

2024 Policy Address Public Consultation

Submission from Equal Opportunities Commission

Executive Summary

The Equal Opportunities Commission would like to make the following 19 Recommendations under 7 Themes for the Government to consider in its 2024 Policy Address:

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- Increase Supply of Barrier-free Taxis (p.6)

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Theme 3: Protection of Persons with Disabilities (“PWDs”) (including youths with mental health needs)

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Introduction

The Equal Opportunities Commission (“EOC”) makes 19 recommendations under 7 themes for the 2024 Policy Address in the hope that the Government can make more efforts for the protection of minority groups and curbing of discrimination.

2. The EOC recommends measures to minimize biases towards minority groups in society, and calls for better protection and support as well as empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (“PWDs”). Meanwhile, the EOC finds that the implementation of Universal Design (“UD”) Principles is of equally high importance as the general public can benefit from accessible infrastructures and facilities as much as people with special needs. Also, against the backdrop of increasing number of carers, recommendation is made for the building of a more family-friendly Hong Kong community.

3. Fostering greater understanding and harmonious relations among diverse ethnic communities is another area of focus as it is the key to the creation of an inclusive environment for all, free of racial discrimination and barriers.

4. This paper also highlights the importance of empowering the education sector to promote healthy interpersonal interactions and relationships to prevent and combat sexual harassment at early education before students enter university or join the labour market. Initiatives on campus are also necessary to equip the future generation with an accepting mindset to equality, mutual respect, human dignity, and collective progress.

Theme 1: Enhanced Efforts to Combat Unconscious Biases and Discrimination

Recommendation 1: Issue Guidelines to Address Unconscious Biases in the Digital World

5. Algorithmic discrimination happens when automated systems give differential treatments to people based on characteristics such as race, disability and gender. For example, people who are facing sight challenges may react slower than the average person in clicking verification buttons shown on websites, and as a result may lose out in first-come-first-serve digital queues for services. It is very possible that when essential public services are considered, such as making public clinic appointments via HA Go application, minority interests will be marginalized due to unconscious biases embedded in electronic services.

6. Unconscious bias in automated services is a worldwide issue affecting many places albeit it presents a relatively new policy challenge. In response, certain governments have taken steps to curb algorithmic discrimination. In the United States of America, the *Blueprint for an AI Bill of Rights* introduces the Principles of “Algorithmic Discrimination Protections” and “Human Alternatives, Consideration, and Fallback” to ensure minority interests will be given adequate protection and personalized care;¹ in Japan, the *Algorithms/AI and Competition Policy* published by the Japan Fair Trade Commission highlights the issue of possible price discrimination based on consumers’ personal attributes, and seeks to address the issue by enforcing the *Antimonopoly Act* in the digital world;² in China, Section 17 of the *Provisions on the Management of Algorithmic Recommendations in Internet Information*

¹ The White House. 2022. “Blueprint for an AI Bill of Rights.” Retrieved from <https://www.whitehouse.gov/ostp/ai-bill-of-rights/>.

² Japan Fair Trade Commission. 2021. *The Study Group on Competition Policy in Digital Markets Released the Report on Algorithms/AI and Competition Policy*. Retrieved from <https://www.jftc.go.jp/en/pressreleases/yearly-2021/March/210331.html>.

Service (《互联网信息服务算法推荐管理规定》) specifies that service providers using algorithms should only recommend services to users without analysing the personal attributes of users, or providers should allow an easy option for users to opt out of algorithms, while the Cyberspace Administration of China and the New Generation AI Governance Expert Committee introduced measures such as penalties for “big-data swindling” (「大数据杀熟」) and published guidelines to encourage “inclusiveness and sharing” in private entities’ development of algorithms.³

7. Against the backdrop of possible algorithmic discrimination, application and website developers ought to be more aware of the impact of their designs, especially when electronic public services are considered, and service users should have the option to reach human alternatives when they prefer human consideration to standardized responses from pre-set systems. To achieve these goals, **the Digital Policy Office may seek to reduce unconscious biases in algorithms of digital public services by issue of guidelines to bureaux/departments (“B/Ds”), to ensure that human alternatives to digital services will be provided as an option in the provision of public services.**

8. The Government may also mainstream Digital Inclusion by paying attention to the patterns by which people access public information. Through addressing issues in the public domain, the Government can set an example for private entities to follow, reduce biases in the digital world, and broaden opportunities for minority groups. **The Government is therefore recommended to oversee the development of electronic public services to ensure fairness, while also encouraging adoption of accessibility standards in the private sector, so that equal opportunities for all can be practised. In**

³ Jian, Xu. 2024. “Opening the ‘Black Box’ of Algorithms: Regulation of Algorithms in China.” <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/22041451.2024.2346415>.

the long run, the Government may consider enacting new laws to require that digital private services must provide human alternatives, or be free of algorithmic biases.

Recommendation 2: Increase Supply of Barrier-free Taxis

9. In the *Study on Taxi Accessibility of Hong Kong* published by the EOC in 2017, the EOC prompted the Government to seize the window of opportunity and require all newly purchased taxi and retiring taxi to be converted to wheelchair-accessible taxis in the near future.⁴ Seven years have passed, but wheelchair-accessibility of taxis remains low in Hong Kong. As of February 2024, only about 4,700 taxis in Hong Kong are wheelchair-accessible, accounting for only a quarter of the total number of 18,163 taxis.⁵ Meanwhile, Legislative Council (“LegCo”) members have raised questions on the policies governing barrier-free taxis in Hong Kong, but the Government replied that it has no plan of mandating all taxis to be replaced with wheelchair accessible models in 2023.⁶

10. Taking the experience of the United Kingdom (“the UK”) as an example, a requirement for all newly licensed taxis in the London area to be wheelchair-accessible came into effect since 1 February 1989, and the whole fleet of London taxis became wheelchair-accessible by 1 January 2000.⁷ The Transport for London refuses to issue a taxi license to vehicles which do not satisfy the accessibility requirement as one of the “Conditions of Fitness”.⁸ All

⁴ Equal Opportunities Commission. 2017. *Study on Taxi Accessibility of Hong Kong*, p. 13. Retrieved from <https://www.eoc.org.hk/eoc/upload/ResearchReport/201831610981892231.PDF>.

⁵ The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administration Region. “LCQ20: Barrier-free taxis.” 27 March, 2024. Retrieved from <https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202403/27/P2024032600748.htm?fontSize=1>.

⁶ The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administration Region. “LCQ22: Barrier-free taxis.” 23 May, 2024. Retrieved from <https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202305/24/P2023052400242.htm?fontSize=1>.

⁷ UK Parliament. 1993. “London Taxis”. *Hansard*, 26 March 1993. Retrieved from <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1993-03-26/debates/a78b1aa5-460b-440c-98ec-388e5aeea3ec/LondonTaxis>.

