong Kong and on the subject of child care, is worthy to be explored. In any case, this study examined the subject of service gaps and possible ways out by engaging and consulting different stakeholders in the process, including parents, operators, policy makers, scholars, schools and private sector funders etc. This is the first step to involve different stakeholders in tackling this subject of child care and exploring the possible ways out.

Chapter 9

Recommendations



This study started with the concern on low income families' child care needs and completed with the unfolding of a series of issues relate to changing needs in child care, service gaps and service planning etc. Lots more need to be done by the government and community as whole to tackle the problem. This chapter lists out the recommendations for moving forward.

It is worthy to note from the outset, that government and the community need to recognize the importance of early childhood. Secondly, an integrated approach has to be adopted in reviewing and planning the child care services. Not just nurturing of our next generation with quality education and care should be considered, but providing support to families that have difficulties in child care, ensuring accessibility for children with special needs, providing choices for women to actualize equality in gender, and helping families to reconcile work and family responsibilities etc. should also be taken into account.

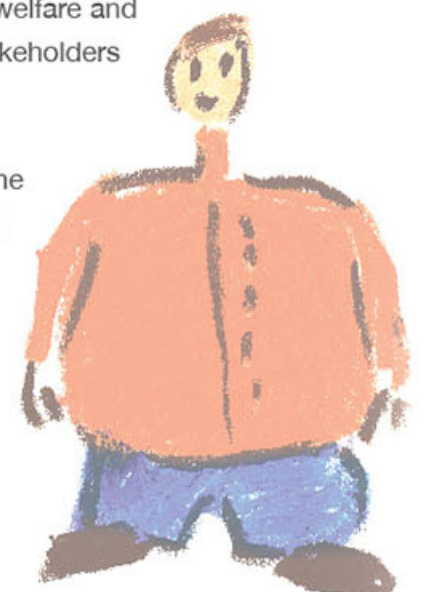
That said, the following values could guide the search for improvement ahead:

- childhood as a unique and valuable stage of learning and development be recognized;
- early childhood development as an investment for sustainable personal and social development be recognized;
- women's choice for active participation in workforce and personal development be respected;
- quality early childhood education and care be promoted irrespective of the socio-economic background of families; and
- effort to help families reconcile the work and child care responsibilities be promoted.

Specific recommendations of the study are as follows:

1) To review the philosophy, policy objectives and planning mechanism of child care services

- The government should review the philosophy and policy objectives of child care services. The belief that family could and should take up the child care function herself seems to be a myth rather than a reality. The policy assumption behind the provision of child care services and the policy objectives ahead have to be reviewed in light of the changing family needs (e.g. choice for female homemakers to enter the labour market). As the review relates to the welfare and interests of many parties and the community as a whole, different stakeholders should be consulted in the process.
- Accessibility, affordability and quality of the child care services are the reference for development. The review should hence include the planning mechanism, the assistance to needy families and the financing of the service (i.e. to operators), the service mode (including the operation duration), the roles of formal and informal services and the smooth implementation of the policies by government departments (EDB and SWD) etc.





- At present, no clear planning standard could be referred to for Standalone Child Care Centre and long whole-day Kindergarten-cum-Child Care Centre services. There was no adjustment in service provision in the past 10 years though there was demand for the services. This has impact on families in need of the service. The government is suggested to include relevant service planning ratio in 'Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines'.

2) To have clear policy objectives in enabling choices for women to enter employment

Government, in her 2013 population policy consultation, stated the need to increase the workforce by unleashing the potential of female homemakers.

- With the aim to enable more mothers to have choice to enter the labour market, the government should examine the types of jobs that the targeted female homemakers will enter into and the related working hours etc. These will affect the capacity and mode of the child care services as a response. Moreover, while it is an economic issue to increase the labour force, it should be borne in mind that child should be the focus and quality child care is a must to ensure the development of children.

3) To increase provision of services that are in urgent demand

To improve the accessibility, the total provision and distribution of services corresponding to the needs in districts should be addressed. In the study, the urge for more Standalone Child Care Centres and long whole-day Kindergarten-cum-Child Care Centres was identified. It is hence recommended that the government should take immediate action to:

- increase the provision of subsidized Standalone Child Care Centres and that the provision should take note of district needs. At the moment, there are districts that do not have any aided Standalone Child Care Centres service (e.g. Kwun Tong, Wong Tai Sin and Sai Kung) or that there is only limited service provision in the districts. It is suggested to increase provision, especially in newly developed districts or districts with more young couples.
- conduct strategic planning for long whole day Kindergarten-cum-Child Care Centres for aged 2 to 6. The service enhances the all-rounded development of children and with longer service hours, it meets the needs of working parents better. It is also welcomed by families with special needs (e.g. families with more than one child or children with special education needs). Again, service distribution should be noted to ensure that needs in different districts are met. The role and function of this particular type of service should be addressed in the planning for 15-year free education, e.g. setting up ratio for the service.



4) To improve the existing child care facilities

To improve the accessibility of the services, it is recommended to:

- review the arrangement of after school services for primary students
Both the Social Welfare Department (SWD) and the Education Bureau (EDB) provide resources for different after school programmes including the After School Care Programme under SWD and the School-based After-school Learning and Support programmes etc. under EDB. These programmes are operated in schools, children and youth centres or community centres. The service focus and content, service hours and escort arrangement vary. It is suggested to review the services comprehensively so that different services could be co-ordinated better and echo each other. By doing so, effective service could be available families with primary students and service gaps could be filled up.
- enhance the support to the Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project (NSCCP)
NSCCP helps release pressure from shortage in formal child care services. Government should enhance the support to the programme. For instance, to increase incentive for recruiting more nannies and hence ensure a stable supply of nannies. For centre-based service, there could have more such centres in operation so as to increase accessibility to families in need of the service. Lastly, there should be comprehensive and systematic training for all the nannies to ensure the service quality. In the long run, the need and feasibility to have accreditation of nannies should be examined.

5) To improve the fee subsidy schemes for children aged 0-6 in order to relieve parents' financial pressure

To ensure affordability of child care services, it is suggested to

- improve the Kindergarten and Child Care Centre Fee Remission Scheme such as relaxing the criteria of income level in order to assist families with lower income to use appropriate child care service, e.g. the long whole-day Kindergarten and Child Care Centre. The consultation of Committee on Free Kindergarten Education on 15 years free education should seek views of related stakeholders on affordability in finalizing the recommendations.

6) To develop a database on children and to encourage more research on child care and child development

It is recommended to develop a database to keep tracking the situation of children and families and to facilitate evidence-based planning for services. There is also a need to work with different stakeholders e.g. NGOs, scholars, service operators, parents, corporate, schools etc. to build up the system and regularly analyse the data for use. Government and stakeholders should encourage the conducting of more researches on child care. The availability of all these data will facilitate effective and evidence based evaluation and planning of child care services.



7) To provide supporting services in community for carers and for families with children

- The family plays a crucial role in child development and, as indicated in the study, there are also other carers helping the caring role. Many parents and other carers would need guidance and assistance on child care. It is recommended to introduce more extensively parental education in the community, and to support parents (and grandparents) who face difficulties in child rearing and parenting including those in child's learning / development and family relations etc.

8) To support the development of new initiatives

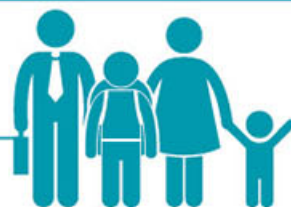
Different stakeholders (including schools, corporate and charity foundations etc.) can start / support new initiatives in child care, so as to fill in the service gaps; to test out / demonstrate different effective ways in enhancing child care / child development in community, and to support the under privileged families etc. Government should take a more active role in supporting programmes that are found to be effective – by scaling up the service or replicating the projects in other districts.

Employers could also consider other family support measures to help employees take care of their children, e.g. to give subsidies on child care. Government could provide supporting measures to employers, e.g. tax exemption for these subsidies.

Work-based child care service is a service that could be further examined for expansion. This is an area that business sector can consider to contribute.

Concluding Remark

This mapping exercise on child care services reveals that there are service gaps and areas for improvement. Child care is more than a matter of child. It is an important social development agenda and requires the effort of family herself, government and community as a whole to improve the existing situation. Local experiences in recent years have engaged different stakeholders in the improvement of child care in community. It is hoped that with all parties' inputs, the community could actualize the vision that the young generation who are pillars of society in future, can receive quality child care; women can enjoy choices in active participation in work force and development; and families can reconcile her child care and work responsibilities.



