2025 Policy Address Public Consultation

Submission from Equal Opportunities Commission

Executive Summary

The Equal Opportunities Commission ("EOC") would like to make the following 21 Recommendations under 9 Themes for the Government to consider in its 2025 Policy Address:

Theme 6: Enhancing Awareness of Equal Opportunities on School Campuses

Theme 7: Strategies for Advancing Gender Equality and Preventing Sexual Harassment

Theme 8: Positive Sexuality Education to Nurture Our Future Generation

Theme 9: Fostering a Racially Friendly Community for Residents from Diverse Races and Visitors to Hong Kong

Theme 1: Addressing Minority Needs against the Backdrop of Technological Developments

<u>Recommendation 1: Live-Transcription and Translation System for Government and Public Services</u>

1. Live-transcription and translation can solve communication barriers in public service provision. For example, in Japan, a live-translation system is used in the JR railway and allows travelers to ask questions in their own languages, which would be quickly translated into Japanese and shown to the customer service officers on screens, facilitating understanding by people of different ethnicities. [1] Similarly, Japan Airlines' example shows that a live-transcription system can project conversations on screens, which facilitates understanding of content by people with reduced hearing abilities.[2] In terms of application in public service, the National Health Service ("NHS") of the United Kingdom makes use of the *SpeechReport* platform, an AI-powered speech recognition and speech-to-text system which allows adjustment of output font size and audio, to create clinical documentation facilitating the provision of care to patients such as those with visual impairments and hearing difficulties.[3] The NHS is also aiming to upgrade its digital capacity to address the growing need for Digital Dictation, Speech/ Voice Recognition, Outsourced Transcription, and associated services in the United Kingdom's healthcare system.[4] In Hong Kong, the Intelligent Transcription System is being used by the Legislative Council to increase multilingual accessibility to meeting content,[5] and the Judiciary has tried out Artificial Intelligence ("AI") transcription technologies for making notes in court.[6]

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[1] TOEI Transportation. (n.d.). *Toei Subway adopts a multi-lingual communication panel system for handling spoken customer questions, a Japan-first for subway users*. https://www.kotsu.metro.tokyo.jp/eng/news/2024/20240228_11398.html

[2] PR TIMES. (2024, July 2). *TOPPAN and JAL begin demonstration experiment using "VoiceBiz® UCDisplay®" that visually shows the content of conversations*. https://prtimes.jp/main/html/rd/p/000001437.000033034.html

[3] Service.gov.uk. (n.d.) *SpeechReport- Digital dictation, speech recognition and workflow management software - Digital Marketplace*. https://shorturl.at/GyYU5 . **See also**: https://www.g2speech.com/.

[4] GOV.UK. (2025, June 17) *Digital Dictation, Speech/Voice Recognition, Outsourced Transcription and associ*. https://www.find-tender.service.gov.uk/Notice/022401-2025

[5] Lam, M. (2025, June 17). LegCo's new speech-to-text AI sets new standard for multilingual meeting accessibility. *The Standard*. https://shorturl.at/88GCz

[6] Ma, J. (2023, July 9). Hong Kong judges try out AI tool to speed up transcribing notes, but courts still wary about bringing in ChatGPT. *South China Morning Post*. https://shorturl.at/jiV9y

2.   **The Government may consider using live-transcription and live-translation technologies in Government service provision in order to facilitate citizens' access to services.** For instance, the Government's frontline service centres such as District Offices, along with other places providing public services such as hospitals and railways stations, can make use of tablets or screens to display live-transcription and translation of conversations, in addition to optional audio playing of transcribed or translated texts with replay and volume adjustment functions, thereby facilitating universal access to public services.

3.   With the EOC's years of advocacy in universal design and accessibility, the EOC is pleased that Government departments have appointed "Access Co-ordinators and Access Officers" to provide assistance to persons with disabilities ("PWDs") in accessing premises under their ownership and management as well as services and facilities that they provide. Access Coordinators and Access Officers play a vital role in connecting with other departments and organisations to share best practices and promote consistent accessibility standards. Other than providing support to physical accessibility, the Government may consider enhancements in user-friendliness and accessibility in service provision for people with diverse needs by introducing more AI solutions, including above live-transcription and live-translation services.

Recommendation 2: Improve Employment Opportunities for PWDs through AI Solutions

4.   AI is reshaping the employment landscape, creating new opportunities for disability inclusion in the workplace. The advancement of virtual assistants and personalised accessibility tools can significantly enhance the work capabilities of PWDs and boost their productivity. A study of AI by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development highlighted that AI can enhance job opportunities for PWDs. For example, speech recognition solutions and live captioning systems can facilitate communication and access to jobs that require interpersonal interaction.[7] The use of AI by PWDs are also becoming more common, with 55% reporting their use.[8]

5.   To effectively harness AI for improving employment opportunities for PWDs, the Government may consider adopting a two-pronged strategy: **(i) promote the research,**

