

Chapter 7

Home and Youth Affairs

The Home Affairs Bureau was reorganised into the Home and Youth Affairs Bureau on 1 July and its major policy responsibilities include youth development, women and family-related matters, civic education, community development and district administration.

The bureau released the first edition of the Youth Development Blueprint in December, outlining the overall vision and guiding principles for long-term youth development work. More than 160 concrete actions and measures were put forward in the initial stage.

The bureau works closely with the Youth Development Commission to nurture young people to become a new generation with national pride, a sense of ownership and responsibility, and the aspiration and willingness to strive for the future of the country and of Hong Kong.

In line with the direction of the blueprint, the bureau and the commission jointly launched two new funding schemes under the Youth Development Fund, namely the Funding Scheme for Youth Positive Thinking Activities and the Funding Scheme for Youth Adventure Training Activities, to support projects aiming to help young people develop positive thinking, improve their physical and mental well-being, and strengthen their resilience and team spirit.

District Administration

The Home Affairs Department is committed to building a harmonious society and enhancing the communication between the government and the people of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR). There are 18 administrative districts under the department, each headed by a District Officer, who represents the government at district level. The District Officers coordinate inter-departmental affairs at district level, and resolve cross-departmental district problems. Each District Officer chairs a District Management Committee, which comprises representatives of government departments providing essential services in the district. It provides a forum for departments to discuss and resolve cross-departmental district problems promptly.

The department runs a Community Involvement Fund, to promote and implement cultural, sports and community involvement activities. In 2022-23, the provision for the Community Involvement Programme under the department was about \$300 million. The department also runs a District-led Actions Scheme to address long-standing problems and to capitalise on opportunities in the districts. From 2020-21 onwards, the annual recurrent provision for the scheme has been increased from \$63 million to \$80 million.

The District Minor Works Programme and Rural Public Works Programme provide funds for minor works projects to improve the facilities and living environment of the local communities. The annual basic provision for the two programmes is \$340 million and \$160 million respectively.

Twenty Home Affairs Enquiry Centres, attached to the district offices, provide a range of free services to the public, including answering general enquiries about government services; distributing government forms; disseminating information; and administering declarations and oaths, including affirmations in lieu of oaths, for private use. Residents can make appointments at the centres to consult volunteer lawyers under the Free Legal Advice Scheme administered by the Duty Lawyer Service. Rating and Valuation Department representatives are also available at five designated centres on specified days to advise on tenancy matters.

There is a District Council in each of the 18 districts, the main function of which is to advise the government on matters affecting the well-being of the people in the district. As part of the efforts to improve governance at the district level, the government was reviewing the district council arrangements to ensure that the future arrangement conforms with the Basic Law, adheres to the principle of 'patriots administering Hong Kong', and is conducive to enhancing governance efficacy at the district level.

Care Teams

The Chief Executive announced in the Policy Address 2022 that District Services and Community Care Teams would be set up in the 18 districts to consolidate community resources and strengthen local networks. The teams, which will be steered by District Officers, will organise caring activities, assist in handling emergencies, help the government disseminate information to the public and relay the views of the public to the government. A total of 452 teams will be set up progressively in 2023, starting in Tsuen Wan and Southern districts.

Advisory and Statutory Bodies

About 5,800 members of the public serve on around 520 advisory and statutory bodies. These bodies tap professional expertise in the community and allow a wide cross section of the community and relevant organisations to take part in the initial stage of policymaking and public-service planning, and to perform specific functions. The government maintains a regular turnover of members to ensure broad participation and the inclusion of fresh perspectives.

Some of the advisory bodies, such as the Advisory Committee on Agriculture and Fisheries, deal with the interests of a particular industry. Others, such as the Transport Advisory Committee, advise on a particular area of government policy. Statutory bodies, such as the Hospital Authority, have legal powers and responsibilities to perform specific functions according to the relevant legislation.

Youth Development

To promote youth development work more effectively, the government reorganised the Home Affairs Bureau into the Home and Youth Affairs Bureau, which is tasked to coordinate various bureaus in formulating an overall youth policy and the Youth Development Blueprint, setting policy objectives and priorities for youth development, and creating opportunities for upward mobility for young people.