1. 背景

- 1.1 香港的兒童照顧服務雖然發展多年，但近年不少父母（特別是基層家庭），一直反映服務未能滿足他們的需要。在兒童照顧服務不足的情況下，低收入家庭的母親難以透過外出就業賺取收入維持家庭開支。
- 1.2 本研究的目標在於探討為何在服務供應及需求間會出現這些服務縫罅；同時就現況找出填補縫罅的可行方向。本研究對現時0-12歲的兒童照顧服務進行分析，梳理出整體概況，更深入地回應上述與兒童發展、婦女就業與發展和低收入家庭相關的問題。
- 1.3 兒童照顧不單與兒童發展相關，亦關乎婦女及家庭的福祉。因此，本研究將採用綜合的角度分析現時的兒童照顧服務/政策。在此綜合角度下，兒童照顧服務應同時顧及下列原則：
 - 兒童是人生學習及發展的重要階段，有母可取代的重要性
 - 重視兒童的早期發展，是對個人及社會長遠發展的重要投資
 - 婦女參與勞動市場與個人發展的選擇應受到尊重
 - 為不同社會經濟背景的兒童提供優質的早期教育及照顧
 - 促進家庭在工作與兒童照顧上取得平衡

2. 人口數據分析

- 2.1 本研究從文獻、統計數據及全港性電話調查搜集資料，並與服務營辦者、有兒童的低收入家庭及其他持份者進行深入訪談/聚焦小組訪問。從統計數據的分析中，本研究有以下的發現：
 - 雖然現時生育率維持於低水平及0-12歲兒童數目持續下降，但整體兒童數目仍維持一定水平。
 - 在2011年，本港有487,417戶有最少1名12歲或以下兒童的住戶，佔全港住戶數目約五份之一(20.6%)，這些住戶共有67.6萬名12歲或以下兒童。
 - 比較2001至2011年的數字，在2011年整體0至12歲兒童數目較2001及2006年的為低，但在2011年0-2歲的兒童群組數目較2006年的數目為高，上升了26.3%。

表1 2001, 2006及2011全港住戶數目及住戶內人口數目

年度	住戶數目 (佔全港百分比)	住戶內的人口 (佔全港百分比)
2001	602,985 (29.4%)	2,456,944 (39.1%)
2006	546,814 (24.6%)	2,124,698 (32.9%)
2011	487,417 (20.6%)	1,862,954 (28.1%)

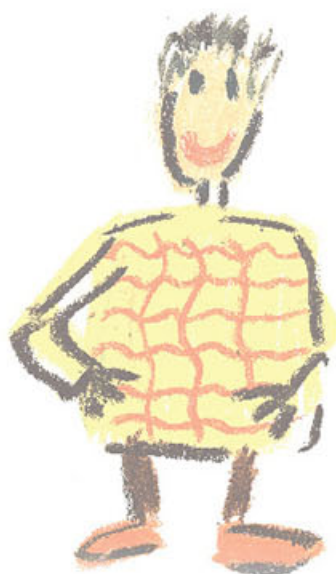




表2 由1991至2011年有最少一名0-12歲兒童住戶的數目

年度	0-12歲兒童數目	按年齡劃分的兒童數目	
		0-2	0-3
1991	990,972	0-2	200,966
		0-3	268,515
		0-6	489,318
		6-12	578,049
1996	968,683	0-2	195,165
		0-3	267,224
		0-6	486,170
		6-12	556,503
2001	939,617	0-2	149,092
		0-3	209,934
		0-6	435,162
		6-12	584,420
2006	770,007	0-2	118,866
		0-3	165,902
		0-6	325,238
		6-12	501,131
2011	675,680	0-2	150,129
		0-3	201,539
		0-6	346,317
		6-12	375,681

根據現時兒童照顧服務的服務對象年齡“0-2” / “0-3” / “0-6” / “6-12”劃分住戶內的兒童人口

- 現時家庭平均有較少孩子，因此父母對兒童照顧的期望會較高。此外，在以核心家庭為主的家庭結構下，多數父母需要依靠自己照顧兒童。

表3 2001、2006及2011年有0-12歲的子女的住戶數目及百分比

0-12歲子女的數目	2001		2006		2011	
	家庭住戶數目	佔全港家庭百分比	家庭住戶數目	佔全港家庭百分比	家庭住戶數目	佔全港家庭百分比
1名	362,687	60.1%	369,143	67.5%	338,873	69.5%
2名	203,677	33.8%	159,018	29.1%	134,307	27.6%
3名	31,676	5.3%	16,537	3.0%	12,775	2.6%
4名或以上	4,945	0.8%	2,116	0.4%	1,462	0.3%



- 婦女首次生育的年齡及婦女勞動參與率不斷上升。

表4 1985-2014年按性別劃分的勞動人口參與率 (%)

按性別劃分的勞動人口參與率 (%)			
年度	男	女	男女合計
1985	80.4	48.5	64.8
1991	78.9	47.9	63.5
2001	73.0	50.8	61.5
2011	68.4	53.0	60.1
2012	68.7	53.6	60.5
2013	69.1	54.5	61.2

資料來源: 政府統計處

- 貧窮問題持續，2012年香港約有18萬兒童生活於低收入家庭¹。低收入家庭往往既需要由其中一位家庭成員(通常為母親)全職照顧兒童，或父母二人均同時參與勞動市場以賺取足夠收入，在這兩者之間陷入兩難。

表5 2001、2006及2011年有最少一名0-12歲兒童的家庭中住戶入息低於住戶入息中位數及住戶入息中位數的一半的住戶數目和百分比

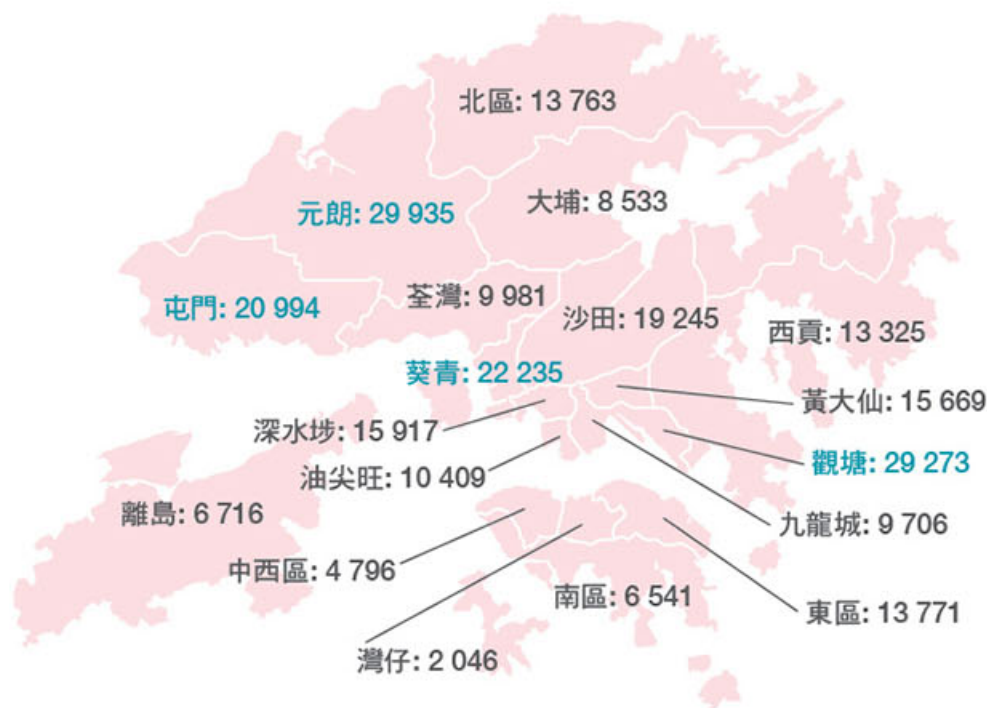
年度	全港有最少1名0-12歲兒童的住戶數目	其中低於或等於住戶入息中位數的住戶數目	其中低於或等於住戶入息中位數一半的住戶數目
		(佔整體百分比)	(佔整體百分比)
2001	602,985	331,901	123,550
		(55.0%)	(20.5%)
2006	546,814	291,293	121,498
		(53.3%)	(22.2%)
2011	487,417	252,873	109,592
		(51.9%)	(22.5%)

- 低收入家庭的兒童並非於18區平均分佈，因此政府在規劃時必須考慮不同地區需要的差異。

¹ 低收入家庭的定義：按不同住戶人數劃分，收入少於或等於全港相同人數住戶入息中位數一半的住戶

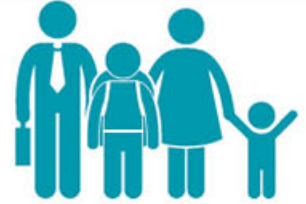


圖1 2011年按地區劃分有0-12歲兒童的低收入住戶數目



3. 現時的兒童照顧理念及服務

- 3.1 政府對兒童照顧的政策理念影響服務的策劃，包括服務模式及服務量等。現時的政策強調照顧兒童是家庭的責任，政府只擔當「剩餘福利」的角色。我們需要檢視這種政策取向需否更新以回應社會實際需要。
- 3.2 由於兒童數目下降，正規的兒童照顧服務由2000年間開始減少。不過，服務的供應並沒有因應近年兒童數目回升而增加。例如服務0-3歲兒童的資助獨立幼兒中心使用率近年已達100%，但服務仍未有擴展。
- 3.3 近年，社會福利署嘗試以較「靈活」的模式提供兒童照顧服務，例如在2000年開始日間的寄養家庭(foster day care)及日間的兒童之家(day small group home)服務。服務營運者反映這些服務並非地區性提供，其可達度(accessibility)影響使用率。因此，兒童照顧服務的可達度是一個重要的考量。
- 3.4 現時雖有不同的服務種類及服務時間，但這些服務是否可以滿足到家長的需要，則需要詳細檢討。此外，不同地區會有不同的服務需要，現時有一些地區根本沒有服務提供，因此服務的提供點亦是重要的考慮。
- 3.5 現時不同的服務收費水平及相應資助制度的提供影響家長是否可以負擔選用服務。例如現時幼稚園及幼兒中心學費減免計劃中的入息水平要求高，一些較低收入(入息相約於住戶入息中位數)的家長會因不合資助條件而不能使用適當的兒童照顧服務。