⁸ UK Transport for London, London Taxi and Private Hire. 2007. *Construction and Licensing of Motor Taxis for Use in London: Conditions of Fitness*, para. 15. Retrieved from <https://content.tfl.gov.uk/taxi-conditions-of-fitness-update-2019.pdf>.

15,100 London taxis remained wheelchair-accessible at a stocktaking exercise that took place in April 2023.⁹ Outside of London, another 16,300 taxis in the UK (accounting for 39% of the total), were also wheelchair-accessible by April 2023.¹⁰

11. Given the similar size of Hong Kong’s taxi fleet as compared to the London taxi fleet, it is feasible for Hong Kong to phase out non-wheelchair-accessible-taxis. The lag in Hong Kong’s phasing out of non-wheelchair-accessible-taxis is costing Hong Kong’s image as an inclusive society and also its image as an inclusive tourist destination. In its efforts to upgrade Hong Kong taxis’ service quality, **the Hong Kong Government may consider accelerating the pace of increasing the supply of barrier-free taxis to enhance physical mobility of PWDs, and set a timeline for phasing out non-wheelchair-accessible-taxis.** Concrete objectives / KPIs can be set to ensure progress. The Government may also make reference to the UK’s example, and set a cut-off date for all taxis to be wheelchair-accessible using administrative measures.

⁹ Department for Transport. 2023. “Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Statistics.” Retrieved from <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/taxi-and-private-hire-vehicle-statistics-england-2023/taxi-and-private-hire-vehicle-statistics-england-2023>.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

Theme 2: Implementation of UD Principles

Recommendation 3: Expand the Scope of the Design Manual: Barrier Free Access

12. The *Design Manual: Barrier Free Access 2008* (“DM”) issued by the Buildings Department (“BD”) serves as a key guideline for setting out design requirements that ensure proper access and suitable facilities in private buildings for PWDs. It is known that the BD is currently revising the DM to incorporate more UD concepts, as this was one of the policy measures highlighted in the *2023 Policy Address*.¹¹ Unlike barrier-free design, UD takes a user-centred approach to meet the needs of the widest spectrum of users and aims to create an environment that is accessible and usable by everyone, including but not limited to PWDs, elderly, carers and families with children. It is the opportune time for the Government to consider reviewing the existing legislation and refining the DM to enhance the accessibility of the physical environment in Hong Kong so that everyone, regardless of ability, age and status in life, can navigate the city independently.

13. The voluntary implementation of UD principles are insufficient to meet the needs of the quickly-ageing population in Hong Kong, and therefore, the DM serves as a mandatory requirement for buildings to incorporate UD principles that can greatly facilitate the mobility of the population and accessibility of premises. Nonetheless, the provisions in the existing DM are only applicable to new private buildings or alterations / addition works in existing private buildings and primarily focus on the barrier-free designs to cater the needs of PWDs. This may hinder the overall improvement in accessibility of premises in the long-run.

¹¹ *2023 Policy Address*, Para. 119(iv).

14. **In the exercise for review of the DM, the Government may consider extending the coverage of the BD’s DM to create a physical environment that is accessible to all. The Development Bureau may consider amending the Buildings Ordinance (Cap. 123) and Buildings (Planning) Regulations (Cap. 123F) to bind buildings belonging to, or rented by the Government to observe the provisions in the DM. In addition, in drafting the new DM, BD may consider incorporating its *Practice Note on Provision of Babycare Rooms and Lactation Rooms in Commercial Buildings* as an obligatory requirement for practitioners to follow and consider expanding its application to Government premises in line with the Government’s strategies and action plans to promote a childbearing environment.** Furthermore, UD principles can be translated into feasible design concepts by turning some recommended design requirements into obligatory requirements, such as installing automatic door openers on all entrance doors of a building, providing double handrails at a lower height for children and elderly, and installing emergency call bell with audible and visual signals.

Recommendation 4: Review Rehabus Service to Promote Local Accessible Tourism

15. There is a strong demand for accessible tourism in Hong Kong. The EOC has had dialogues with groups representing PWDs from mainland China which were interested in visiting Hong Kong, including members of the China Disabled Persons’ Federation (「中国残疾人联合会」). They have received comments that it was difficult to book Rehabuses, or other forms of transportation for PWDs’ tourism purposes in Hong Kong, even when advance bookings were made as early as 3 months prior to the date of intended use.

16. Meanwhile, the Audit Commission revealed in its 2024 Audit Report that the utilisation of Rehabus services has been low over the past 4 years.¹² According to the Audit Commission's Report released in 2024, the usage rate of the Rehabus feeder service was particularly low in 2023 - 80% of the weekday trips scheduled for three hospital routes were without passengers. In addition, four out of five recreational routes accounted for only 28% of the total bookings, and the low patronage may reflect a lack of tourist attractiveness of these routes. Despite the low patronage, the Transport Department will procure ten additional Rehabuses in the 2024-25 fiscal year. The seemingly contradictory low usage of service and expansion of the Rehabus fleet may signal low efficiency and non-optimal usage of Rehabuses.

17. Currently, Rehabus operators would have to seek Transport Department's approval for opening new or temporary routes for Rehabuses. By critically reviewing usage in existing routes and the restrictions on flexibly adjusting Rehabus routes, Rehabuses may be reassigned to more flexible routes (especially during off-peak periods) to enhance mobility of PWDs. The Government may even make accessible tourism more widely available and affordable for PWDs and people with mobility challenges by reviewing the policies governing Rehabuses.

18. In addition to serving only local passengers, the feeder service can be expanded to serve tourists with mobility challenges. According to the World Health Organization, 1.3 billion people, accounting for about 16% of the global population¹³, experienced significant disability in 2023. Enhancing accessibility for all to cover tourism facilities and transportation within the city presents a

¹² Audit Commission. 2024. *Director of Audit's Report No.82*, "Chapter 5: Provision and Monitoring of Rehabus Services". Retrieved from https://www.aud.gov.hk/pdf_e/e82ch05.pdf.

¹³ World Health Organisation. 2023. "Disability." Retrieved from <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/disability-and-health>.

business opportunity to embrace all tourists with diverse needs and boost the overall tourism economy. Therefore, **the Government may consider giving more flexibility to the operators for developing new recreational routes, running temporary routes to popular spots in addition to the regular routes, and to develop flexible point-to-point transportation mode to promote local accessible tourism during non-peak hours of weekdays and during weekends.**

Recommendation 5: Install Safety Devices in Accessible Toilets in Public Spaces

19. Against the backdrop of accidents in public toilets which led to deaths that were otherwise preventable, the LegCo discussed measures to ensure safety of users of public toilets in 2023, and urged the Government to consider installing smart body sensors and alarm systems in accessible and universal toilets so that venue managers and their staff are able to recognize emergency situations in a timely manner.¹⁴ At the time, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department said it had tested relevant devices in one public toilet and would review their effectiveness in due course.¹⁵ By now, certain premises such as Pok Oi Hospital and the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre have already installed alert systems in accessible toilets. In a similar effort, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (“LCSD”) has also launched a trial of drowning detection system in swimming pools.¹⁶ Nonetheless, in less visible areas such as independent cubicles of changing rooms and accessible toilets where less traffic is expected, motion detectors and life alert systems are still sparingly installed despite their possible lifesaving effect.