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[7] Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2023). *Using AI to Support People with Disability in the Labour Market: Opportunities and Challenges*. https://shorturl.at/YBm4y
[8] Randstad. (2023). *Understanding Talent Scarcity: AI & Equity*. https://shorturl.at/p9VK9

development and adoption of AI solutions focused on accessibility; and (ii) introduce education and training initiatives to raise the AI literacy of PWDs. Specifically, the Government may consider making use of the Smart Government Innovation LAB to encourage bureaux/ departments (B/Ds) and statutory bodies to procure solutions that can facilitate PWDs' access to public services, such as applying the Offline and On-Device Speech to Text Solution to facilitate live conversation recording and transcription,[9] and allocate budgets for B/Ds and statutory bodies to improve the overall accessibility of their services through acquisition of technologies. To increase incentives in applying technology-assisted solutions to public service provision, B/Ds can share their success stories on how technologies such as AI have improved their efficiency and productivity so that they can inspire other B/Ds and statutory bodies. The Government may also consider making use of the existing "Supported Employment Training for Persons with Disabilities" for providing on-the-job trainings to PWDs regarding the use of AI tools to enhance their work productivity.[10]

Recommendation 3: Tackle Unconscious Biases in the Development of AI

6. Governments and organisations worldwide have introduced legislative and administrative measures to regulate potential discriminations pertaining to development of AI. ISO/IEC 42001 (Information technology-Artificial intelligence-Management system) published in 2023 by the International Organisation for Standardisation is the globally recognised standard for the governance of AI technologies, which specifies that all organisations involved in developing, providing or using AI-based products or services should ensure AI systems are fair and transparent to avoid unintended discrimination.[11] In mainland China, the National Technical Committee 260 on Cybersecurity of Standardisation Administration of China ("全国网络安全标准化技术委员会") issued the *Security Specification for Generative Artificial Intelligence Pre-training and Fine-Tuning Data* which will come into effect in November 2025. The document explicitly prohibits using discriminatory content related to gender, ethnicity, religion, occupations and health conditions in training and optimising data for generative AI models, and lists out technical requirements

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[9] Smart Government Innovation LAB. (2025, June 19). *AI+ Tool and Solution Catalogue*. https://www.smartlab. gov.hk/en/ai_solutions/a-0058
[10] Social welfare department. (n.d.). *Supported Employment Training for Persons with Disabilities (SET)*. https://www.swd.gov.hk/en/pubsvc/rehab/cat_vocatdaytrain/set/
[11] ISO.(2023). *ISO/IEC 42001:2023 Information technology- Artificial intelligence- Management system.* https://www.iso.org/standard/42001

for data collection, training and manipulation.[12] Likewise, the European Union proposed the *EU AI Act* in 2024 which lays out the requirements of detecting and mitigating possible biases in AI systems that can lead to discrimination.[13] South Korea also has a new legislation requiring AI developers to take steps to mitigate bias and ensure their AI systems treat all individuals fairly, and prohibits the use of AI for discriminatory purposes.[14]

7.   **The Digital Policy Office ("DPO") may consider further refining its recently published** *Ethical Artificial Intelligence Framework*[15] **and** *Hong Kong Generative Artificial Intelligence Technical and Application Guideline*[16] **by incorporating more sector-specific AI application scenarios across diverse professional fields**, such as education, retails, property management, e-commerce and medical services, **to address potential discrimination.** The above guidelines could more specifically include the introduction of fairness metrics to evaluate model treatment across different demographic groups, employment of data rebalancing techniques to eliminate dataset biases, development of algorithms with built-in anti-discrimination safeguards, utilisation of adversarial debiasing during model training, as well as the deployment of post-processing calibration methods with human oversight to optimise AI-driven decisions or outcomes. **DPO may also consider benchmarking against national standard and foreign practices, and substantiating its own guidelines with more concrete specifications related to the design and governance of AI models to ensure fair and non-discriminatory outcomes.**

[12] **[Only Chinese]** *网络安全技术 生成式人工智能预训练和优化训练数据安全规范*。（2024）。国家市场监督管理总局国家标准化管理委员会。取自 https://www.tc260.org.cn/file/2024-04-01/94e7e6de-2688-472c-af8b-a6cfe7fc7d29.pdf

[13] EU Artificial Intelligence Act. (n.d.). *The AI Act Explorer*. https://artificialintelligenceact.eu/article/10/

[14] Captain Compliance. (2025, January 8). *South Korea's AI Act: Will Robots Rule the World?* https://captaincompliance.com/education/south-koreas-ai-act-will-robots-rule-the-world/

[15] Digital Policy Office. (2024). *Ethical Artificial Intelligence Framework*. https://www.digitalpolicy.gov.hk/en/our_work/data_governance/policies_standards/ethical_ai_framework/doc/Ethical_AI_Framework.pdf

[16] Digital Policy Office. (2025). *Hong Kong Generative Artificial Intelligence Technical and Application Guideline.* https://www.digitalpolicy.gov.hk/en/our_work/data_governance/policies_standards/ethical_ai_framework/doc/HK_Generative_AI_Technical_and_Application_Guideline_en.pdf

Theme 2: Awareness for Mental Health Needs of Young People

Recommendation 4: Integrate Social and Emotional Learning into School Curriculum

8.   Youth mental health issues in Hong Kong have become a pressing concern, with alarming prevalence rates that demand immediate action. Research indicates that around 1 in 6 young people experience mental health illnesses.[17] Between 2022 and 2024, there were 131 suspected suicide deaths among primary and secondary school students, with secondary students representing about 91% of these cases.[18]

9.   In response to this urgent mental health crisis, **the Government may consider integrating Social and Emotional Learning ("SEL") into the school curriculum**. SEL focuses on developing the knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary for understanding and managing emotions, fostering positive relationships, making decisions, and achieving both personal and collective goals. Key components of SEL include self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making.[19]

10.   Research indicates that SEL can have a profound and lasting impact on youth's well-being. It equips youth with essential competencies that help mitigate known risk factors for youth suicide, such as anxiety and hopelessness.[20] For instance, SEL interventions in Hong Kong kindergartens have enhanced children's social competence while reducing anxiety and aggression.[21] Similarly, an SEL program for primary students demonstrated significant reductions in anxiety and aggression post-intervention.[22] Countries like Australia and

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[17] Chen, E. Y. H. (2022). *The Hong Kong Youth Epidemiological Study of Mental Health (HK-YES)*. Grant Review Board, The University of Hong Kong.