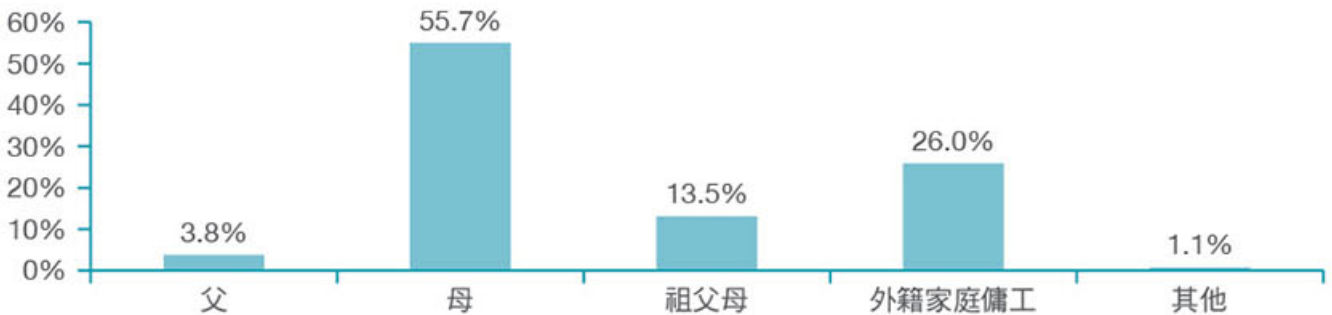
4. 研究結果 - 電話調查及焦點小組/深入訪談

4.1 電話調查結果發現：

我們將結果以貧窮住戶、低收入住戶及高收入住戶作分析。

- 大部份貧窮住戶及低收入住戶的被訪者，主要依靠母親照顧兒童。而高收入住戶則主要以外傭為照顧者。較多貧窮家庭認為沒有其他人可協助他們照顧兒童。超過一半貧窮住戶認為母親作為主要照顧者會對家庭帶來財政壓力。

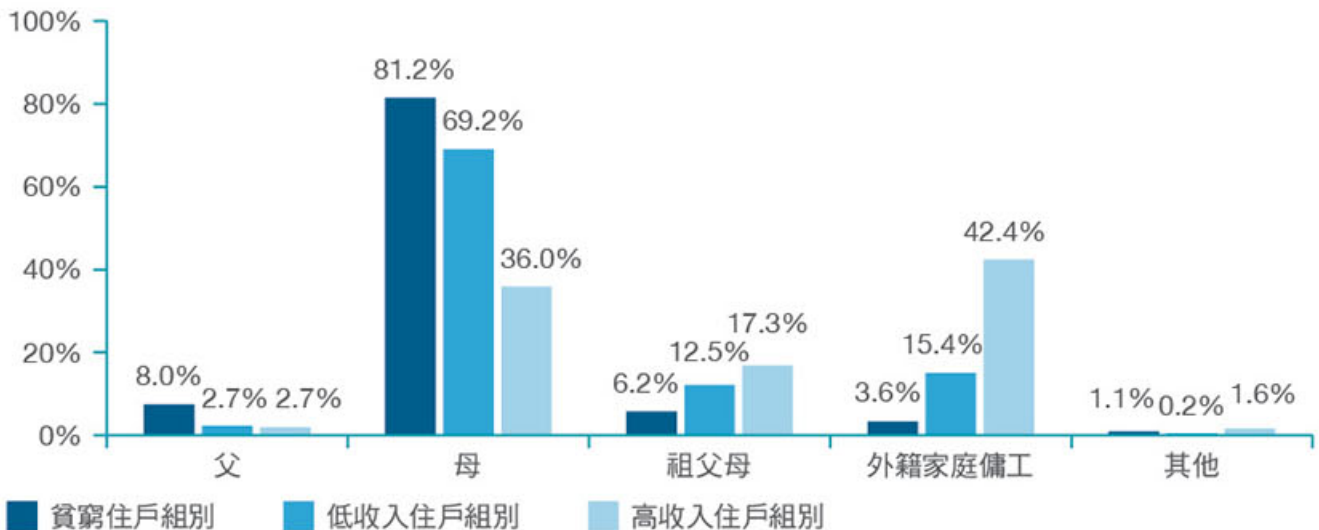
圖2 照顧兒童的主要照顧者



低收入家庭中的主要照顧者是母親：在“貧窮住戶”中，超過八成(81.2%)家庭的主要照顧者是母親、其次是父親，佔8%；“低收入住戶”中，子女主要的照顧者也是母親(69.2%)，其次是外籍家庭傭工(15.4%)；

高收入家庭中的主要照顧者是外籍家庭傭工：在“高收入住戶”中，外籍家庭傭工是主要的照顧者(42.4%)，其次才是母親(36.0%)。

圖3 以住戶收入組別劃分主要照顧者





收入愈低的家庭愈缺乏其他照顧者支援：問及是否有其他照顧者的安排，整體受訪者中有64.4%的家庭有其他照顧者安排；有35.6%的家庭沒有其他照顧者安排。不過，如按不同收入住戶分析，調查顯示收入愈低的家庭愈缺乏其他照顧者支援。“貧窮住戶”中，超過一半（53%）並沒有其他照顧者安排；“高收入住戶”中，只有24.5%沒有其他照顧者安排。

圖4 有沒有其他照顧者安排

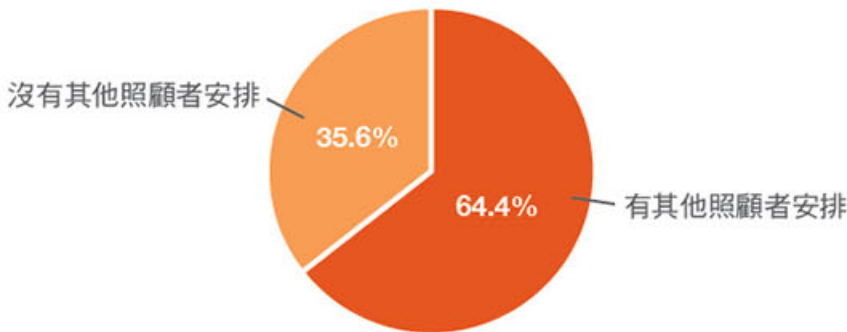
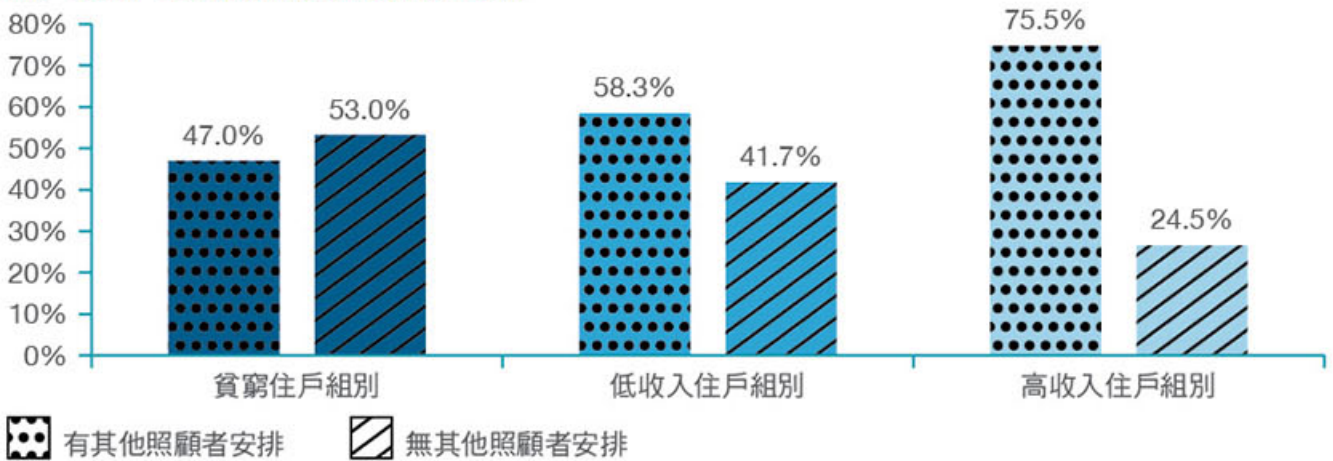
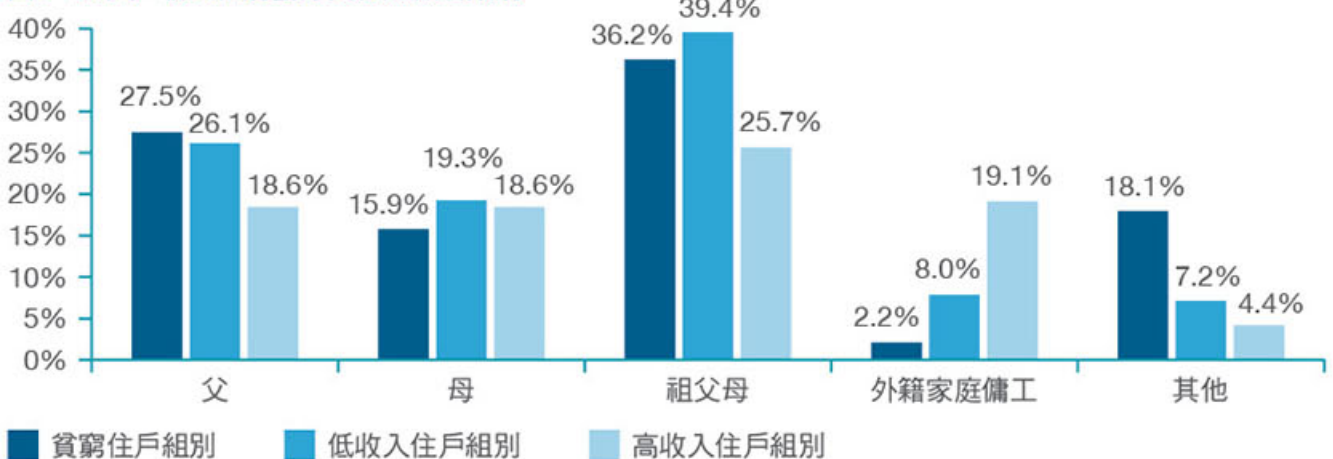