¹⁴ See: LC Paper No. CB(2)22/2024, Para. 27. Retrieved from <https://www.legco.gov.hk/yr2023/english/panels/fseh/minutes/fseh20231218.pdf>; See also: LC Paper No. CB(4)454/2023, Para. 37. Retrieved from <https://www.legco.gov.hk/yr2023/english/panels/hs/minutes/hs20230419.pdf>.

¹⁵ LC Paper No. CB(2)22/2024, Para. 27. Retrieved from <https://www.legco.gov.hk/yr2023/english/panels/fseh/minutes/fseh20231218.pdf>.

¹⁶ The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. “LCSD Launches Trial of Artificial Intelligence Drowning Detection System at Kwun Tong Swimming Pool.” 28 July, 2023. Retrieved from <https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202307/28/P2023072800303.htm?fontSize=1>.

20. **The Government may consider installation of fall sensors or life alert systems with automatic motion-detection function in accessible toilets in public spaces, including parks, hospitals, swimming pools, train stations, and community centres, to improve users' safety, particularly the safety of disabled persons.** Traffic in accessible toilets are lower than ordinary toilets, and it is likely that accidents will go unnoticed. Auto-detection devices can prevent users from unnoticed accidents such as fainting and falling by sending alerts to the security control when an accident is detected. Venue staff will then be able to take immediate actions and provide assistance if needed. **The BD may also consider adding a new obligatory design requirement for installing safety devices in its DM to influence designs of private premises.**

Theme 3: Protection of PWDs (including youths with mental health needs)

Recommendation 6: Enact Law for Mandatory Reporting of Abuse of PWDs / Mechanism for Whistleblowing

21. According to Article 15 of the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (“CRPD”), the Hong Kong Government shall take all effective legislative, administrative, judicial or other measures to prevent PWDs being subjected to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. As early as in 2022, there was already discussion in the LegCo that a mandatory reporting mechanism is crucial to the prevention of abuse cases in residential care homes (“RCHs”).¹⁷ At the time, the Government mentioned that it “can indeed enact legislation to cover all underprivileged persons or potential targets for abuse, including PWDs and frail elderly persons”, and would consider mandatory reporting of abuse of elderly persons and PWDs in the community.¹⁸

22. In fact, the Central Information System on Elder Abuse Cases (“CISEAC”) compiled by the Social Welfare Department (“SWD”) suggests that abuses are common in community at large, with physical abuse (72.3% of 318 reported cases, or 230 cases) being particularly common, and more than 90% of the cases involved familial relationships while another 6.3% of the cases involved domestic helpers.¹⁹ Nonetheless, the existing dataset suggests not all cases have been reported to the police, not to mention that cases involving PWDs have not been reflected in the existing dataset. The numbers reported to the CISEAC may just be the tip of the iceberg.

¹⁷ Legislative Council. *Official Record of Proceedings, Wednesday, 22 June 2022*. Pp. 4186. Retrieved from <https://www.legco.gov.hk/yr2022/english/counmtg/hansard/cm20220622-translate-e.pdf>.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ [Only in Chinese] 社會福利署。2024。「虐待長者個案數字」。轉載自 [https://www.swd.gov.hk/storage/asset/section/1218/tc/CISEAC_\(Traditional%20Chinese\)_2023.pdf](https://www.swd.gov.hk/storage/asset/section/1218/tc/CISEAC_(Traditional%20Chinese)_2023.pdf)。

23. In connection with the above, **the Government may consider making the reporting of (suspected) cases of abuse of PWDs and the elderly as an explicit requirement bound by law, rather than only a procedural and administrative practice.** When considering enactment of an Ordinance to govern mandatory reporting of abuses experienced by PWDs, the Government may refer to its earlier view that it “cannot only consider mandatory reporting for RCHs”.²⁰ At present, not only does a lacuna exist for reporting potential abuses happening in non-subsidized service units such as privately run RCHs, there is also a lack of legal framework for reporting abuses of elderly persons and PWDs happening in the community.

24. Currently, as an administrative practice, subsidized service units such as RCHs for PWDs and elderly homes are required to report both confirmed and suspected cases of abuses to the SWD Subventions Section and the relevant branches of the SWD within 3 calendar days.²¹ On top of the above existing mandatory reporting mechanism in which management of the service providers act as an intermediary in handling incidents of abuse of PWDs,²² **the Government may consider introducing an easily accessible whistleblowing platform for individuals, such as the employees of service providers or family members of PWDs, to directly and confidentially make reports or complaints to it about these incidents, especially those occur in RCHs where there is less external supervision.** Such a platform guarantees anonymity and offers protection against retaliation. **The Government may consider appropriate strategies e.g., whistleblowing mechanism for individual and organizational service providers (whose service targets include PWDs) that may or may not**

²⁰ See: footnote 17 above.

²¹ Social Welfare Department. *Subvented Service Units Special Incident Report*. Retrieved from https://www.swd.gov.hk/storage/asset/section/605/tc/Special_Incident_Report_Form.docx.

²² Social Welfare Department. 2023. *Guidelines for Handling Mentally Handicapped / Mental Recovery Adult Abuse Cases*, Chapters 5.2 & 5.3, p.30 & 31. Retrieved from https://www.swd.gov.hk/storage/asset/section/346/tc/Abuse_Guidelines_032023.pdf.

be receiving subsidies from the Government. With the protection by anonymity, whistleblowers would be encouraged to speak up against abuse free from fear of adverse consequences, such as job loss, demotion or harassment for their reports.

Recommendation 7: Use of Integrated Community Centre for Mental Wellness (“ICCMWs”) to Support Young PMIs

25. The numbers of students with mental illnesses have risen from 150 to 370 for primary school students and from 450 to 1,610 for secondary school students between the school years 2018/19 and 2022/23.²³ Despite the Three-Tier School-based Emergency Mechanism to address mental needs of students, there were 32 suicide cases involving school-age adolescence in 2023 alone, which is a record high number in the past 5 years.²⁴ To complement efforts of the *One-off Grant for Mental Health at School* and the *One-off Grant for Mental Health of Parents and Students* in improving mental health of stakeholders, measures can be implemented at the community level so that early identification and intervention can be delivered to youth-at-risk.

26. A LegCo research report highlighted that inadequate capacity and limited coordination of primary mental care has overburdened crisis resolution, in-patient and day care services, leading to long waiting times for these specialist services.²⁵ As a way to expand the capacity of primary mental care in Hong Kong, the Government mentioned the enhancement of services of ICCMWs in both the 2022 and 2023 Policy Address.²⁶ Yet, a desktop review of services provided by

²³ Legislative Council Finance Committee. 2024. “Replies to initial questions raised by Legislative Council Members in examining the Estimates of Expenditure 2024-25.” Reply serial no. EDB177. Retrieved from https://www.legco.gov.hk/yr2024/english/fc/fc/w_q/edb-e.pdf.