Youth Development Blueprint

The bureau released the first edition of the Youth Development Blueprint in December, outlining the overall vision and guiding principles for the government's long-term youth development work. It put forward more than 160 actions and measures, aiming to nurture a new generation of young people with an affection for the country and Hong Kong, a global perspective, aspiring mindset and positive thinking. Guided by the axiom of 'Inspire, Support, Embrace', the government seeks to provide young people with an enabling environment to cherish hope for the future and strive for continuous growth, so that they can unleash their full potential in society and contribute to Hong Kong, the country and the world.

Youth Development Commission

The Youth Development Commission aims to enhance policy coordination within the government and enable a more holistic and effective examination and discussion of issues of concern to young people. The commission and the bureau organise or sponsor programmes, such as the Youth Ambassadors Programme, internships and exchanges, entrepreneurship support and life planning activities, to help young people develop positive values and become a new generation with national pride, a sense of ownership and responsibility, as well as the aspiration and willingness to strive for the future of the country and of Hong Kong.

Promotion of Young People's Positive Thinking and Well-being

The government promotes the diversified development of young people and makes available different activities to realise their potential, with a view to fostering a conducive environment for their healthy growth. The bureau and the commission launched two new funding schemes under the Youth Development Fund at the end of 2022.

The Funding Scheme for Youth Positive Thinking Activities subsidises projects by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that help nurture young people's positive thinking, particularly those which involve cross-sectoral collaboration or are youth-led and can drive community building.

The Funding Scheme for Youth Adventure Training Activities subsidises NGOs to provide systematic and quality adventure training activities for young people to enhance their physical and mental well-being, positive thinking and resilience, as well as foster a sense of discipline and team spirit.

Media and Communications

Dissemination of Government Information

The bureau oversees the policy on dissemination of government information. The Information Services Department (ISD) is the government's news and communications agency and advises the government on public relations matters in Hong Kong and overseas.

The department's Information Officers work as Press Secretaries to Principal Officials or in information units in bureaus and departments to help formulate and implement public relations and publicity strategies, handle media enquiries and organise promotional activities.

The department operates a 24-hour media enquiry service. The Government News and Media Information System gives journalists access to press releases, photographs and video clips. Press releases are available online, while major press conferences and events are webcast live. Government news and messages are also disseminated in a dynamic multimedia fashion on the news.gov.hk website and through social media.

The ISD helps bureaus and departments mount local publicity campaigns and is responsible for advertising, creative design, photography, videography and the production of a range of government publications. Among the major campaigns conducted in 2022 were the 25th Anniversary of the Establishment of the HKSAR, 2022 Chief Executive Election, Boosting COVID-19 Vaccination, Consumption Voucher Scheme and Territory-wide Clean-up Campaign.

The department helps develop the government's public relations strategy outside Hong Kong and promote the city's image overseas. It liaises with about 70 foreign media organisations based in Hong Kong, engages media outside Hong Kong to produce multimedia content publicising the city's strengths, and develops publicity campaigns and materials to support the government's Economic and Trade Offices' events, senior officials' visits and major promotional activities outside Hong Kong. It also runs the Brand Hong Kong communications programmes to promote Hong Kong globally as Asia's world city, and sponsors political and business leaders, academics and journalists to visit Hong Kong to see the latest developments and take home Hong Kong's good stories.

Mass Media

Hong Kong's mass media at the end of 2022 included 89 daily newspapers (including electronic newspapers), 418 periodicals, three domestic free-TV programme service licensees, two

domestic pay-TV programme service licensees, nine non-domestic TV programme service licensees, two sound broadcasting licensees and one public service broadcaster.

Registered Hong Kong-based press at the year-end included 58 Chinese dailies, 13 English dailies, 14 bilingual dailies, three Japanese dailies and one Korean daily. One of the English dailies publishes a daily Braille edition in conjunction with the Hong Kong Society for the Blind. Of the Chinese dailies, 47 cover mainly local and international news, while the others focus on particular subjects such as finance.

International media including *The Economist*, *The Financial Times*, *The New York Times*, *The Nikkei*, *The Wall Street Journal*, Agence France-Presse, Associated Press, Bloomberg and Thomson Reuters have a presence in Hong Kong. International broadcasters with operations in Hong Kong include BBC, CNBC, CNN International, CNA and NHK.