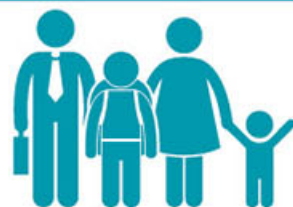
圖5 以住戶收入組別劃分其他照顧者安排



祖父母及外籍家庭傭工擔當協助照顧者的角色：在回答有其他照顧者安排者中，不同的收入群組普遍以祖父母為“其他照顧者”；外傭亦是“高收入組別”的育兒支援。

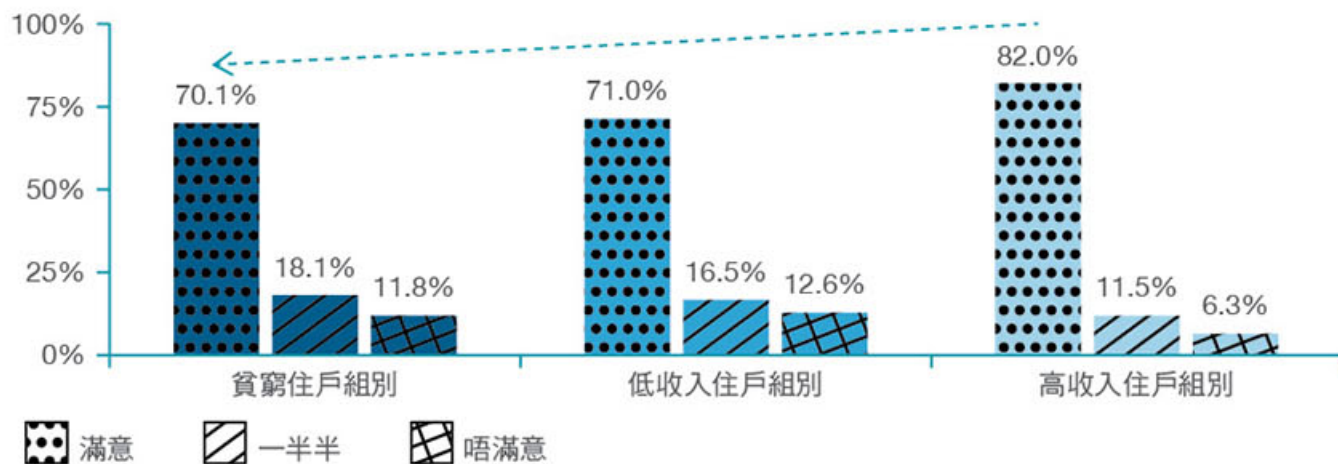
圖6 以住戶收入組別劃分其他照顧者類別





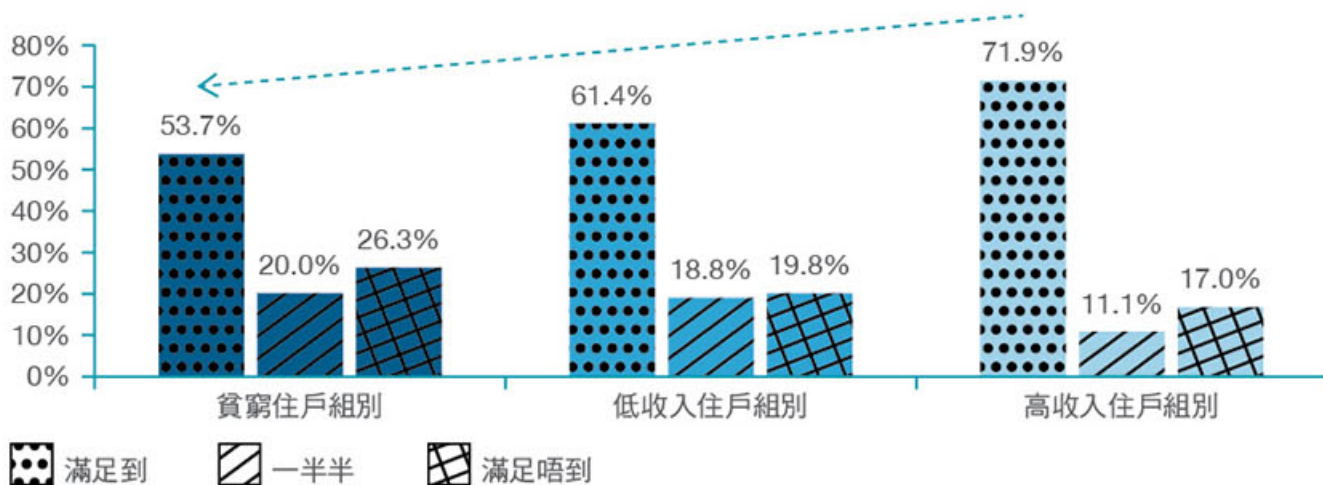
低收入的組別對現時照顧方式的滿意程度下降：問及對現時照顧安排的滿意程度，愈低收入的群組的滿意程度愈有下降趨勢。在“貧窮住戶”及“低收入住戶”中，有近3成受訪者的滿意程度屬「一半半」及「唔滿意」。

圖7 以住戶收入組別劃分父母對現時照顧方式的滿意程度



一些家庭擔心現時的照顧安排不能滿足到子女的各種需要：問及現時的照顧安排是否能滿足子女的需要時，愈低收入的群組，滿意程度亦較低，反映一些受訪家庭擔心現時的照顧安排不能滿足到子女的各種需要。在“貧窮住戶”及“低收入住戶”中，有46.3%及38.6%回答「一半半」及「滿足唔到」。

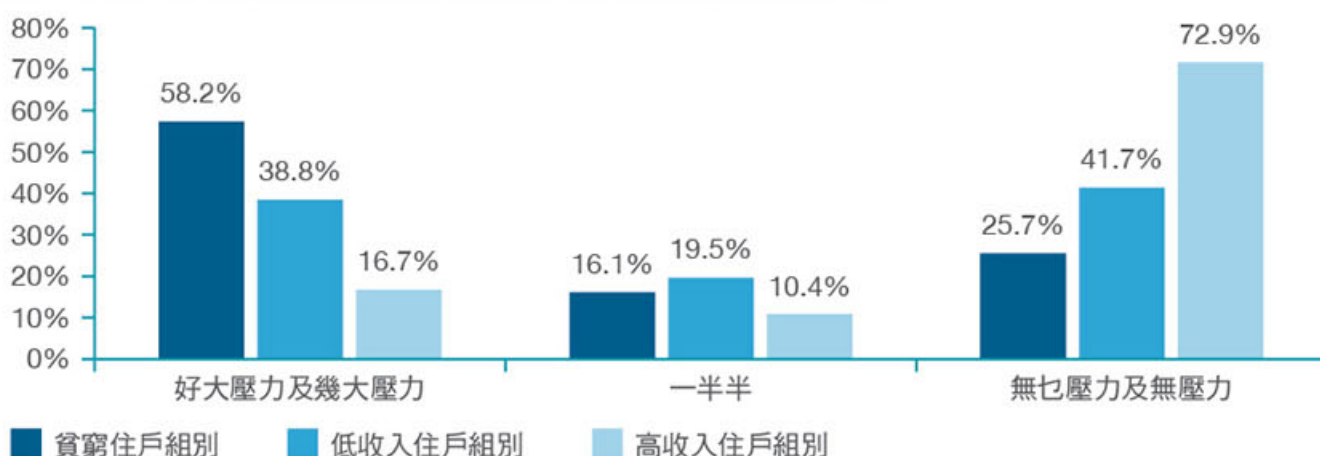
圖8 以住戶收入組別劃分父母對現時照顧安排能否滿足到子女的需要





低收入群組家長表示現時的照顧模式(以母親照顧為主)對家庭經濟狀況造成壓力：比較不同的收入群組，超過一半(58.2%)的“貧窮住戶”表示現時的照顧模式對家庭經濟狀況造成壓力；在“低收入住戶”中，亦有38.8%的受訪家庭表示面對家庭經濟壓力。