²⁴ *Ibid.* Reply serial no. EDB071.

²⁵ Legislative Council. 2021. *Mental Health Services for Young People* (ISE31/20-21). Retrieved from <https://www.legco.gov.hk/research-publications/english/essentials-2021/ise31-mental-health-services-for-young-people.htm>.

²⁶ **See:** 2022 Policy Address, Para. 86; **See also:** 2023 Policy Address, Para. 145(ii).

existing ICCMWs showed that most services target adults and the elderly, with only a few initiatives engaging children of PMIs, and a few others aiming secondary school students as the primary service targets. Although ICCMWs target at people aged 15 or above, statistics showed that young people can be as likely as adults to be troubled by mental health challenges, thus more attention can be given to young people to enhance their mental wellbeing.²⁷

27. Mental illness among young people is not merely an issue that concerns school life. As a matter of fact, the view that family issues can cast a huge psychological burden on young children is shared by certain professionals such as experts from the HKU Family Institute.²⁸ In response to the phenomenon, **the Government may consider using ICCMWs to bridge service gaps existing in school environments in order to provide better support to young PMIs at the community level, and to promote mental health awareness among young people.** For example, training programmes for non-clinical mental health workers and volunteers can utilize community manpower at the district level and equip people with basic skills to care for the mental health of young people. Also, community relaxation and sports activities can be good starting points for mental health workers to stay in touch with young people, especially before and after exam seasons.

²⁷ Legislative Council. 2021. *Mental Health Services for Young People* (ISE31/20-21), **footnotes 4 & 5**. Retrieved from <https://www.legco.gov.hk/research-publications/english/essentials-2021ise31-mental-health-services-for-young-people.htm>.

²⁸ **[Only in Chinese]** 「學童精神健康 | 研三層應急機制 由教師社工到醫局 | 治療師：情緒問題多源自家庭」。《明報 Jump》，2023 年 11 月 21 日。轉載自 <https://jump.mingpao.com/career-news/daily-news/%e5%ad%b8%e7%ab%a5%e7%b2%be%e7%a5%9e%e5%81%a5%e5%ba%b7%ef%bd%9c%e7%a0%94%e4%b8%89%e5%b1%a4%e6%87%89%e6%80%a5%e6%a9%9f%e5%88%b6-%e7%94%b1%e6%95%99%e5%b8%ab%e7%a4%be%e5%b7%a5%e5%88%b0%e9%86%ab%e5%b1%80/>。

Theme 4: Social and Economic Empowerment of PWDs and Carers

Recommendation 8: Use of the Internet of Things (“IoT”) and Assistive Technologies (“ATs”) to Support PWDs

28. When complemented by appropriate Assistive Technologies (“ATs”), the IoT can enhance the wellbeing of PWDs and potentially benefit Hong Kong’s ageing population and their carers. For example, Amap (「高德地图」) in mainland China offers navigation for wheelchair users (「无障碍导航」) and helps them locate accessible routes with elevators and accessible toilets.²⁹ The application also offers audio real-time countdown of traffic lights for people facing visual challenges in addition to other functions such as analysis of real-time pedestrian and road traffic which may pose as threats to people with different disabilities.³⁰ Similarly, New York City’s Department of Transportation has adopted a remote control device named “aBeacons” for people with visual impairments to activate Accessible Pedestrian Signals. The well-received device provides PWDs with volume-adjustable audio information such as the street names to the crossings in proximity and performs functions of pushbuttons.³¹

29. Modelling on the existing success of other regions, **the Government may consider building smart infrastructure systems and collect data in society that would enable the IoT to benefit the mobility and convenience of PWDs, carers and the elderly.** For example, with reference to the *Multi-functional Smart Lampposts Pilot Scheme* which was completed in December 2023, the Digital Policy Office may take the lead to coordinate B/Ds to install

²⁹ [Only in Chinese] 「高德地图升级轮椅导航功能，支持沿途搜索无障碍卫生间等」，《新华网》，2023年6月5日。 <http://www.news.cn/tech/20230605/e76ced4864064a6e811979350e0484fb/c.html>。

³⁰ [Only in Chinese] 「高德地图上线视障导航和听障信息指引，服务1700万视障人士」。《第一财经》，2024年8月23日。轉載自 <https://m.yicai.com/news/102243930.html>。

³¹ Inclusive City Maker, “Will Remote Activation Become the Norm for Accessible Pedestrian Signals?”, 20 January, 2023. Retrieved from <https://www.inclusivecitymaker.com/remote-activation-accessible-pedestrian-signals/>.

more smart lampposts that would both collect data and give information to pedestrians about real-time road and sidewalk situations via phone apps or smart canes.³²

30. **The Government may also consider procuring ATs, encouraging the innovation of ATs, and promoting the use of ATs among individuals with needs.** One option is to make ATs for PWDs a research cluster in the up-and-coming San Tin Technopole, so that innovators will receive enough support to develop and test technologies while PWDs will be able to be trained in using ATs for the benefit of their daily lives in the vicinity of the research cluster. At the same time, to address the basic needs of PWDs to access information in a growingly digitalized society, **the Digital Policy Office may consider addressing the categorical needs of different PWDs when upgrading Government websites and mobile applications, opening up data, and offering digital services, so as to facilitate PWDs in accessing public information.**

Recommendation 9: Explore New Job Opportunities for PWDs in the Digital Economy

31. With the help of technologies, PWDs can take on remote work or engage in work that are virtual, such as ESports, remote customer service, or even remote control of robots and machines. Examples from China (including Hong Kong and the mainland) and other countries demonstrate that ESports can be a level playing field for all including PWDs.³³ Similarly, remote work made possible by technology are also enabling PWDs to engage in service provision,

³² The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. “LCQ20: Multi-functional Smart Lampposts”, 8 May, 2024. Retrieved from <https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202405/08/P2024050800286.htm?fontSize=1>.