[18] **[Only Chinese]**〈過去 5 年 131 學生自殺 教育局：9 成為中學生〉。《星島頭條》，2025 年 6 月 12 日。https://www.stheadline.com/edu-news/3463932/

[19] The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning. (2021, August 11). CASEL'S SEL Framework https://casel.org/casel-sel-framework-11-2020/

[20] Posamentier, J., Seibel, K., & DyTang, N. (2023). Preventing youth suicide: A review of school-based practices and how social–emotional learning fits into comprehensive efforts. Trauma, Violence, & Abuse, 24(2), 746-759.

[21] Lam, L. T., & Wong, E. M. (2017). Enhancing social-emotional well-being in young children through improving teachers' social-emotional competence and curriculum design in Hong Kong. *International Journal of Child Care and Education Policy*, *11*, 1-14.

[22] Wong, A. S., Li-Tsang, C. W., & Siu, A. M. (2014). Effect of a social emotional learning programme for primary school students. *Hong Kong Journal of Occupational Therapy*, *24*(2), 56-63.

Singapore have successfully integrated SEL into existing school subjects through interactive activities, providing valuable models for Hong Kong's educational system.[23]

Recommendation 5: Youth Mental Health Campaign Initiatives

11.　　Despite 1 in 6 young people experience mental health illness, many are reluctant to seek help because of the stigma attached. In 2025, the Hong Kong Council of Social Service reported that students in severe distress are less likely to seek assistance.[24] A survey also found that many youth believe emotional distress signifies weakness, perpetuating stigma that discourages help-seeking.[25] In order to destigmatise the mental health topic among youths, research suggest that having idols and admired figures talk about the topic can effectively combat stereotypes, leading to higher willingness to seek help.[26] Studies also show that when celebrities openly discuss mental health issues and share their own stories, it helps reduce both public and self-stigma.[27]

12.　　Many jurisdictions have campaigns to destigmatise the mental health topic. For example, "Time to Change" in England and "Like Minds Like Mine" in New Zealand featured media advertisements with stories from celebrities (e.g. politicians, TV personalities and actors) who have experienced mental health conditions. Surveys on "Like Minds Like Mine" indicated increased public awareness and reduced the stigma surrounding mental health.[28] Similarly, Singapore launched the "It's OKAY to Reach out" campaign in 2021, a national initiative aimed at normalising conversations about mental health. A key component involves sharing

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[23] Ministry of Education Singapore. (2021). *Character & Citizenship Education (Cce) Syllabus Secondary*. https://www.moe.gov.sg/-/media/files/secondary/syllabuses/cce/2021-character-and-citizenship-education-syllabus-secondary.pdf

[24] **[Only Chinese]** 香港社會服務聯會（2025年5月12日）。四成受訪HKDSE學生呈現抑鬱或焦慮症狀，求助意願低。社聯倡家校協作，推動跨界別「無標籤支援」。https://shorturl.at/w8z6u

[25] **[Only Chinese]** 突破機構（2023年11月13日）。青年情緒受困只五成求助 情緒污名化礙求助意欲 正面傾訴經驗成青年困擾出口。https://shorturl.at/HqFvP

[26] Hoffner, C. A., & Cohen, E. L. (2018). Mental health-related outcomes of Robin Williams' death: The role of parasocial relations and media exposure in stigma, help-seeking, and outreach. *Health Communication*, *33*(12), 1573-1582.

[27] Gronholm, P. C., & Thornicroft, G. (2022). Impact of celebrity disclosure on mental health-related stigma. *Epidemiology and psychiatric sciences, 31,* e62.

[28] Ministry of Health and Health Promotion Agency. (2014). *Like Minds, Like Mine National Plan 2014–2019: Programme to Increase Social Inclusion and Reduce Stigma and Discrimination for People with Experience of Mental Illness.* https://www.health.govt.nz/system/files/2014-05/like-minds-like-mine-national-plan-2014-2019-may14.docx

relatable stories through mass media campaigns, including TV, radio and social media, to reduce stigma.[29]

13.   **The Government is recommended to consider implementing innovative strategies to reduce stigma and normalise seeking help**. One possible approach is **leveraging the influence of celebrities and social media influencers on platforms like Instagram or Threads**, which are popular among youth, especially during stressful examination periods.