Committee on the Promotion of Civic Education

The Committee on the Promotion of Civic Education advises the government on civic education outside schools, and works with the government and other parties to organise or sponsor civic education activities. In 2022-23, the committee continued promoting the Constitution of the People's Republic of China and the Basic Law to deepen public understanding of 'one country, two systems' while enhancing the awareness and sense of responsibility towards national security, and encouraging the public to learn about the latest developments and opportunities of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area. As for core civic values, greater emphasis was placed on 'Respect' and 'Responsibility' while the promotion of 'Love' and 'Inclusiveness' continued.

The committee's Civic Education Resource Centre houses reference materials on civic education and organises training courses, seminars, film sharing sessions, guided tours and exhibitions.

Helping Ethnic Minorities Integrate into Community

The government commissions non-profit-making organisations to run eight support service centres for ethnic minorities, offering dedicated classes, counselling and integration programmes. One of the centres also provides free language interpretation on the telephone to help ethnic minorities use public services. During 2022, the support service centres strengthened their services, particularly those catering for new arrivals and young people. District-based programmes were organised to encourage interaction and exchange between ethnic minorities and local communities.

In addition, two government-sponsored community support teams offer special services for ethnic minorities through members of their own communities. The government funds radio programmes and publishes service guidebooks in a number of ethnic minority languages. Two ambassador schemes provide information about public services to ethnic minority families and young people, and make referrals where necessary. A team of publicity officers who are familiar with ethnic minority cultures and languages holds talks and exhibitions to promote racial harmony in the community.

Committee on the Promotion of Racial Harmony

The committee advises the government on the promotion of racial harmony, including the provision of support services for ethnic minorities, and on proposals for race-related public education and publicity.

Women's Commission

The Women's Commission advises the government on policies and initiatives of concern to women. As at end-2022, the government had applied the commission's Gender Mainstreaming Checklist to around 1,400 major policies and programme areas to assess gender implications. The commission's Capacity Building Mileage Programme is a learning programme focusing on women. It had over 5,300 enrolments in 2021-22. In 2022-23, 52 projects were approved under the commission's Funding Scheme for Women's Development.

Funding

Community Care Fund

The Community Care Fund helps people with financial difficulties, especially those who either fall outside the social safety net or have special needs that are not covered by it. As at end-2022, 59 assistance programmes were launched under the fund, with a commitment of around \$21.1 billion benefiting over 2,780,000 cases. These included pilot programmes to help the government identify measures that could be considered for incorporation into its regular assistance and service programmes. Twenty such programmes have been incorporated into the government's regular assistance programmes since the fund was set up in 2011.

Community Investment and Inclusion Fund

The fund finances diversified social capital development projects, promotes trust and reciprocity among the public and various sectors, and builds cross-sectoral collaborative platforms and mutual help networks to achieve a caring society. In 2022, it allocated \$40.26 million to 12 new projects. Ongoing projects recorded about 128,000 participants, including about 24,000 volunteers, and about 2,650 collaboration partners. Together, they have built about 220 mutual support networks.

Religion

Hong Kong's Basic Law guarantees religious freedom, allowing a diversity of faiths to coexist harmoniously.

Buddhism

Buddhism was introduced into China from India more than 2,000 years ago. It is one of the main religions in Hong Kong, with about 1 million followers and more than 400 temples, some over 700 years old. Notable worship sites include the Po Lin Monastery on Lantau Island, famous for its giant bronze statue of a seated Tian Tan Buddha that is also known as the Big Buddha, and the Chi Lin Nunnery in Diamond Hill, Kowloon, which is a cluster of temple structures built in the architectural style of the Tang dynasty.

Local Buddhist groups aid social welfare and education, operating nearly 100 primary and secondary schools, homes for the elderly and centres for children and youths. The Hong Kong Buddhist Association seeks to propagate Buddhist teaching and culture and provide charitable services to the public. The association runs 11 secondary schools, seven primary schools, eight kindergartens, a hospital and six Chinese medicine service units.

The major Buddhist festival takes place on Buddha's birthday, which falls on the eighth day of the fourth month in the lunar calendar and is a statutory holiday. The association holds celebrations on that day and organises dharma functions during the Ching Ming Festival.