³³ **See: [Only in Chinese]** 「全民电子竞技：残障玩家如何打破刻板印象」。《搜狐网》，2023年5月26日。转载自 https://www.sohu.com/a/679237660_100057771。 **See also:** Able Gamers. “How Esports Is Becoming More Accessible.” Retrieved from <https://ablegamers.org/esports-accessibility>.

such as being the virtual waiting staff in restaurants, without the fuss to overcome otherwise inaccessible physical work environments.³⁴

32. Technological advancements mean that PWDs are no longer seen as mere service users, but they are also regarded as a productive force to the economy. Against this backdrop, vocational rehabilitation may consider exploring new options of “work”, which are decreasingly dependent on one’s physical capabilities, and prepare PWDs for the digital economy by teaching them to make best use of assistive technologies for employment. Therefore, **the Government may consider reviewing job training and job matching services provided to PWDs to complement emerging economic opportunities in the digital economy.** Existing policies can also be adjusted to encourage virtual economic activities of PWDs. **The Government may consider relaxing or removing the monthly household income requirement for “Integrated Support Service for Persons with Severe Physical Disabilities” so that PWDs have a higher incentive to participate in economic activities.**

Recommendation 10: Enhance Access to Team Sports by PWDs as Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Initiatives

33. According to Article 30 of the CRPD, signatory Parties shall take appropriate measures to enable PWDs to participate on an equal basis with others in sporting activities.³⁵ Yet in Hong Kong, sports training courses currently offered by the LCSD for PWDs are limited. Under the *Sports Training Programmes for Persons with Disabilities*, the LCSD is only offering 102 sports training courses for PWDs from June 2024 to April 2025, which are much fewer

³⁴ See: [Only in Chinese] 「社企餐廳任遙距帶位員 | 殘疾人士展現工作才能」。《東網》，2022年08月12日。轉載自 https://hk.on.cc/hk/bkn/cnt/news/20220812/bkn-20220812050012651-0812_00822_001.html。

³⁵ See: *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Para. 5 of Article 30*. Retrieved from <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-persons-disabilities>.

than those offered to the general public and to the elderly. As a comparison, the LCSD is providing more than 4,200 and 450 training courses for the general public and elderly respectively from August 2024 to December 2024.³⁶ To ensure PWDs have an opportunity to participate in disability-specific sporting and recreational activities and encourage the provision of appropriate instruction, training and resources, **the Government may consider provision of more sports training courses for PWDs under the *Sports Training Programmes for Persons with Disabilities*,**³⁷ which are conducted by qualified instructors assigned by relevant National Sports Associations (“NSAs”).

34. Apart from the need of increasing the number of training courses, there is also a need to provide a greater variety of team-based sports activities for PWDs in general, in order to allow PWDs to interact with other fellow PWDs, thereby building their confidence in socialisation and encouraging them to participate in community. Currently, certain PWDs such as persons in mental recovery cannot join any team-based sports activities under the courses offered by the LCSD; whereas some other PWDs such as persons with hearing impairment only have one team-based sports choice. To address the lack of team-based sports training courses for PWDs, **the Government may explore with the relevant NSAs for providing more diversified team-based sports training courses, such as football, rugby and dragon boat.** Providing additional sports choices for PWDs emphasizes PWDs’ abilities instead of emphasizing their inabilities, and is a common practice in overseas countries such as the UK. In particular, deaf athletes in the UK are professionally trained to compete on the world stage.³⁸ **When designing training courses for PWDs, the Government**

³⁶ See: Leisure and Cultural Services Department. “SmartPLAY.” Retrieved from <https://www.smartplay.lcsd.gov.hk/programme/search-result?activityType=%5B%5D&startDate=ALL&district=all&pageNum=1>

³⁷ See: Leisure and Cultural Services Department. “Sports Training Programmes for Persons with Disabilities.” Retrieved from https://www.lcsd.gov.hk/en/dlso/sport_training.html.

³⁸ See: UK Deaf Sports. “UK Deaf Sports Directory.” Retrieved from <https://ukdeafsport.org.uk/sports/>.

may consider offering training courses that welcome the participation of all types of PWDs in general. For example, courses which are physically less demanding, such as body-mind stretch and Baduanjin (「八段錦」), may be suitable for expanding the scope of target participants to accommodate different types of PWDs in the same class.

Recommendation 11: Shorten the Queues for Day Care and Residential Care Services to PWDs for Carers' Mental Health

35. A LegCo report shows that a total of some 11,500 PWDs were being waitlisted for various types of services, including residential care services (“RCS”), and the average waiting time ranged from 4.2 months to 171.1 months.³⁹ For PMIs who are expected to leave special schools at the age of 21, queues for RCS are over 171 months for PMIs with severe conditions, and over 154 months for PMIs with moderate conditions.⁴⁰ Services offered by Day Activity Centres and sheltered workshops for PMIs also require an average waiting time of 55.6 months and 14 months respectively.⁴¹ The long queues do not only affect the care recipients themselves, but also cast a huge family responsibility on carers, thereby limiting their life choices and also participation in the workforce.

36. Regarding carers' high levels of pressure in taking care of PWDs with chronic medical conditions, especially for cases where the carers themselves are of old age or with disabilities, **shortened queues for services such as Residential Care Homes for Persons with Disabilities, Day Respite Service, Day Activity Centres, and sheltered workshops can relieve burdens and ease**

³⁹ Legislative Council Secretariat Research Office. “Support for Carers of Persons with Disabilities and Chronic Diseases,” *Statistical Highlights* [No. ISSH35/2023]. Retrieved from https://app7.legco.gov.hk/rpdb/en/uploads/2023/ISSH/ISSH35_2023_20231208_en.pdf.

⁴⁰ Legislative Council Secretariat, “Support for carers of persons with disabilities and chronic diseases”, *Statistical Highlights* [No. ISSH35/2023] (Hong Kong: Legislative Council Secretariat, 2023), 1, https://app7.legco.gov.hk/rpdb/en/uploads/2023/ISSH/ISSH35_2023_20231208_en.pdf.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

tensions, thereby lowering the possibilities of domestic violence due to heavy caring responsibilities. **The Government may consider enlarging the service capacities of day care and residential care for PWDs by making use of private resources, and resources in the Greater Bay Area. In the longer term, the Government may also consider more subsidies for training relevant professionals and helpers who are expected to work locally.**

Theme 5: Building a Family-friendly Community in Hong Kong

Recommendation 12: Enhance Availability of Breastfeeding Facilities in Hong Kong

37. According to the EOC's *Study on Breastfeeding at Publicly Accessible Premises in Hong Kong* released in 2024, Babycare and Lactation Rooms are categorically inadequate in shopping centres, public places and premises built before 2000.⁴² To provide assistance to families with young children, and to boost confidence of prospective parents in having children by providing adequate community support, the Government may consider encouraging an increase in the number of breastfeeding facilities. **Government premises and parks may develop more breastfeeding facilities to meet the needs of breastfeeding mothers.**

38. As regards private premises, existing BEAM Plus arrangements allow private developers to choose building of breastfeeding facilities as an optional component to fulfil conditions for receiving gross floor area ("GFA") concessions. **The Government may consider turning the option to build breastfeeding facilities into a prerequisite for property developers to receive GFA concessions, and require breastfeeding facilities to be appropriately distributed across a defined unit of area.** Similarly, concessions may be granted for renovated buildings on the premises when breastfeeding facilities are adequate.