Recommendation 6: Dedicated Youth Spaces with Integrated Mental Health Services

14.   In 2024, the Hong Kong Government launched a pilot scheme for free community-based mental health assessments at three District Health Centres ("DHCs") and District Health Centre Expresses ("DHCEs"), but the scheme did not cover youths under 18. In contrast, the Australian government has funded 160 "headspace" centres since 2006, with plans to expand to 173 centres by 2025/26, providing integrated mental health services for youths aged 12-25 with mild to moderate needs.[30] Similarly, Singapore's Ministry of Health established the Community Health Assessment Team in 2009 as a first point of contact for youths aged 16-30 facing mental health challenges, offering free, personalised assessments and brief therapy to reduce barriers to seeking help.[31]

15.   **The Government may consider establishing dedicated youth spaces that offer integrated mental health services.** While digital mental health services provide convenience and anonymity, face-to-face support remains critical for building trust, fostering deeper emotional connections, enabling early personalised intervention.[32] To enhance support for young people, the EOC proposes creating more welcoming and accessible counseling spaces by **utilising the existing 139 Integrated Children and Youth Services Centres**. Additionally, the Government should consider gradually **extending community-based mental health**

[29] Clement, Y. (2021, October 30). National mental well-being campaign aims to equip S'poreans with skills to support family, friends. *The Straits Times. https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/national-mental-well-being-campaign-launched-to-equip-people-with-skills-to-help*
[30] Australian Government Department of Health, Disability and Ageing. (2024, June 17). *New headspace service for Oran Park.* https://www.health.gov.au/ministers/the-hon-emma-mcbride-mp/media/new-headspace-service-for-oran-park
[31] Institute of Mental Health. (2025, June 18). *About CHAT.* https://www.imh.com.sg/CHAT/About%20CHAT/Pages/default.aspx
[32] Stieger, S., Lewetz, D., & Willinger, D. (2023). Face-to-face more important than digital communication for mental health during the pandemic. *Scientific Reports*, *13*(1), 8022.

assessments to include youths under 18, specifically targeting students from upper primary and junior secondary levels at more DHCs and DHCEs.

Recommendation 7: Address Shortage of Mental Health Professionals on Campus

16.   With the rising number of students with special educational needs ("SEN") and mental health issues, there have been continuous calls to increase the ratio of educational psychologists ("EPs") to schools. The Hong Kong Psychological Society has recommended a ratio to 1:4, highlighting the need for adequate support. [33] In response to the demand for EPs, the Education Bureau launched the Enhanced School-based Educational Psychology Service (Enhanced SBEPS) in 2016/17, aiming to achieve the 1:4 ratio in schools with higher number of SEN students.[34] Although this program has expanded, and about 60% of schools have accessed Enhanced SBEPS in 2023/24, [35] the Government should consider gradually extending this ratio to all schools to ensure that students with SEN receive necessary support.

17.   To achieve this goal, t**he Government, in discussion with University Grants Committee-funded universities, may consider increasing student enrollment quotas for undergraduate and postgraduate programs in educational psychology and other psychology-related fields**, such as counseling and speech therapy. Additionally, **attracting specialists from outside Hong Kong** and enhancing existing policies through the **introduction of an Education category in the Talent List**[36] will help address the growing demand for EPs, speech therapists and SEN teachers. Priority should be given to professionals who are proficient in Cantonese and Mandarin, in addition to English, to better serve the diverse needs of students.

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[33] **[Only Chinese]** 香港心理學會教育心理學部。（2014）。校本教育心理服務調查報告書。香港心理學會。取自 https://www.dep.hkps.org.hk/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/DEP_SBEPS_Survey_Final_Report2014.8.15.pdf

[34] The Government of HKSAR Press Releases. (2024, January 10). *LCQ13: School-based Educational Psychology Service*. https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202401/10/P2024011000245.htm?fontSize=1

[35] Legislative Council Panel on Education. (2024). *Professional Support Provided to Ordinary Schools for Implementing Integrated Education.* https://www.legco.gov.hk/yr2024/english/panels/ed/papers/ed20240301cb4-246-5-e.pdf

[36] Talent List Hong Kong, the Government of the HKSAR. (2025, February 18). *Talent List Hong Kong*. https://www.talentlist.gov.hk/en/index.html

Theme 3: Accessible Arts, Sports and Leisure

Recommendation 8: Promote Accessible Arts, Sports and Leisure Activities to Ensure PWDs' Equal Access

18.   Article 30 of the *UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* requires appropriate measures to be taken so that the right of PWDs to take part on an equal basis with others in cultural life is protected. Yet, in Hong Kong, only 11 cinemas are equipped with audio description facilities for film viewing.[37] Moreover, with the retirement of the *iM Guide* mobile phone application in June 2025, which provided indoor navigation and information about exhibits through audio, text and multimedia content in museums, persons with visual impairments ("PVIs") may find it more difficult than before to access cultural resources. Meanwhile, audio description ("AD") and sign language interpretation are provided sporadically and mostly on a voluntary basis regarding sports activities. A lack of closed captions and sign language interpretations in TV programmes may adversely affect access to cultural resources by persons with hearing impairment.

19.   **The Government may encourage service providers and domestic TV programme service licensees to make use of technologies to provide closed captions and subtitles for audio materials and audio description for visual materials to facilitate PWDs' access to cultural resources,**[38] not least because Hong Kong will be a first-time co-host of the National Games and National Games for Persons with Disabilities. Other options to enhance PWDs' access to cultural resources include deploying vision pads to facilitate PVIs' access to sports competitions such as soccer matches and basketball games.[39] The Government should also consider adding clauses on funding criteria requiring itemised budget to include AD, sign language, or use of accessible technology to enhance physical or service accessibility to arts and leisure projects such as those under the Cultural and Creative Industries Development Agency.