Taoism

Taoism is an indigenous religion of China with a 2,000-year history. Hong Kong has over 1 million followers and more than 300 Taoist abbeys and temples.

The Hong Kong Taoist Association, set up by representatives of major temples in 1961, is a non-profit-making charity. It organises religious, cultural and charitable activities to promote Taoist scriptures and moral values. These activities include the annual Taoist Day held on the second Sunday of March to celebrate the birthday of the deity Taishang Laojun, or Laozi, whom Taoists believe is the founder of Taoism and author of *Tao Te Ching*, the main Taoist text dated to the late 4th century BC. Worshippers also mark the triennial Taoist Blessing Ceremony on the 15th day of the 10th lunar month and attend religious lectures and *tai chi* classes.

Educational, social and charitable services include running more than 40 schools and kindergartens and subsidising tertiary-level courses. Taoists operate clinics, homes for the elderly, care homes, child care centres and community service centres in Hong Kong.

Confucianism

Confucianism, originating in China, is a set of religious, ethical and philosophical teachings derived from ancient Chinese philosopher Confucius (Kongzi, 551-479 BC) that emphasises the importance of morals, tradition and rites. *The Analects*, a record of Confucius's words, acts and teachings, is the main text edited by his followers.

Confucian values are introduced in local primary, secondary and university teaching through the advocacy of the Confucian Academy, founded in 1930. The academy incorporates principles of Confucianism in the curricula of its own Confucian Tai Shing schools. Local Confucian groups promote education and organise charitable activities.

Other local Confucian organisations include the Hong Kong Confucianism Association and Confucius Hall. The major Confucian festival takes place on Confucius's birthday, which falls on the 27th day of the eighth month in the lunar calendar. The academy celebrates Confucian Day on the day following the Mid-Autumn Festival.

Christianity

The Christian community numbers about 1.3 million, most of whom are Protestants and Roman Catholics. The Greek, Russian and Coptic Orthodox Churches also have a presence in Hong Kong. There is an annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

Protestant Community

The local Protestant movement began in 1841 and Hong Kong now has about 1,040,000 Christians, more than 300,000 of whom attend church services regularly. The Protestant community is composed of more than 70 denominations within 1,300 congregations which are Chinese-speaking. These include indigenous denominations as well as other independent churches. The Hong Kong Christian Council and the Hong Kong Chinese Christian Church Union facilitate cooperation among the Protestant churches.

The Protestant community runs five tertiary institutions as well as 130 nurseries, 260 kindergartens, 206 primary schools and 180 secondary schools. It also operates more than 30 theological and bible seminaries, 150 publishing houses, 58 bookstores and 55 media and art agencies, which produce *Christian Times* and *Christian Weekly*, regular television programmes and a weekly radio show.

The Protestant community runs eight hospitals and 52 hospital chaplaincies, as well as 160 social welfare organisations that provide services at over 130 centres for families and youths, 11 children's homes, 182 elderly centres and nursing homes, and about 60 rehabilitation centres for drug addicts and the disabled. There are three prison chaplaincies, one airport chaplaincy and around 30 campsites.

Roman Catholic Community

The Roman Catholic Church in Hong Kong was established as a mission prefecture in 1841 and became a diocese in 1946. The Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong has about 395,000 Catholics served by 279 priests, 98 brothers and 419 sisters in 52 parishes, comprising 39 churches, 28 chapels and 24 halls for religious services conducted in Cantonese; three-fifths of the parishes also provide services in English and, in some cases, Tagalog, the Filipino language. The diocese has its own administrative structure while maintaining close links with the Pope and other Catholic communities round the world.

Through the assistance of the Catholic Education Office, 249 Catholic schools and kindergartens educate 136,804 pupils. Caritas-Hong Kong is the diocese's official social welfare arm and provides medical and social services to at least six hospitals, 10 clinics, 47 social and family service centres, 23 hostels, 15 homes for the aged and 34 rehabilitation service centres. The diocese publishes two weekly newspapers: *Kung Kao Po* and the *Sunday Examiner*. Its Diocesan Audio-Visual Centre produces programmes for evangelising and pastoral purposes, disseminated via various channels, including online platforms.

Islam

Hong Kong has an estimated 300,000 Muslims, according to the Incorporated Trustees of the Islamic Community Fund of Hong Kong.