⁴² Equal Opportunities Commission. 2024. *Study on Breastfeeding at Publicly Accessible Premises in Hong Kong*, p. 22. Retrieved from [https://www.eoc.org.hk/Upload/files/research-report/Study%20on%20Breastfeeding%202023/ResearchReport-BreastfeedingStudy\(Eng\)rev.pdf](https://www.eoc.org.hk/Upload/files/research-report/Study%20on%20Breastfeeding%202023/ResearchReport-BreastfeedingStudy(Eng)rev.pdf).

Recommendation 13: Boost Birthrate and Unleash the Workforce by Relaxing Restrictions on Reproductive Technologies

39. It is noted that the Council on Human Reproductive Technology in Hong Kong is currently reviewing the maximum storage period for gametes and will make relevant recommendations to Health Bureau in due course.⁴³ The Government may take into account social developments and review whether the existing *Human Reproductive Technology Ordinance* is compatible with life patterns and norms shared by the Hong Kong population. According to a report published by the United Nations Population Fund, which took out Vatican for comparison, Hong Kong has the lowest birth rates across the world.⁴⁴ The low incentives to start families may be related to gender inequality, career patterns, and lack of options to preserve fertility in Hong Kong.⁴⁵ Thus, the Government may consider foreign examples and review comprehensively the legal restrictions limiting access to fertility technologies.

40. Taking the example of the UK's Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority, which oversees the *Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act* and is the independent regulator of fertility treatment in the UK, UK citizens who are worried about decline in fertility but are unready to have children or have yet to find the right partner can participate in 'elective egg freezing' for non-medical reasons.⁴⁶ In addition, a public consultation was held in the UK in 2020 leading to a relaxed statutory storage limits for gametes and embryos, so as to

⁴³ [Only in Chinese] 香港特別行政區。「立法會：醫務衛生局局長就「支援輔助生育政策」議員議案總結發言」。2024年6月20日。轉載自

<https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202406/20/P2024062000484.htm>。

⁴⁴ United Nations Population Fund. 2023. *8 Billion Lives, Infinite Possibilities: the Case for Rights and Choices*. Retrieved from <https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/swop23/SWOP2023-ENGLISH-230329-web.pdf>.

⁴⁵ Hillary Leung. "'Not all about money': Hong Kong's Low Birth Rate Needs more than Cash to Convince Couples to Have Kids." *Hong Kong Free Press*, 28 October, 2023. Retrieved from <https://hongkongfp.com/2023/10/28/not-all-about-money-hong-kongs-low-birth-rate-needs-more-than-cash-to-convince-couples-to-have-kids/>.

⁴⁶ UK Human Fertilisation & Embryology Authority. "Egg Freezing." Retrieved from <https://www.hfea.gov.uk/treatments/fertility-preservation/egg-freezing/>.

diminish any unnecessary restrictions on individual freedom of choosing when to start a family.⁴⁷ The *Health and Care Act 2022* in the UK now allows storage of gametes and embryos to a maximum of 55 years.⁴⁸

41. Having children is a big decision in life, and young couples may want to be well-prepared in other aspects of life, such as fulfillment of personal ambitions and career stability, before they decide on the issue. By allowing all married couples to freeze and store their gametes when they are in their prime health, regardless of whether they face infertility issues, a window for family discussion can be left open, leading to a higher chance that couples will take actions to conceive. In other words, the option to preserve fertility has the effect of potentially boosting birth-rate in the future while also unleashing the young women workforce immediately. Therefore, to solve the simultaneous equations to both a low-birth rate and a demand for an enlarged workforce at both present and in the future, **the Government may consider reviewing the *Human Reproductive Technology Ordinance* and relax the requirement that only infertile couples can access reproductive technologies to include married couples who may not have infertility issues but prefer having children at the right time.**⁴⁹

⁴⁷ UK Department of Health & Social Care. 2021. "Gamete (Egg, Sperm) and Embryo Storage Limits: Response to Consultation." Retrieved from <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/egg-sperm-and-embryo-storage-limits/outcome/gamete-egg-sperm-and-embryo-storage-limits-response-to-consultation>.

⁴⁸ UK Health and Care Act 2022. Retrieved from <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2022/31/schedule/17>.

⁴⁹ At the beginning of **Cap. 561**, it is stated: "(The Human Reproductive Technology Ordinance is) *An Ordinance to regulate reproductive technology procedures, and the use, for research and other purposes, of embryos and gametes; to confine the provision of reproductive technology procedures to infertile couples subject to any express provision to the contrary in any code; to regulate surrogacy arrangements; to establish a Council on Human Reproductive Technology; and to provide for matters incidental thereto or connected therewith.*".

Theme 6: Fostering Greater Understanding and Harmonious Relations among Ethnic Communities

42. Fostering greater understanding and harmonious relations among ethnic communities is essential to the creation of an inclusive environment for all free of racial discrimination and barriers. In this regard, the EOC reiterates its 2023 recommendations in this submission for **marking cultural and religious festivals celebrated by many non-ethnic Chinese (“NEC”) communities through official greetings and public events to foster mutual respect and understanding; as well as launching territory-wide public advertisements and announcements promoting racial equality and inclusion.**

43. On top of the 2023 recommendations, actions on the following two areas of racial inclusion are highly recommended.

Recommendation 14: Enhance Promotion of Racially Friendly Customer Service

44. Never has the need, as well as the payoff, for embracing racially inclusive policies and practices been greater. Measures to boost cultural inclusion will not only create a welcoming experience for local NEC residents but also visitors to the city. From products and services to attitudes and behaviour of people delivering these services, the lived experiences of the diverse populations of Hong Kong can serve as an ambassadorial message to potential tourists.

45. At present, close to 8,000 shops and restaurants have been accredited under the Quality Tourism Services Scheme by the Hong Kong Tourism Board, showcasing that the customer service industry in Hong Kong is indeed maintaining its reputation as a tourist-friendly destination. Nevertheless, venturing into newer tourist markets, such as countries with a Muslim majority, presents fresh challenges to the tourism and related industries.

46. For example, scant restaurant choices, unfriendly shopping experience and less-than-welcoming social interactions are common hurdles encountered by some racial groups adhering to specific religious dietary restrictions (such as Halal for Muslims) and distinctive attire norms (including head coverings and beards).

47. The EOC started addressing this issue in 2019 by promoting four good practice suggestions to customer service providers, namely “Help with language needs (「溝通無障礙」)”, “Expand product and service choices (「服務有選擇」)”, “Make customers feel comfortable (「待遇零歧視」)” and “Offer service of equal quality (「招待無差別」)”. It is highly recommended that **a territory-wide Racially Friendly Customer Service Promotion Campaign be initiated to level up the publicity and build the capacity of customer service providers by developing a guide, providing training for them and accrediting shops/companies and shopping malls which follow the guide and have staff undergone the training.**

Recommendation 15: Enhance Promotion of Racially Friendly Community

48. It is strongly believed that the unwelcoming experience faced by community members and tourists from certain ethnic and religious groups originates from deep-rooted bias and lack of cultural understanding in the mainstream community. To tackle the root cause, a variety of initiatives have been implemented by the EOC. Through the *Racial Diversity & Inclusion Charter for Employers and Racially Friendly Campus Recognition Scheme*, the EOC has successfully engaged a critical mass of employers (over 460) and schools (over 150) respectively to promote racial inclusion in their workplaces and campuses. Recently, the first-ever *Racial Diversity & Inclusion Sports Day*

was organised in April 2024, drawing nearly 300 community members from diverse races to enjoy team sports.