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[37] As of 30 June 2025, there are 11 cinemas equipped with audio description facilities for film viewing. MCL K11 Art House, MCL Movie Town, MCL Cheung Sha Wan, MCL City Gate, MCL The One, MCL Airside, CineArt House（Maritime Square, B+ Cinema APM, My Cinema Yoho Mall, Emperor Cinemas (Times Square), CGV Cinemas D2 Place.

[38] **[Only Chinese]** 李慧熒（2025 年 6 月 9 日）。〈無綫今起取消兒童節目及動畫中文字幕　有機構憂礙聽障兒童學習〉。《香港 01》。https://www.hk01.com/article/60246047?utm_source=01articlecopy&utm_medium=referral

[39] Vision pads were used during the 2024 Olympic Games: International Olympic Committee. (n.d.). *Accessibility - Vision Pad.* https://www.olympics.com/en/galleries/accessibility-vision-pad. See also: Leicester, R. (2024, August 11). Paris Olympics embrace accessibility technology for visually impaired fans. *AP News.* https://apnews.com/article/olympics-2024-accessibility-technology-8b918cbb5c49c6dad2f0e095444f67f1

20.   The demand for trained sign language interpreters is also rising in various settings such as police statement-taking process, court proceedings, news and other programmes' broadcast. To address this need, **the Government may foster an ecosystem of such accessibility services providers by encouraging course operators to seek accreditation services under the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications, and engage existing course operators to register or renew their course registration under the Continuing Education Fund ("CEF")**, **thereby increasing the supply of sign language interpreters**, as only limited courses are currently included in the CEF.[40]

Recommendation 9: Introduce "Quiet Hours" in Museums to Promote Arts Inclusion

21.   Museum exhibitions can often be crowded and noisy, creating a stressful environment for some visitors, particularly those who are neurodivergent, such as those with autism or sensory processing differences, along with their caregivers. To foster an inclusive and calming atmosphere, many museums worldwide have begun offering "Quiet Hours" or "Quiet Visits" during regular opening hours or on specific days (e.g., a designated day each month). For example, museums in Australia, Ireland, Singapore and the United Kingdom have implemented designated quiet hours or zones. During these times, museums create a less stimulating environment by dimming lights, reducing background sounds, and turning off interactive exhibits to minimise sensory input.

22.   **The Government may consider introducing above administrative measures to support visitors with special needs.** Apart from implementing "Quiet Hours", limiting group visits or capping the number of attendees can help alleviate crowding and facilitate neurodivergent visitors to museums. Staff training is also crucial to ensure visitors receive assistance, enhancing the sensory-friendly experience. Furthermore, providing assistive tools such as sensory maps, ear defenders and fidget tools can help individuals manage sensory issues and anxiety more effectively.

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[40] Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency. (n.d.). *Continuing Education Course Search*. https://shorturl.at/DJfjC

Theme 4: Accessibility and Universal Design

Recommendation 10: Enhance Accessibility in Ageing Buildings

23.   Hong Kong's buildings are ageing rapidly. In 2024, there were 9,600 private buildings aged 50 years or older, a figure expected to rise to 15,800 by 2032.[41] *The Design Manual Access for the Disabled* 1984 incorporates legislation that affects access for PWDs and recommends measures to enhance their mobility. Since August 1985, all newly constructed non-domestic private buildings are required to comply with statutory requirements under the *Buildings Ordinance* to provide access and facilities for PWDs. However, many older buildings still lack these essential features, creating significant inconveniences for PWDs and the elderly.

24.   While comprehensive urban renewal presents a long-term solution, short-term strategies could improve the accessibility of older buildings. For instance, the Sham Shui Po District Office of the Home Affairs Department has initiated a pilot scheme to install elderly-friendly features in selected buildings.[42] **The Government should consider expanding this initiative to include areas that would benefit not only the elderly but also individuals with reduced mobility.**

25.   Additionally, as part of the 2024 Policy Address initiative on "joint property management",[43] **the Government may consider identifying clusters of ageing buildings and assist in coordinating joint improvement works to enhance accessibility**. This collaborative approach would allow buildings to pool together resources for minor repairs and renovations. Based on the EOC's operational experience, it can sometimes be challenging for individual Owner's Corporations to approve the purchase of assistive devices due to the associated costs. Sharing these expenses among buildings in the cluster could facilitate easier navigation for all residents. Improvement works could include installing handrails, enhancing lighting for safety, and acquiring portable ramps and stair climbers for wheelchair users.

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[41] Legislative Council (2024). *Report of the Bills Committee on Land (Compulsory Sale for Redevelopment) (Amendment) Bill 2023)*. https://www.legco.gov.hk/yr2024/english/bc/bc01/reports/bc0120240717cb1-1026-e.pdf

[42] **[Only Chinese]** 深水埗民政事務處。（2025）。2024 年工作匯報及 2025 年工作計劃。深水埗區議會。https://www.districtcouncils.gov.hk/ssp/doc/2024_2027/sc/dc_meetings_doc/30091/SSPDO_Annual_District_Plan.pdf . **See also**:〈深水埗民政處聯合深青社推「長者友善樓宇設計」試驗計劃　升級長者友善設施成效顯著　惠澤居民〉。《堅料網》。（2025 年 5 月 30 日）。取自 https://shorturl.at/l1AXH

[43] The Chief executive's 2024 Policy Address. (2024). *Policy Address*. https://shorturl.at/06SYQ

Recommendation 11: Fire Services Department Building Improvement Support Centre

26.   The Fire Services Department has recently set up three Building Improvement Support Centres ("BISCs") as a one-stop hub to support owners of old composite and domestic buildings in completing fire safety improvement works to comply with legal requirements and applying for government subsidy schemes. [44] **Buildings Department may consider leveraging the established BISCs to advise or give information to the building owners on incorporating universal design ("UD") elements alongside fire service installation in retrofitting work of buildings**. Incorporating UD elements into building renovations enhances the ability of occupants with different needs, including the elderly and persons with disabilities, to safely evacuate during emergencies such as fire outbreak.