圖9 以住戶收入組別劃分父母對現時照顧模式對家庭經濟有否構成壓力



不同收入群組照顧子女時遇到的困難：約四分三(73%)的受訪家庭表示在過去一年，在照顧子女上最少曾遇到以下一種或以上的困難。如果按家庭收入作分析，發現低收入家庭中較多認為「沒有能力教育子女做功課」；而較高收入組別則認為「自己或配偶工時長，無法協助照顧子女」是目前主要的困難。

表6 不同收入群組照顧子女時遇到的困難

照顧子女時曾遇到的困難	貧窮住戶組別 (n=189)	低收入住戶組別 (n=308)	高收入住戶組別 (n=440)
(育有多於一名子女者)不同子女的需要，在時間分配上會有衝突	32.3%	29.5%	30.9%
沒有能力教育子女做功課	59.3%	42.2%	20.9%
當自己生病時，難以找到其他人或者託兒服務暫時照顧子女	49.2%	39.0%	23.4%
(有人工作的家庭)當子女生病無法上學時，向僱主請事假很困難	21.2%	19.5%	17.5%
(有人工作的家庭)當子女放學校假期時，向僱主請假很困難	18.0%	24.7%	17.3%
自己或配偶工時長，無法協助照顧子女	30.7%	41.9%	43.9%
以上皆否	19.3%	24.3%	32.3%



4.2 在深入訪談/聚焦小組中，被訪者反映了他們對服務縫罅的意見：

- 現時家庭及鄰舍對兒童照顧的支持不斷削弱。
- 家長希望得到有質素的兒童照顧服務以滿足兒童發展的需要。
- 家長是否得到服務，不單是受服務供應數量的影響，也受服務提供地點、服務時間、不同服務之間的協調，以及行政程序是否繁複等因素影響。
- 不同類型的兒童照顧服務因不同問題影響其服務的可達性，較重要的包括：
 - 資助獨立幼兒中心 - 數量不足
 - 全日制幼稚園暨幼兒中心 - 數量不足
 - 社區保姆 - 未能提供較固定的保姆，及方便使用者的行政程序
 - 課餘託管 - 不同服務間缺乏聯繫
- 社區的家長教育不足。

5. 本地新嘗試及海外經驗

5.1 在本地經驗方面，服務機構近年推出了不少社區計劃以回應家庭的需要。這些新服務嘗試與不同持份者合作進行，包括個人或企業捐贈者及學者等。計劃的目標大多是針對現時的服務縫罅，例如：

- 增加服務供應：例如在週末及學校假期間提供服務；
- 針對兒童的特殊學習需要：例如為弱勢兒童提供早期學習；
- 對家庭的支援：鼓勵家長參與及提供家長教育；及
- 連結不同的服務：與學校合作，在校提供課餘託管服務。

5.2 這些計劃的推行反映出

- 非政府機構在捐贈者的支持下，繼續擔當先導的角色回應社區需要；
- 公民社會願意及可協助回應社會問題；及
- 因此，跨界別的合作是發展兒童照顧服務的一個可行方向。

5.3 研究亦搜集了一些本地及海外的經驗，以整合及豐富現時兒童照顧服務的系統，對家庭可以有更全面的支援。例子包括在社區支援育兒的設施、以兒童照顧津貼方便有需要的家庭獲取服務等。在統整及全面的服務支援下，家長可以盡快找到所需的服務，而不同服務之間亦有效連結，方便家長可以有途徑獲得一些更配合他們個別需要的服務。

6. 討論及建議

6.1 根據上述分析，服務縫罅可從兩方面分析。第一，這與現行服務的數量與可達性相關。在服務數量方面，例如兩種主要的兒童照顧服務，即資助獨立幼兒中心與長全日制幼稚園暨幼兒中心，過去十年都沒有因應新增的服務需求而增加服務供應量。至於可達性方面，父母們未能充份使用其他兒童照顧服務的原因包括：營運時間不合家長的需要、不同服務間缺乏連繫，及社區保姆計劃的服務質素未能滿足家長的需要等。

6.2 第二，服務縫罅亦關乎現時未有提供的服務，有服務營運者提出了一些家長未有注意的需要，這包括家長的支援服務(如家長教育)，及擴大對家庭及社區的支援。



- 6.3** 本研究亦發現出現上述服務縫罅的主要原因，是政府缺乏服務規劃。自1991年起，政府已沒有因應人口及社會經濟狀況變化，評估兒童照顧服務的需要。不少被訪者於訪談中表示，現時政府對兒童照顧服務的政策理念，仍然是停留於照顧兒童為家庭責任，而當中蘊涵女性作為全職家務勞動者的性別分工假設。此外，服務營運者亦認為政府往往把兒童的教育及照顧需要，視為兩項不同的政策範疇，然而實際上，教育與照顧需要應該有機結合。
- 6.4** 從綜合兒童、婦女與家庭需要的角度出發，我們必須正視現時家庭照顧與社會服務照顧、婦女就業選擇與政策介入、教育與照顧需要、正規服務與非正規服務、政府承擔與公民社會的參與等分歧思維。我們應以更全面的角度，改善兒童照顧服務及政策。本研究建議可從下列方向改革兒童照顧服務：
1. 重新檢視現時的兒童照顧服務及兒童照顧服務的理念、政策目標及規劃機制；
 2. 對釋放婦女勞動力制訂清晰的政策目標；
 3. 增加現時有急切需求服務的供應量，特別是指資助獨立幼兒中心及長全日制幼稚園暨幼兒中心；政府作規劃時亦需要考慮兒童的區域分佈；
 4. 改善現有兒童照顧服務，包括全面檢討課餘託管計劃，以確保服務能切合家長的需要以及為低收入家庭提供可負擔的服務；以及優化社區保姆計劃為有需要家長提供服務及減輕現時正規服務的壓力；
 5. 改善現時0-6歲兒童照顧服務的收費資助計劃以減輕父母的財政壓力，使到不同背景的父母都能使用服務；
 6. 建立有關兒童的數據庫及鼓勵進行更多有關兒童照顧及發展的研究，達至以實證為本的方法規劃及評估兒童照顧服務；
 7. 為兒童照顧者作出支援，包括家長教育；及
 8. 支持各種滿足兒童照顧服務的新需要及填補服務縫罅的新嘗試。
- 6.5** 從綜合角度看，兒童照顧服務不單只關乎兒童，亦與兒童發展、婦女發展，及家庭福祉相關。因此這是需要家庭、社區及政府共同努力的社會發展議程。我們期望透過正確的政策及合適的服務，協助兒童發展成為社會的未來棟樑、婦女能在參與勞動市場及個人發展上有真正的選擇及家庭能夠調和兒童照顧及其他社會經濟責任。



香港社會服務聯會委託
香港大學民意研究計劃進行

本港父母對兒童照顧服務意見調查

問卷

2014年6月24日





第一部分 自我介紹

我地進行緊一項有關「兒童照顧同埋相關服務」嘅問卷調查，我地只會阻你大概10分鐘時間，請問你願唔願意接受我地訪問呢？

願意 ➔ 繼續介紹

唔願意 ➔ 終止訪問，多謝，拜拜

[S1] 請問你嘅住宅電話號碼係唔係xxxx-xxxx？

係 ➔ S2

唔係 ➔ 終止訪問

第二部分 選出被訪者

[S2] 呢份問卷嘅訪問對象係18歲或以上，講廣東話而又有最少一個12歲或以下子女嘅家長，請問你屋企有幾多位屬於呢個組別嘅成員呢？

有一位合資格家長 ➔ S4

有多過一位合資格家庭成員：_____位 ➔ S3

冇合資格家庭成員 ➔ 訪問完成

接聽電話者拒絕回答合資格家庭成員人數 ➔ 訪問完成

接聽電話者拒絕給合資格家庭成員聽電話 ➔ 訪問完成

[S3] 因為多過一位合資格嘅家長，我想請即將生日果位黎聽電話。請問可唔可以呢？（訪問員：可舉例說明「例如有冇6 / 7月或未來三個月內生日嘅人？」）

可以，接聽電話者係被訪者 ➔ S4

可以，其他家人係被訪者 ➔ S4

被選中嘅家庭成員不在家 / 沒空 ➔ 另約時間再致電

唔可以，接聽電話者拒絕給被選中嘅家庭成員聽電話 ➔ 訪問完成

唔可以，被選中嘅家庭成員拒絕接受訪問 ➔ 訪問完成



[S4] 包括你自己但不包括外籍家庭傭工，請問你屋企而家有幾多人一齊住？

- 1) _____人 ➔ 開始訪問
- 2) 拒答 ➔ 訪問完成

[S5] 由於呢個調查會根據家庭收入進行深入分析，所以希望你唔好介意，我地首先想請問你現時嘅每月家庭總收入屬於以下邊個組別？**[只選一項]**

- 1) \$17,500或以下
- 2) \$17,501 - \$26,500
- 3) \$26,501 - \$33,000
- 4) \$33,001 - \$36,200
- 5) \$36,200以上
- 6) 唔知 / 難講 ➔ 訪問完成
- 7) 拒答 ➔ 訪問完成