49. The Sports Day's vibrant atmosphere and positive feedback highlighted the power of sports in fostering inter-cultural connections. Given the growing demand for sports with a social purpose, it is strongly recommended that **the racial inclusion theme be incorporated in selected sports services of the LCSD**. For example, dedicated games for multiracial teams can be featured in territory-wide events, such as Sports for All Day or Hong Kong Games. As district-level initiatives, multicultural training programmes in running, football, basketball, swimming, etc. can be set up to recruit members from diverse races, engage them in joint training and facilitate their inclusion.

50. Besides, it is timely to broaden racial inclusion education to the community level. For example, **multicultural performances organised by LCSD may engage local NEC groups**, which not only allow the general public to appreciate the diverse cultures in Hong Kong but also showcase the city's vibrant multicultural identity to tourists, fostering inclusion and cultural exchange. **Public libraries can also effectively contribute to this objective by running reading weeks and recommending books** giving information about other cultures including those centred around festivals celebrated by racial minorities in Hong Kong, like Diwali, Eid, Songkran, etc., or important events such as the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

51. On top of the above, **an ambassador project can be introduced to step up the engagement of community members in promoting racial inclusion in their neighbourhood**. This can be done through mobilising District Councils and neighbourhood organisations to recruit local mainstream residents to be Racially Friendly Community Ambassadors with incentivisation for

participation in cultural sensitivity training and recognition for taking up racially friendly actions.

Theme 7: Enriching Equal Opportunities Awareness on School Campus

Recommendation 16: Formulate Comprehensive Sexuality Education in Secondary Schools

52. Sexuality education is crucial to the growth of children and young people by equipping them with the knowledge and skills to make healthy and responsible decisions in their lives and when taking part in the society. Their access to sexuality education is endorsed by international treaties which stress the right of every individual to education and to the highest attainable standard of health and wellbeing. These include the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and the CRPD. On the other hand, good health and wellbeing, quality education and gender equality are also the global development priorities as mentioned in the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.

53. In the report of *A Study on Comprehensive Sexuality Education in Secondary Schools of Hong Kong* published by the EOC in 2022, it was found that the teaching hours allocated to sexuality education in Hong Kong were largely inadequate.⁵⁰ Sexuality education in secondary schools, without designated hours or curriculum, was put under values education. Most schools' curricula of sex education, instead of sexuality education, placed focus heavily on the biological and physiological aspects (e.g. the mechanics of reproduction). In addition to sex, sexuality should be included to cover the psychological and social aspects like healthy relationships, sexual consent, gender equality, etc. which are equally important for students' growth. According to the United Nations Population Fund, comprehensive sexuality education should be a

⁵⁰ James K.S Chan. (2022). *A Study on Comprehensive Sexuality Education in Secondary Schools of Hong Kong*. Hong Kong: Equal Opportunities Commission.

curriculum-based process of teaching and learning about the cognitive, emotional, physical and social aspects of sexuality, which enables young people to protect and advocate for their health, wellbeing and dignity with necessary knowledge, attitudes and skills.⁵¹ It helps young people nurture positive values which include discussions about family life, relationships, culture and gender roles, as well as gender equality and bodily autonomy, and address threats such as discrimination, sexual abuse and violence.

54. Comprehensive sexuality education has been a mandatory subject in various jurisdictions. For example, in Singapore, all schools have been mandated to provide sexuality education to students from primary five to pre-university levels. Guidelines were issued by the Ministry of Education to require schools to implement programmes with specified length of teaching hours. Sexuality education in Singapore include five themes, i.e. “human development”, “interpersonal relationships”, “sexual health”, “sexual behaviour”, and “culture, society and law”.⁵² In the UK, “relationships education” and “relationships and sex education” have become compulsory subjects in all primary and secondary schools since 2020, aiming at preparing students for the experiences of adult life with the ability to make informed decisions on their wellbeing including healthy relationships.⁵³ Statutory guidance was established by the Department of Education to let schools develop their policy for this subject with parents’ consultation and to require schools to address issues like everyday sexism, misogyny, gender stereotypes in the programme.⁵⁴

⁵¹ United Nations Population Fund. *Comprehensive Sexuality Education*. Retrieved from <https://www.unfpa.org/comprehensive-sexuality-education>.

⁵² Singapore Government Ministry of Education. *Sexuality Education: Scope and teaching approach*. Retrieved from <https://www.moe.gov.sg/education-in-sg/our-programmes/sexuality-education/scope-and-teaching-approach>.

⁵³ The UK Government Department of Education. *What do children and young people learn in relationship, sex and health education*. Retrieved from <https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2023/03/10/what-do-children-and-young-people-learn-in-relationship-sex-and-health-education/>.

⁵⁴ The UK Government Department of Education. *Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education: Statutory guidance for governing bodies, proprietors, head teachers, principals,*

55. Compared to piecemeal and reactive measures, in Hong Kong, a holistic approach to set out a comprehensive sexuality education curriculum with designated teaching and learning hours by the Education Bureau (“EDB”) is the more effective way to create a sustainable impact in cultural change. **A curriculum of comprehensive sexuality education with clear outline on required topics and hours, covering not only biological but also psychological and social aspects, has to be formulated in the education sector to guide schools, especially secondary schools, on educating their students systematically.** While resources usually concern schools, to encourage schools and teachers to include sexuality education efficiently into daily teaching, **subsidies should be provided by the Government to schools for developing teaching materials, sending staff to receive relevant training or setting up a designated position to teach or coordinate sexuality education.** Experts from non-governmental organisations should be engaged in providing relevant education or references to schools. Other topics such as home-school cooperation and parent education on continuing the strength of sexuality education after school should be considered by the EDB too. As a global metropolis for Asia striving to progress, Hong Kong should keep abreast of the best practices in formulating comprehensive sexuality education and take the lead on nurturing young people to build an inclusive society free of discrimination and harassment.