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[44] Fire Services Department of the HKSAR. (n.d.). *Introduction to the Fire Services Department Building Improvement Support Centre*. https://www.hkfsd.gov.hk/eng/fire_protection/fs_bisc.html

Theme 5: Support for Carers

<u>Recommendation 12: Introduce Support for More Types of Working Carers</u>

27.   The Government has implemented the 3-day childcare leave for civil servants with children under the age of 3 from 2025, and about 12,000 civil servants are eligible for taking the leave.[45] Research conducted by the EOC discovered that human resources professionals do not think existing employment practices in Hong Kong are particularly helpful to carers taking care of young children, elderly people, and people with illnesses or special needs. In other jurisdictions such as the United Kingdom, Australia and Canada, working carers can take carer's leave[46] to care for family members who have diverse needs.

28.   To increase support to working carers and families caring for different types of carees, **the Government may consider introducing flexible work hours, allowing annual leaves to be taken by quarter-day, and establishing mechanisms for employees to request leave, in addition to their annual leave entitlements, in case they have to take care of family members with disabilities or illnesses.** In addition, to allow families more quality time for making collective family decisions and the space to share caregiving responsibilities among members, **the Government may consider promoting a culture of disconnection from work.** Disconnection from work means that employees can choose not to prioritise work or respond to work calls and other forms of contacts after regular work hours. A culture of disconnect from work is in line with the Government's merit-based culture, as it promotes work efficiency during work hours and discourages procrastination so that people can truly spend time with their families after work hours.

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[45] **[Only Chinese]** 朱劍明（2025 年 5 月 19 日）。〈公務員事務局：約 12000 名公務員符合資格申請育兒假〉。《香港商報網》。取自 https://www.hkcd.com.hk/content_app/2025-05/19/content_8695523.html
[46] Carer's leave refers to leave taken for the purpose of fulfilling family responsibilities in this paper.

Theme 6: Enhancing Awareness of Equal Opportunities on School Campuses

Recommendation 13: Establish Equal Opportunities Office in Tertiary Education Institutions

29.   Tertiary institutions bring together students and staff of diverse races, genders, abilities, and backgrounds, making it crucial to foster campus environments that ensure equal opportunities, promote mutual respect, and eliminate all forms of discrimination and harassment. Leading universities worldwide have recognised this need and established centralised Equal Opportunities Offices ("EOOs") as best practice. Staffed by trained professionals and reporting directly to senior management, these offices ensure consistent coordination in areas such as complaint handling, raise awareness of equal opportunity issues, and embed these principles into hiring practices, curricula, and campus culture.

30.   In Hong Kong's tertiary institutions, where universities exercise considerable autonomy in resource allocation, the establishment of EOOs has not been prioritised. Currently, only one of the eight University Grants Committee-funded universities maintains a standalone Equal Opportunity Unit. In other institutions, these critical responsibilities are dispersed among existing departments like Human Resources, Student Affairs and Careers Office. These units may lack the capacity to effectively address concerns related to gender, sexual harassment, race, family status, disability and universal design in learning, service provision and facilities management, which are key subject matters under the anti-discrimination laws, due to their other primary duties and insufficient manpower. This fragmented approach often results in inconsistent complaint case handling, unclear accountability and uncoordinated policy implementation for promoting positive measures to address EO issues for students and staff on campus and in preparation for students to enter the workforce as future leaders of society.

31.   Given the significant government investment in universities—totaling $68.1 billion in recurrent funding for the 2025/26 to 2027/28 triennium —t**he EOC recommends that the Government make the establishment of EOOs a strategic direction in future block grants for UGC-funded universities**, ensuring their inclusion in Planning Exercise Proposals.[47] This

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[47] Legislative Council of the HKSAR. (2025). *Legislative Council Brief issued by the Education Bureau in February 2025 on recurrent funding for the University Grants Committee-funded Universities in the 2025-2026 to 2027-2028 triennium.* https://www.legco.gov.hk/yr2025/english/panels/ed/papers/EDB(HE)CR7204119-e.pdf

would provide a clear framework for integrating equal opportunity principles into institutional planning and operations.

Theme 7: Strategies for Advancing Gender Equality and Preventing Sexual Harassment

32.   Deeply ingrained gender stereotypes is one of the root causes for sexual harassment. These stereotypes create unequal power dynamics, where one gender (typically men) is seen as dominant to the others. It fosters a sense of entitlement leading to unwanted advances or control over others, and often normalises behaviours that contribute to a culture of harassment, allowing harmful beliefs to thrive and making it less likely for harassment to be addressed effectively.[48] To **eliminate gender stereotypes and advance equality between genders for combating sexual harassment**, the Government may consider prioritising two forward-looking initiatives.