第三部分 問卷主體部分

第一部分 現時照顧子女的模式

[Q1] 請問你有幾多個12歲或以下嘅子女？

- 1) _____個
- 2) 拒答

[Q2-Q5] 我哋想問一下你(啲)子女嘅基本資料 (請由年紀最細嘅講起)

		子女1	子女2	子女3	子女4	子女...
Q2. 年齡	1) _____ 2) 拒答					
Q3. 性別	1) 男 2) 女 3) 拒答					
Q4. 佢讀緊乜野學校？	1) 未入學 2) 幼兒園(如學前班、playgroup等) 3) 幼稚園 4) 小學 5) 拒答					
Q5. [撇除「未入學」者] 半日制定全日制？	1) 半日 2) 全日 3) 拒答					



[Q6] 以下問題係關於你(啲)子女照顧安排 (請同樣由年紀最細嘅講起)

		子女1	子女2	子女3	子女4	子女...
Q6a. 平日主要係由邊個照顧佢(哋)? [只選一項]	1) 父 2) 母 3) 祖父母 4) 外籍家庭傭工 5) 育嬰園 6) 鄰居 7) 其他親友(請註明, 如姨媽、姑姐等)_____					
Q6b. 除左___ (Q6a.答案)之外, 仲有冇安排其他人幫助照顧佢(哋)? [可選多項]	1) 父 2) 母 3) 祖父母 4) 外籍家庭傭工 5) 育嬰園 6) 補習社 7) 鄰居 8) 其他親友(請註明, 如姨媽、姑姐等)_____					
	9) 其他 (請註明)_____					
	10) 唔知 / 難講 11) 拒答					



[Q7-Q8] 對子女照顧安排的評價:

		子女1	子女2	子女3	子女4	子女...
Q7. 你有幾滿意或唔滿意現時嘅照顧安排?	1) 好滿意					
	2) 幾滿意					
	3) 一半半					
	4) 唔係幾滿意					
	5) 好唔滿意					
	6) 唔知 / 難講					
	7) 拒答					
Q8. 現時嘅照顧安排對你嘅家庭經濟狀況有無造成壓力?	1) 好大壓力					
	2) 幾大壓力					
	3) 一半半					
	4) 冇乜壓力					
	5) 冇壓力					
	6) 唔知 / 難講					
	7) 拒答					

[Q9] 你認為現時嘅照顧安排滿唔滿足到你(嘞)子女嘅需要:

- 1) 完全滿足到
- 2) 幾滿足到
- 3) 一半半
- 4) 唔係幾滿足到
- 5) 完全滿足唔到
- 6) 唔知 / 難講
- 7) 拒答

[Q10] 你有冇計劃喺未來12個月內改變目前嘅照顧方式?

- 1) 有
- 2) 冇 [\[跳至Q12\]](#)
- 3) 唔知 / 難講 [\[跳至Q12\]](#)
- 4) 拒答 [\[跳至Q12\]](#)



[Q11] [只問Q10答「有」者] (請由年紀最細嘅講起)

		子女1	子女2	子女3	子女4	子女...
<p>Q11a. 你想點樣改變目前嘅照顧方式? [可選多項]</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) 改為由父母照顧 2) 改為由祖父母照顧 3) 改為由親友照顧(請註明, 如姨媽、姑姐等) _____ 4) 改為由鄰居照顧 5) 改為由外籍家庭傭工照顧 6) 帶到育嬰園 7) 帶到補習社 8) 使用暫託服務 9) 使用延展服務 10) 使用課餘託管 11) 使用社區保姆 12) 其他 (請註明) _____ 13) 唔知 / 難講 14) 拒答 					
<p>Q11b. 咁要作出呢個改變困唔困難?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) 好困難 2) 幾困難 3) 一半半 4) 唔係幾困難 5) 完全唔困難 6) 唔知 / 難講 7) 拒答 					
<p>Q11c. [只問Q11b.答「好困難」、 「有啲困難」或「一半半」者] 你認為會遇到乜野困難? [可選多項]</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) 經濟負擔唔到 2) 服務時間不合適 3) 服務供不應求 4) 輪候時間長 5) 唔知道有冇咁嘅服務 6) 其他(請註明)_____ 7) 唔知 / 難講 8) 拒答 					



[Q12] 嚟過去一年，你嘅照顧仔女方面有冇遇過以下困難？**[可選多項]**

- 1) (育有多於一名子女者)不同子女的需要，在時間分配上會有衝突(沒有足夠時間照顧子女)
- 2) 沒有能力教育子女做功課
- 3) 當自己生病時，難以找到其他人或者託兒服務暫時照顧子女
- 4) (有人工作的家庭)當子女生病而無法上學時，向僱主請事假很困難
- 5) (有人工作的家庭)當子女放學校假期時，向僱主請年假很困難
- 6) (有人工作的家庭)自己或配偶工時長，無法協助照顧子女
- 7) 經常更換主要照顧者
- 8) 其他(請註明) _____
- 9) 以上皆否
- 10) 唔知 / 難講
- 11) 拒答

第二部分 現時的社區兒童照顧服務

[Q13] 就社區兒童照顧服務嚟講，請你話俾我知：

		1. 育嬰園	2. 幼兒園	3. 暫託服務	4. 延展服務	5. 課餘託管	6. 社區保姆
Q13a. 你有冇嚟你居住嘅地區用過呢啲服務？	1) 有 2) 冇 3) 唔知 / 難講 4) 拒答						
[只問Q13a答「有」者]	Q13b.你使用咗呢個服務幾耐？	1) ___個月 2) 唔知 / 唔記得 3) 拒答					
	Q13c.你當時輪候咗幾耐先可以使用呢個服務？	1) ___個星期 2) 唔知 / 唔記得 3) 拒答					
	Q13d.你對呢個服務有幾滿意或唔滿意？	1) 好滿意 2) 幾滿意 3) 一半半 4) 唔係幾滿意 5) 好唔滿意 6) 唔知 / 難講 7) 拒答					
[只問Q13a答「有」者]	Q13e.點解冇用呢個服務？ [可選多項]	1) 唔知道有咁嘅服務 2) 冇需要 3) 有需要但經濟負擔唔到 4) 有需要但服務時間不合適 5) 有需要但輪候時間長 6) 其他(請註明) _____					



[Q14] 你有幾同意或唔同意以下呢句說話：「照顧年幼子女係父母嘅責任」？

- 1) 好同意
- 2) 幾同意
- 3) 一半半
- 4) 唔係幾同意
- 5) 好唔同意
- 6) 唔知 / 難講
- 7) 拒答

[Q15] 咁你有幾同意或唔同意「父親同母親應該分擔照顧子女嘅責任」？

- 1) 好同意
- 2) 幾同意
- 3) 一半半
- 4) 唔係幾同意
- 5) 好唔同意
- 6) 唔知 / 難講
- 7) 拒答

[Q16] 你認為現時喺你居住地區嘅託兒服務滿唔滿足到你嘅託兒需要？

- 1) 完全滿足到
- 2) 幾滿足到
- 3) 一半半
- 4) 唔係幾滿足到
- 5) 完全滿足唔到
- 6) 唔知 / 難講
- 7) 拒答

[Q17] [Q16.答「完全滿足唔到」、「唔係幾滿足到」或「一半半」者] 咁你認為政府有冇需要增加你居住地區嘅託兒服務？

- 1) 好需要
- 2) 幾需要
- 3) 一半半
- 4) 冇乜需要
- 5) 完全冇需要
- 6) 唔知 / 難講
- 7) 拒答



第四部分 個人資料

我想問你些少個人資料，方便分析，請你放心，你嘅資料係唔記名同埋會絕對保密嘅。

[DM1] 性別：

- 1) 男
- 2) 女

[DM2a] 請問你嘅年齡係？

- 1) _____ 歲
- 2) 唔肯講準確年齡

[DM2b] [只問不肯透露準確年齡的被訪者]年齡範圍：

- 1) 18-19歲
- 2) 20-24歲
- 3) 25-29歲
- 4) 30-34歲
- 5) 35-39歲
- 6) 40-44歲
- 7) 45-49歲
- 8) 50-54歲
- 9) 55-59歲
- 10) 60-64歲
- 11) 65-69歲
- 12) 70歲或以上
- 13) 拒答