All local Islamic activities are coordinated by the trustees, which form a charity managing five mosques, two cemeteries and a kindergarten. They make funeral arrangements, announce the dates of festivals including Ramadan, and conduct inspections and issue certificates for halal food in Hong Kong and parts of the Mainland. The Chinese Muslim Cultural and Fraternal Association operates a college, two primary schools and two kindergartens.

The oldest mosque is the Jamia Masjid in Mid-Levels, built in 1849 and rebuilt in 1915, which was declared a monument in 2022. The eight-storey Masjid Ammar and Osman Ramju Sadick Islamic Centre in Wan Chai features a library, a clinic, a canteen and a kindergarten. The Kowloon Masjid and Islamic Centre, with its distinctive white-marble finish, is a landmark in Tsim Sha Tsui. It has a capacity of 3,500 and sees nearly 1 million users yearly. Stanley Mosque is inside Stanley Prison, while Chai Wan Mosque is at Cape Collinson. The cemeteries are in Happy Valley and Cape Collinson.

Hinduism

Religious and social activities of the 100,000-strong Hindu community are centred on the Hindu Temple in Happy Valley, which is managed by the Hindu Association of Hong Kong. Worshippers use the temple for meditation, spiritual lectures, yoga classes and other community activities, and to observe major festivals including *Diwali*, *Dussehra*, *Holi*, *Ganesh Chaturthi*, *Cheti Chand* and *Hanuman Jayanti*. They also perform engagement and marriage ceremonies according to Hindu rites and the Marriage Ordinance. Other important services include administering last rites and making arrangements for cremation and related rituals.

The temple holds devotional music sessions and religious discourses every Sunday morning, followed by a free community meal that is also served on Monday evenings.

Sikhism

Hong Kong's first Sikhs came from Punjab, India, as part of the British Armed Forces in the 19th century. The first Sikh temple, Sri Guru Singh Sabha, on Queen's Road East, Wan Chai, was built in 1901 and later renamed Khalsa Diwan Hong Kong Sikh Temple. It was reopened in November following redevelopment and features two prayer halls, a free kitchen and dining room, private function rooms, seminar halls, a digital library and a car park.

The Khalsa Diwan, a registered charitable organisation that manages the temple, offers voluntary services, including the provision of *langar* (a free meal) and short-term accommodation for overseas visitors.

The Khalsa Diwan estimates Hong Kong has about 12,000 Sikhs. Followers of Sikhism founder Guru Nanak Dev Ji attend religious services at the temple every morning and evening, and gather there on Sundays and the main Sikh holy days. Their most important religious dates are the birthdays of Guru Nanak Dev Ji and Guru Gobind Singh Ji (the 10th Guru), and *Vaisakhi* (the birthday and baptism day of all Sikhs).

Judaism

The settlement of the Jewish community in Hong Kong dates from the 1840s. There are three main synagogues: Ohel Leah Synagogue (Orthodox) providing daily, Sabbath and festival services; the United Jewish Congregation of Hong Kong (Reform) with Sabbath and festival services, both of which share the same premises in Mid-Levels; and the Chabad Lubavitch in MacDonnell Road, which has daily services.

Ohel Leah Synagogue, built in 1901, includes a *mikvah* (ritual bath). The Jewish Cemetery in Happy Valley was built in 1857.

The site next to Ohel Leah houses a residential complex and the Jewish Community Centre. The centre offers its 400 member families from all three congregations kosher dining, banqueting, cultural and recreational facilities, a supermarket and a specialist library, as well as activities and classes. The community also runs the Carmel School and religious classes as well as several charity and cultural organisations.

Other Faiths

The Baha'i Faith and Zoroastrianism are among other religions that have been established in Hong Kong for many years.

Websites

Brand Hong Kong: www.brandhk.gov.hk

Community Care Fund: www.communitycarefund.hk

Community Investment and Inclusion Fund: www.ciif.gov.hk

Government's online news platform: www.news.gov.hk

Home and Youth Affairs Bureau: www.hyab.gov.hk

Home Affairs Department: www.had.gov.hk

Home Affairs Department's Race Relations Unit: www.had.gov.hk/rru

Information Services Department: www.isd.gov.hk

Women's Commission: www.women.gov.hk

Youth Development Commission: www.ydc.gov.hk