Recommendation 14: Assessment of Policies and Practices within the Government

33.   Despite the Government's adoption of the gender mainstreaming strategy in its policy formulation and implementation of the Gender Mainstreaming Checklist (the Checklist), designed by the Women's Commission, since 2002, there were no other Gender Focal Point ("GFP") Networks established after 2016, [49] and the public has no access to the latest development or progress of this area after 2020.[50] No readily available information is found on, for example, whether there was a systematic approach in monitoring and evaluating the Checklist's effectiveness (the current Checklist for Government Staff is dated December 2009) , or if there was an increase of GFPs and any achieved progress among government units.

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[48] The EOC's research report, "A Territory-wide Representative Survey on Sexual Harassment in Hong Kong 2021" found that perpetrators of workplace sexual harassment were overwhelmingly men (66.7% of the most recent incidents of workplace sexual harassment were committed by male harasser(s)). (https://www.eoc.org.hk/en/policy-advocacy-and-research/research-reports/2022-1) Another EOC's study, "Break the Silence: Territory-wide Study on Sexual Harassment of University Students in Hong Kong", also revealed that gender stereotyping was one of the causes of campus sexual harassment (some students wrongly held the view that men should engage in conduct of sexual harassment to showcase their "manliness and masculinity"). (https://www.eoc.org.hk/en/policy-advocacy-and-research/research-reports/2019-4)

[49] The current GFP Networks are present in the Government bureaus and departments (2003), District Councils (2008), social welfare sector (2016) and listed companies (2016). The Government has not established more GFP Networks after 2016. In the EOC's Report on the Formulation of Anti-Sexual Harassment Policies of National Sports Associations in Hong Kong 2020, the EOC made recommendations to the then Home Affairs Bureau and the Leisure and Cultural Services Department about establishing GFP Network in the sports sector.

[50] Promotional activities on gender mainstreaming have been carried on until March 2020. https://www.hyab.gov.hk/Gender_Mainstreaming/en/promo_activities/ (accessed on 12 August 2025)

34.   It is proposed that the Government should **regularly publish to the public the results of the review of policy papers and practices, and the measures taken in enhancing respect and equality between genders** within Government bureaux and departments to facilitate the society's understanding and reflection of the progress made by the Government, which can serve as an exemplar for other sectors to follow.

Recommendation 15: Proactive Support in Preventing Sexual Harassment from Our Communities

35.   Besides the top-down efforts from the Government, community-led initiatives for cultivating a society offering proactive prevention and support should be advocated. The immediate limitations of current legal and institutional frameworks, coupled with scarce resources and support services, particularly within specific communities, cause a culture of silence and impunity surrounding sexual harassment. To address these shortcomings, expertise from the communities should be encouraged to step up in the fight against sexual harassment.

36.   The Government should **establish a fund dedicated to supporting groups and organisations to initiate and implement anti-sexual harassment programmes** tailored to the specific needs and cultural contexts of diverse communities in Hong Kong. Examples of projects under this fund include bystander intervention training workshops in Cantonese, Mandarin, English and other ethnic minorities' languages; support groups for survivors; community dialogues and awareness campaigns utilising local media and social networking services; arts-based initiatives promoting informed consent and respect among the diverse population; and movements in the private sector on enhancing their mindset of ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) with a positive duty of providing a safe working environment by eliminating sexual and other harassment to employees.

Theme 8: Positive Sexuality Education to Nurture Our Future Generation

37.   The education of our young generation today shapes our society in future. Sex and sexual health, involving both biological and cognitive aspects, is in particular essential to an individual's physical, mental and social well-being, that ultimately influences our society's social and economic development. Sexuality education, therefore, should be a lifelong process which starts at early age. By **equipping children and young people with adequate knowledge and positive values to understand their own and others' sexual rights**, they will be empowered not only to respect sexual diversity but also to react to and stop any gender-based violence.

38.   Although there are frameworks on values education, the school-based approach does not specify the minimum teaching hours of different values, including sexuality education. The flexibility on one hand allows schools to structure their teaching timetable and goals based on their own priorities and background; on the other hand it could lead to imbalanced allocation of teaching hours among different values, especially sexuality education, which, to some schools, is often of a lower priority or even a taboo.

Recommendation 16: Integration of Sexuality Education into Daily Subjects with Minimum Hours Required

39.   Sexuality, encompassing a range of topics including building relationships, protecting privacy, respecting boundaries, experiencing closeness, etc., is most essential in one's childhood and adolescence. **Formulating a formal and structured sexuality education curriculum with designated minimum hours by integrating sexuality education into daily subjects** encourages open discussion and well informed decisions for engaging in healthy and respectful relationship in future, which is fundamental to enabling an equal and safe society without unwanted harassment.

40.   Since the needs of sexuality education vary with different learning stages, multi-disciplinary panel of experts including healthcare educators, youth development professionals and school leaders, can be convened to design age-appropriate and learner-centred curriculum which facilitates the integration of sexuality education into daily subjects for primary and secondary schools. For example, "healthy relationship" could be one of the topics in reading comprehension of the language subjects; and the proper use and application of artificial intelligence like deepfakes, which should be involved in the Information Technology subject,

could be infused with the education on preventing harassment, especially sexual harassment, against others.