[DM3a] 出生地

- 1) 香港 [\[跳至DM4\]](#)
- 2) 中國大陸
- 3) 台灣
- 4) 澳門
- 5) 東南亞(e.g. 馬來西亞、印尼、越南)
- 6) 加拿大
- 7) 美國
- 8) 澳洲
- 9) 英國
- 10) 其他出生地(請註明) _____
- 11) 唔知道
- 12) 拒答



[DM3b] 咁你黎左香港幾耐？

- 1) _____ 歲
- 2) 唔記得
- 3) 拒答

[DM4] 你最高嘅教育程度係？

- 1) 小學畢業或以下
- 2) 中一至中三(初中)
- 3) 中四至中五(高中)
- 4) 中六(中學文憑或預科)
- 5) 中七(預科畢業)
- 6) 專上非學位
- 7) 專上學位(學士學位)
- 8) 碩士學位
- 9) 博士學位或以上
- 10) 拒答

[DM5] 請問你嘅婚姻狀況係：

- 1) 未婚
- 2) 已婚
- 3) 離婚
- 4) 分居
- 5) 喪偶
- 6) 其他(請註明) _____
- 7) 拒答





[DM6-DM9] 請問你(同配偶)嘅工作狀況係:

	你	[只問DM5答「已婚」者] 配偶
[DM6] 有冇工作? 1) 全職工作 2) 兼職 3) 開工不足 4) 失業 5) 退休 6) 家庭主婦 / 主夫 7) 其他(請註明)_____ 8) 拒答		
[DM7] [只問DM6答 「有工作」者 (即選項1, 2, 3)] 每周工作日數及時數:	1) _____日, 合共_____小時 2) 唔知 / 唔記得 3) 拒答	
[DM8] [只問DM6答「失業」 (即選項4)者] 你有無計劃搵工?	1) 有 2) 冇 3) 拒答	
[DM9] [只問DM8答 「有」者] 咁你打算幾時開始 搵工?	1) 而家搵緊 2) _____個月後 3) 唔知 / 難講 4) 拒答	

[DM10] 你現時家庭每月總收入係:

- 1) _____
- 2) 唔知 / 難講
- 3) 拒答

[DM11] 你嘅家庭現時有冇接受以下嘅政府經濟援助? [可選多項]

- 1) 綜援(綜合社會保障援助)
- 2) 學費全免
- 3) 學費3/4免
- 4) 學費半免
- 5) 全額書簿津貼
- 6) 半額書簿津貼
- 7) 其他(請註明) _____
- 8) 以上皆否
- 9) 唔知 / 難講
- 10) 拒答



[DM12] 請問你住緊嘅房屋類型係:

- 1) 租住公共房屋
- 2) 自置公共房屋
- 3) 租住居屋
- 4) 自置居屋
- 5) 租住私人樓宇(整個單位)
- 6) 租住私人樓宇(板間房)
- 7) 自置私人樓宇
- 8) 其他(請註明) _____
- 9) 拒答

[DM13] 請問你住響邊區呢?

- 1) 灣仔(香港島)
- 2) 東區(香港島)
- 3) 中西區(香港島)
- 4) 南區(香港島)
- 5) 觀塘(九龍東)
- 6) 九龍城(九龍西)
- 7) 黃大仙(九龍東)
- 8) 旺角(九龍西)
- 9) 深水步(九龍西)
- 10) 油尖(九龍西)
- 11) 西貢(新界東)
- 12) 沙田(新界東)
- 13) 離島(新界西)
- 14) 荃灣(新界西)
- 15) 葵青(新界西)
- 16) 屯門(新界西)
- 17) 元朗(新界西)
- 18) 北區(新界東)
- 19) 大埔(新界東)
- 20) 拒答

完



Survey Method

Random telephone survey conducted by closely monitored interviewers shall be used. All data will be collected using Web-based Computer Assisted Telephone Interview (Web-CATI) system which allows real-time data capture and consolidation.

Target Population and Sample Size

The target population of this survey shall be **Hong Kong residents of age 18 or above** who speak Cantonese and are **parents of at least on child of age 0-12**.

A target sample size of either of the below options with the qualified respondents shall be achieved for this survey:

at least **1,000 successful interviews**, with at least **300** successful cases from **low income families***;

*“Low income families” refers to families with monthly household income lower than the median monthly domestic household income”

Table of household income for the telephone survey

Number of person(s) in household	Household income (HKD)		
	(1) Poverty Households (with household income less than or equal to half of the median monthly household income of respective household size)	(2) Low Income Households (with household income less than or equal to the median monthly household income but higher than half of the median monthly household income of respective household size)	(3) High Income Household (with household income above the median monthly household income of respective household size)
2	9,000 or below	9,001 to 18,000	above 18,000
3	13,500 or below	13,501 to 27,000	above 27,000
4	16,750 or below	16,751 to 33,500	above 33,500
5	18,000 or below	18,001 to 36,000	above 36,000
6 or above	19,550 or below	19,551 to 39,100	above 39,100

Sampling Design

To minimize sampling error, telephone numbers will be randomly generated using known prefixes assigned to telecommunication services providers under the Numbering Plan of the Office of the Communications Authority (OFCA). Nonworking numbers are identified by the computer system of Public Opinion Programme at University of Hong Kong that can detect triton signal and also by manual dialing records. Confirmed invalid numbers will then be eliminated and the remaining numbers mixed in random order to produce the final telephone sample.



At the second-level of sampling procedure, when telephone contact is successfully established with a target household, only one qualified respondent would be selected from all those present using the “next birthday rule”. This has been used by practically all the public surveys conducted by our team but we are also open to adopt other scientific methods such as Kish Grid if deemed necessary by HKCSS.

Questionnaire Design

To avoid respondent fatigue, the questionnaire was designed to conform that the average interview time for a successful interview shall be controlled to no more than 10 minutes.

A questionnaire was designed as an instrument to study the current child care arrangements of the sampled parents, their knowledge and experiences of using child care services in the community, and their perception on parenting. Three separate sets of questions were asked.

Regarding child care arrangements, the questions were about:

- main child carer at present (either a person or child care service);
- support from other child carers at present (either a person or child care service);
- satisfactory level with current child care arrangements;
- level of financial stress caused by existing child care arrangements;
- satisfactory level of children’s needs being fulfilled by current child care arrangements;
- planning for a change in child care arrangements in the next twelve months;
- anticipated level of difficulty to make such a change in child care arrangement; and
- difficulties in child care in the last twelve months.

Regarding parent’s knowledge and experiences of using child care services in the community, the questions each respondent had to answer, were about:

- experiences of using different kinds of child care services (e.g. day crèche, nursery school and occasional child care service) in residing district (e.g. how long has been used and on waiting list);
- satisfactory level of using the services;
- reasons for not using child care services;
- satisfactory level of using day care services in the residing district to fulfill child care needs; and
- opinions on increasing day care services in the residing district.

Regarding parent’s perception on parenting, the questions were about:

- the belief that taking care of children is the responsibility of the parents; and
- the belief that father and mother should share the responsibility of child care.

Response Rate Calculation

The overall response rate, calculated as the number of successful cases divided by the sum of successful cases plus effective refusals from confirmed eligible respondents and incomplete cases, shall reach **at least 50%** for random telephone surveys. Each target telephone number would be called back 5 times before the number is dropped as “non-contact”.



The standard formula for calculating the response rate is as follows:

$$= \frac{\text{Successful cases}}{\text{Total number of eligible cases}^*} \times 100\%$$

* Sum of successful cases plus unsuccessful interviews

Fieldwork Logistics

The survey deployed a pool of experienced interviewers to conduct the telephone interviews, they will be trained prior to the fieldwork and monitored by experienced supervisors.

Around **30-35 interviewers** were deployed to carry out the fieldwork each fieldwork day for this survey in order to achieve the task on schedule. Initial call-ins will be made between 1400 and 2230 on weekdays, but fieldwork period could be extended to cover any other periods for chasing subjects on appointment / no answer / busy, even during weekends and public holidays (with thinner manpower than weekdays) in order to cover targets with diversified working hours from different industries. Each sampled telephone number shall be called up to 5 times at different times and on different days before it is dropped as “non-contact”. All interviews were conducted anonymously.

Basic Result

Valid response rate: 87.2%

Standard deviation: below 1.6% (at 95% confidence level + / -3.2%)

Background information of respondents	Frequency	Valid percentage
Gender (n=941)		
Male	329	35%
Female	612	65%
Age (n=929)		
18-29	35	3.8%
30-39	404	43.5%
40-49	407	43.8%
50 or above	83	8.9%
Number of child(ren) aged 12 or below (n=941)		
1	588	62.5%
2	320	34.0%
3 or above	33	3.5%



In-depth Interview Guide

[Service operators and experts in child care services]

Needs and knowledge of using child care services in community

1. What are the parental needs on child care? Are the needs changing? If so, what are the changes?
2. How far the existing policy and provision meet these needs? If there are gaps in the policy and provision, what are they and how to fill these gaps?
3. Any comment on the future development of childcare services e.g. the community need now and how should the child care services develop to meet these needs?
4. Who are the stakeholders in community to be involved in the future development of child care services for the low income?