Recommendation 17: Establish Equal Opportunities Office and Measures for Promoting Diversity, Equality and Inclusion in Universities

56. Dedicated offices on university campus for the promotion of diversity, equality and inclusion (“DEI”) are essential to the nurturing of an inclusive community. Many universities around the globe have designated

senior leadership teams, teachers. Retrieved from https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/62cea352e90e071e789ea9bf/Relationships_Education_RSE_and_Health_Education.pdf.

offices to tackle issues related to DEI. For example, the *Office for Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging* at the Harvard University mitigates issues arising from varied backgrounds, cultures, races, identities, life experiences, perspectives, beliefs, and values of university members;⁵⁵ while the *Equality and Diversity Unit* at the University of Oxford similarly fosters an inclusive culture which promotes equality and diversity.⁵⁶ The examples show that a centralized office, with designated personnel and resources, could promote inclusion and address concerns in areas such as family status, gender, race, Special Educational Needs (“SEN”) and disability issues, in a more coordinated and effective way. Therefore, **the Government may consider additional funding for universities to set up Equal Opportunities Offices to combat discrimination and harassment on campus.** As the support and commitment of university’s senior management is crucial to the instillation of the values of equal opportunities into university operations and culture, Equal Opportunities Offices can directly report to the senior management and advise the latter regarding the formulation and implementation of Equal Opportunities policy in the university community.

57. Meanwhile, it is understood that the University Grants Committee (“UGC”) has entered into University Accountability Agreements with the 8 UGC-funded universities for the 2019-22 triennium (followed by updated agreements for the 2022-25 triennium).⁵⁷ **To measure universities’ efforts in promoting diversity, equality and inclusion, the UGC may consider introducing sector-wide performance measures,** such as total number of inclusive and diverse curriculum offerings in each academic year, percentage of staff and students by race, ethnicity and gender, and those who declare having a

⁵⁵ Harvard University. “Office for Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging.” Retrieved from <https://edib.harvard.edu/>.

⁵⁶ The University of Oxford. “Equality and Diversity Unit.” Retrieved from <https://edu.admin.ox.ac.uk/>.

⁵⁷ LC Paper No. CB(4)653/2023(03), para. 28. Retrieved from <https://www.legco.gov.hk/yr2023/english/panels/ed/papers/ed20230707cb4-653-3-e.pdf>.

disability, as well as student and staff satisfaction with the accessibility of physical facilities, **in the updated agreements for the 2025-28 triennium.**

Recommendation 18: Strengthen Support for Students with SENs

58. As at September 2023, the number of students with SENs in public sector ordinary schools reached around 64,220 (31,030 in primary schools and 33,190 in secondary schools),⁵⁸ which represented a significant increase (i.e. 90%) from 33,830 students in 2013/14.⁵⁹ The continued rising trend poses an ongoing challenges to students, parents and schools. **The Government may consider continued supply of resources for further enhancing the educational psychologists (“EPs”) to schools ratio.** Although the Government has been progressively enhancing EPs to schools ratio for public sector ordinary primary and secondary schools admitting a greater number of SENs to 1:4, in the past five school years, each EP still has to serve about four to eight schools, and about 10% of the cases referred to school-based EPs were unable to be assessed within two months.⁶⁰

59. **The Government may also consider providing more resources for attracting and supporting professional speech therapists to work in the public sector ordinary schools.** There was a total of about 410 school-based speech therapist posts in the 2023/24 school year.⁶¹ An EOC commissioned research study in 2023 indicated that the school principals, special educational needs coordinators (“SENCOs”), and teachers surveyed believed creating school-

⁵⁸ LC Paper No. CB(4)246/2024(05), p.15, **Annex Table 1**. Retrieved from

<https://www.legco.gov.hk/yr2024/english/panels/ed/papers/ed20240301cb4-246-5-e.pdf>.

⁵⁹ Legislative Council Secretariat Research Office. 2019. “Special Educational Needs.” *Statistical Highlights* (ISSH22/18-19), **Figure 2**. Retrieved from <https://www.legco.gov.hk/research-publications/english/1819issh22-special-educational-needs-20190219-e.pdf>.

⁶⁰ The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. “LCQ13: School-based Educational Psychology Service” 10 January, 2024. Retrieved from <https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202401/10/P2024011000245.htm?fontSize=1>.

⁶¹ LC Paper No. CB(4)246/2024(05). Retrieved from <https://www.legco.gov.hk/yr2024/english/panels/ed/papers/ed20240301cb4-246-5-e.pdf>.

based speech therapist posts would be a helpful policy and support measure in achieving integrated education.⁶² It is necessary for the Government to continue making best use of current resource allocations to help these ordinary schools fill the said vacancies.

60. Apart from the above, **the Government may consider streamlining administrative processes to reduce the administrative workload for SENCOs**, allowing them to put more time in mapping out support strategies with teachers, **and allowing schools to use the remaining grant of Learning Support Grant (“LSG”) more flexibly** to deploy resources in order to cope with their particular school contexts.

Recommendation 19: Provide Incentives for Offering UD Courses in Universities

61. UD is “the design of products, environments, programmes and services to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design”.⁶³ It transcends the boundaries of individual disciplines, and is applicable across many disciplines, including architecture, product design, information and communications technology, etc. The cross-disciplinary nature of UD mean that it is not merely a set of skills, but also a holistic mindset that emphasises diversity and inclusivity in all aspects of life.

62. According to the Hong Kong Population Projections 2022-2046, the number of elderly persons will rise from 20.5% in 2021 to 36% in 2046 of the

⁶² Po Yuk Ko, Zi Yan, and Wai Sun Derek Chun. 2023. *Study on Challenges, Effective Policies, and Best Practices of Ordinary Schools in Educating Students with Special Educational Needs in Hong Kong*. Hong Kong: Equal Opportunities Commission, and The Education University of Hong Kong Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching. Retrieved from [https://www.eoc.org.hk/Upload/files/research-report/SEN%20Study%20\(Jun%202023\)/SENREP~4.PDF](https://www.eoc.org.hk/Upload/files/research-report/SEN%20Study%20(Jun%202023)/SENREP~4.PDF).

⁶³ *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, Article 2.

total population.⁶⁴ Inclusive building design, product design and gerontechnology that suit the needs of elderly would become indispensable for addressing the challenges of the ageing population. Teaching UD courses in universities will therefore allow students to always bear in mind the backdrop of an ageing society in Hong Kong, and encourage their innovative solution to addressing societal issues. Incorporating UD principles into the curricula is therefore crucial to equipping students with the right attitudes to approach the needs of other members in society, and enhance students' respect for the needs of minority groups, while also nurturing talents to contribute to the building of an inclusive society. Diverse abilities developed from courses on UD will also prepare students for tackling challenges from multiple perspectives in their future careers.

63. By making UD a component of tertiary education, the future workforce will be better equipped to address the evolving needs of an ageing population and people with various abilities, fostering a more inclusive and equitable society. **The Government may consider providing incentives to tertiary education institutions to introduce UD principles to the school curricula.** To develop more extensive understanding and knowledge of UD principles, the curriculum should cover both the theoretical foundations as well as opportunities for practical application through cross-disciplinary projects, case studies and visits.

⁶⁴ Census and Statistics Department. 2022. *Hong Kong Population Projections 2022-2046*. https://www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/data/stat_report/product/B1120015/att/B1120015092023XXXXB01.pdf.