41.   Similar to the whole school approach to integrated education, schools with solid experience in sexuality education can be served as resource schools to disseminate exemplary practices by sharing the successes as well as the obstacles.

Recommendation 17: Provision of Professional Development for Teaching Staff with Defined Targets

42.   In addition to a well-planned and formalised curriculum, effective sexuality education relies on a quality learning-and-teaching process. In view of the widespread access to the Internet and social media, young people become increasingly vocal in sharing their intimate experience and individual beliefs. Creating a supportive and inclusive classroom atmosphere is therefore particularly vital in sexuality education even when it has been combined with daily subjects. This heavily counts on teachers' competency in establishing trust and rapport with students for discussing highly sensitive matters.

43.   As such**, enhancing teachers' professional capacity in the context-based knowledge** covering the most up-to-date sex-related issues as well as the gender-responsive pedagogy tailoring the learning activities is needed. Such professional development programme can be standardised in the training content and hours, and conducted in a yearly basis, **with mandatory progressive training targets** to be achieved by every school. In the long run, teachers will be able to better adapt the sexuality education curriculum to cater to the school culture and students' learning abilities.

Theme 9: Fostering a Racially Friendly Community for Residents from Diverse Races and Visitors to Hong Kong

Recommendation 18: Recognition and Promotion of Ethnic Cultures

44.   To foster mutual respect and understanding, it is important to **recognise and mark cultural and religious festivals of ethnic communities through official greetings and public events.** Leveraging successful events like the popular Songkran festival celebrated in Kowloon City, similar celebrations can be extended to festivals such as Eid, Diwali, Dashain, and others, helping to showcase the city's cultural vibrancy.

45.   These efforts not only raise awareness about different cultures but also create opportunities for interaction and appreciation between ethnic communities and the wider public. Official support and public visibility will help cultivate an environment where all communities feel respected and included, enriching Hong Kong's multicultural identity and promoting harmonious relations.

Recommendation 19: Racially Inclusive Practices in the Service Industry

46.   Promoting racially inclusive customer service is key to creating welcoming experiences for both residents from the local ethnic communities as well as visitors from Mainland and other parts of the world. Hong Kong has made notable progress in this area, evidenced by an increase in Halal-certified restaurants[51] and positive recognition as a Halal-friendly city[52]. Inclusion efforts should further expand beyond catering to accommodate other needs, such as providing prayer rooms in public and commercial spaces, ensuring religious practices are respected.

47.   To build on these advances, **a comprehensive Racially Friendly Customer Service Campaign is recommended**. This campaign would provide clear guidelines and offer training for service providers, focusing on four core principles: "Help with language needs," "Expand product and service choices," "Make customers feel comfortable," and "Offer service of equal

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[51] According to the Incorporated Trustees of the Islamic Community Fund of Hong Kong, the number of Halal-certified restaurants has increased from about 100 at the beginning of 2024 to more than 200 up to July 2025, which include high-end Chinese restaurants, Cantonese restaurants and contemporary Hong Kong-style noodle restaurants.
[52] In June 2025, Hong Kong was named the "Most Promising Muslim-Friendly Destination of the Year" by CrescentRating, a world's leading authoritative organisation on Halal Travel.

quality." An accreditation system for compliant providers would also incentivise and publicly recognise inclusive business practices.

Recommendation 20: Community-Level Racial Inclusion Education and Engagement

48.   Expanding racial inclusion education at the community level can be achieved by **integrating inclusion themes into sports and cultural programmes** organised by the Leisure & Cultural Services Department. Multicultural performances should actively engage local ethnic groups, enabling cultural exchange and community bonding. Additionally, public libraries can contribute through **culturally themed reading weeks and by recommending books about diverse ethnic cultures and festivals**, enhancing public knowledge and appreciation of different cultures.

49.   Further engagement can be fostered by mobilising District Councils and neighborhood organisations to **recruit mainstream residents as Racially Friendly Community Ambassadors**. Through cultural sensitivity training and incentivised engagement, these ambassadors could be encouraged to take proactive, racially inclusive actions within their communities. This grassroots approach will help build a more culturally sensitive and harmonious society from the ground up.

Recommendation 21: Removing Racial Barriers in Accessing Medical and Healthcare Services

50.   Feedback from diverse ethnic community stakeholders reveals persistent barriers in accessing medical services, notably language difficulties during consultations, with psychiatric care being a critical area affected. To address this, it is advisable to **station trained interpreters in hospitals and clinics with high ethnic minority patient volumes**. This measure will facilitate clear communication, ensuring accurate diagnosis and appropriate treatment while reducing patient anxiety and misunderstandings.

51.   Additionally, **District Health Centres are recommended for actively putting forward outreach programmes tailored to ethnic communities,** especially targeting grassroots groups and senior citizens who may face greater access challenges. These programmes can raise awareness about available medical services, preventive care, and health

rights, delivered in culturally relevant ways through partnerships with community organisations.

52.   Equally important is **enhancing cultural competency among medical staff.** Recruiting professionals proficient in the languages and cultures of ethnic communities can improve trust and quality of care. Simultaneously, regular and intensified cultural sensitivity training should be provided for healthcare providers, equipping them to understand diverse health beliefs and needs. Together, these strategies will help dismantle racial barriers, foster equitable healthcare access, and improve health outcomes for all ethnic groups in Hong Kong.