[Initiatives on school-based after school care service]

1. What were the background and objectives of starting the initiative on after school care in your school? What are the changing needs and service gaps that the programme set up to address?
2. What is the impact of joining the programme on the children and their families?
3. What are the concerns / obstacles met in designing the programme? Can the programme serve the need(s) effectively? What more can be done to enhance the child care support in school / community?
4. Based on the experience of the after school care service, what should be the future direction of providing child care support in school / community.
5. For recommendations, what are your comment(s) on the proposed roles of different stakeholders (formal / informal services; schools; NGOs in community etc) in providing child care support to families?
6. Others





Focus Group Interview Guide

[Parents group]

Needs and knowledge of using child care services in community

1. How old are the children of the participating parents? Are they at school age and need to attend school?
2. How do the parents look after the children currently? Are they using any child care service in the community?
 - If yes, what kind of service they used? Why they needed to use the service? Are they satisfied with the service in terms of location, operating hours and service content etc.?
 - If not, do they need child care service and why? Did they search for such service and what were experience?
 - What are the obstacles to use the service?
3. What kind of child care services they need for child care services for age 0-2 / 0-3 , 2-6 / 3-6 & 6-12?
4. What are the motivations to use these services, e.g. parents working, parents need time for leisure and training, etc.?
5. Their knowledge of other types of child care services in community?
6. Are the parents now at work?
 - If yes, what is the work arrangement e.g. working time needed to be adjusted due to the child care responsibility? How do they balance the responsibilities in child care and work?
 - If not, do they want to work? What is the reason of not getting a job?
 - What are the motivations to work? Is it for income?
 - If they are full time carer, do they still have any need for child care service (e.g. occasional child care? If yes, what sort of occasion?)
7. Their planning on balancing the responsibilities in child care and work in the future?

Recommendation on policy and service improvement

8. Their suggestions for initiatives for enhancing child care services in community.
9. Their recommendations in relation to the policy, provision and operation of existing services including recommending possible new service initiatives in child care services, etc.

Others

10. The roles and responsibilities of a mother perceive in taking care of infants / toddlers / primary school children.
11. The expectations of the society they understand regarding their roles and responsibilities.
12. Others.



[Discussion on possible recommendations for the study – parents group]

1. What were the experiences in using different child care services in community? What are the changing needs and service gaps that the programme set up to tackle?
2. Based on the experience of using different child care services, what should / should be the future directions of child care support in school / community?
3. For recommendations, what are your comment(s) on the proposed roles of different stakeholders (formal / informal services; schools; NGOs in community etc) in providing child care support to families?
4. Others

[Philosophy / policy objectives governing child care services in Hong Kong]

1. How would you comment on the philosophy / policy objectives governing existing child care services (e.g. believe that the best form of care is by parents or the purpose of child care is to release workforce etc.)? How far are they still valid? What are myths and what is the reality about family care?
2. What should / could be the philosophy of child care in Hong Kong?
 - if child care is to release parents for work, then to release which age groups of the workforce, and for how long; to release for what working hours of the parents etc?
 - what needs are to be met, i.e. which income groups to be served?
3. Following the above discussion on policy objectives, how would you comment on:
 - the provision of child care services;
 - the types of services (formal & informal) to be made available;
 - the service modes; and
 - the funding modes (to service recipients and to service operators)
4. Others



[New initiatives on child care services in community]

1. What were the background and objectives for starting the initiatives on child care? What are the changing needs and service gaps that the programme set up to tackle, e.g. in relation to
 - parents' responsibility / needs on child care?
 - change in family functioning?
 - change in social networks in communities?
2. What is the impact of the initiative on the children and the families served?
3. What are the concerns / obstacles met in designing the new initiatives? Can the community resources be mobilized and used effectively? What more can be done to enhance the child care support in community?
4. Based on the experience of the initiatives, what should / could be the future directions of developing child care support in community, e.g.
 - to add variety to existing types of service?
 - to strengthen the social support networks in community?
5. Others.



Appendix 3 Types of Child Care Services and Their Operation Duration



Figure 1 Child care services for aged 0-12

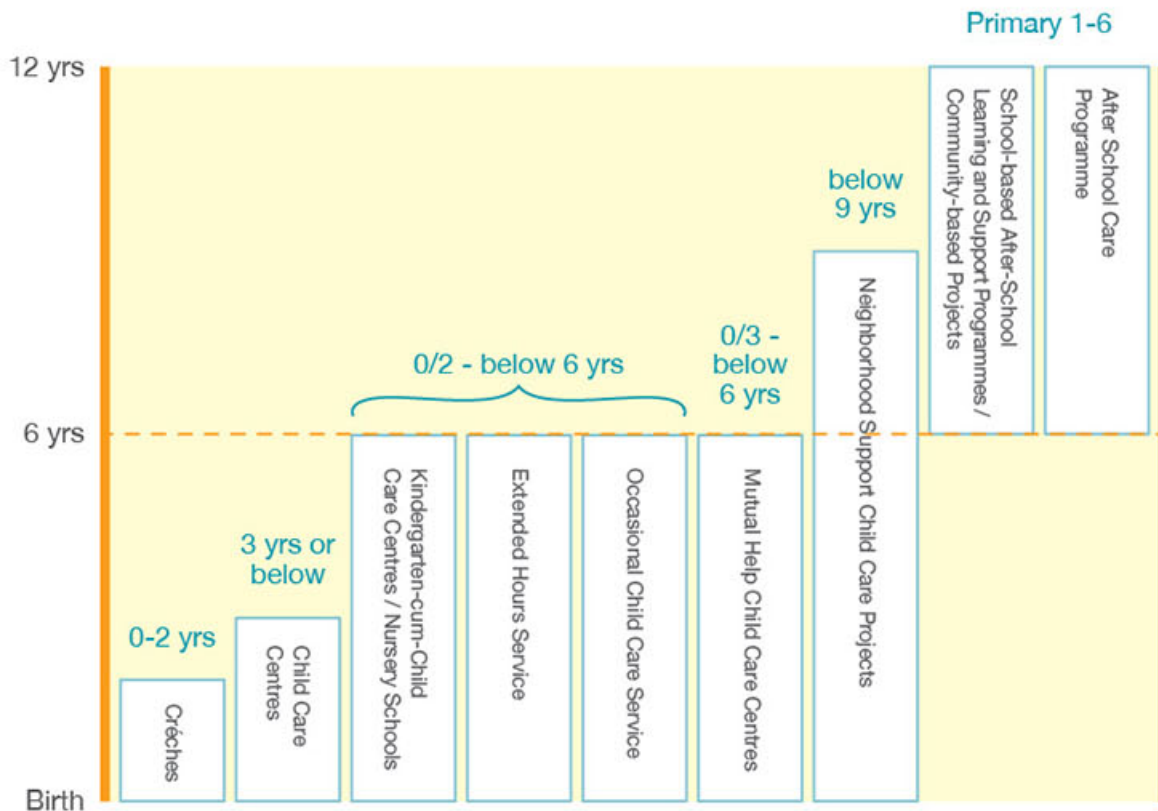


Figure 2 Operation duration of different child care services

Service	Hours	a.m.					p.m.									
		7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Standalone CCCs		←										8a.m. - 6p.m. (Mon-Fri) 8a.m. - 1p.m. (Sat)				
Kindergartens / Kindergarten-cum-CCCs		←										8:45a.m. - 4:30p.m. (Mon-Fri)				
Nursery Schools / Long whole day Kindergarten-cum-CCCs		←										8a.m. - 6p.m. (Mon-Fri) 8a.m. - 1p.m. (Sat)				
Occasional CC Service		←										(same as the centre it adheres to)				
Extended Hours Service												6p.m. - 8p.m. (latest) Saturday: (Hours vary amongst programmes)				
Neighbourhood Support CC Project		←										7a.m. - 11p.m. (Home-based: all year round) 7a.m. - 11p.m. (Centre-based: Mon-Fri / Sat / public holidays)				
After School Care Programme												3:30/4p.m. - 6/7p.m. (Mon-Fri) some serve until 9p.m.; and Sat / Sun / school holidays				



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Title	Report of Study on Child Care Services for Low Income Families in Hong Kong 「香港低收入家庭的兒童照顧服務」研究報告
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Publisher	The Hong Kong Council of Social Service
Telephone	(852) 2864 2929
Fax	(852) 2865 4916
Email	council@hkcss.org.hk
Website	http://www.hkcss.org.hk
Publishing Date	May 2015
ISBN	978-962-8974-92-4



ISBN: 978-962-8974-92-4



9 789628 974924

<http://www.hkcss.org.hk>