



## Support Programme Saves Children from Risk of Dyslexia

*According to local studies, one in four pre-primary children in Hong Kong is at risk of dyslexia, similar to the proportions overseas. In order to help these children, upon the invitation from the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust, Heep Hong Society launched the first pre-primary support programme in Hong Kong, which included a language learning package developed by a multi-disciplinary team of professionals, screening tests, teacher training and parent support.*

In 2013, Heep Hong Society conducted individual testing on 1,557 children studying at 18 kindergartens. 336 were identified as having dyslexic tendencies. After receiving one

year of school-based support services from the Society, the 300 odd children showed significant improvements in five out of six measurements (namely morpheme identification, morphological awareness, orthographic structure identification, semantic radical identification and Chinese characters copying). About 30% of them caught up with their normal peers and were removed from the 'at-risk' category.

Earlier, the Society conducted another study in which children at risk of dyslexia were divided into an experimental group and a control group. It was found that children in the experimental group who had received teaching through *The Language Learning Package for Pre-primary Children* performed significantly better in language and cognitive functions than their peers in the control group. Rex Wong Chun-kit, Educational Psychologist of Heep Hong Society, pointed out, 'By incorporating the *Package* into the daily curriculum in kindergartens, children are able to learn Chinese in a



▲ After receiving one year of services from Heep Hong, about 30% of children at risk of dyslexia caught up with their peers on language ability.

▼ Children improve their ability to form word phrases through interesting activities.



▲ Heep Hong launched the first support programme for children at risk of dyslexia at kindergartens.

systematic manner. Based on clinical experience, if children do not receive timely and appropriate support, their learning difficulties will persist and directly affect their motivation for and performance in language learning. In the long run, their performance in other subjects and personal development may suffer.'

### School-based Support to Enhance Language Abilities

S.K.H. St. Peter's Church Castle Peak Siu Lun Court Kindergarten was one of the participating kindergartens. The Principal, Judy Ng Wing-yan, said, 'We applied Heep Hong's teaching methods in physical education, music and Cantonese lessons. Our teachers noticed that some children could express everyday concepts (e.g. firefighters) in English, but not in Chinese. They might be able to describe the function of ambulance but failed to give the name in Chinese. Teachers thus realised that even articulate children could be at risk of dyslexia. After applying *The Language Learning Package for Pre-primary Children*, the language ability of students has improved overall, especially so for those who were at risk of dyslexia. They have developed a richer vocabulary, and strong interest and confidence in language learning.

### Classroom Teaching & Home Training Complement Each Other

Mr Ho's five-year-old daughter, Sheung, was identified as a child at risk of dyslexia last year. She often mixed up similar Chinese characters and took a long time to finish simple homework. 'Sheung lacked confidence and was reluctant to write Chinese. When she needed to rewrite, her temper would flare. This put a strain on our relationship,' Mr Ho recalled. Sheung easily forgot characters she just learnt. She liked stories but would not pick up a storybook to read.

After receiving extra support from teachers and domestic training for one year, Mr Ho saw substantial progress in Sheung's ability. 'Exercises about character structure have helped improve her efficiency in doing homework. Now I only need to give verbal instructions to help her write. We have become much closer. Now she can recognise many difficult characters and read them aloud. She has even developed an interest in reading and would ask me about new words. That has never happened before.' The post-test results revealed that Sheung had caught up with her normal peers in many aspects of her language ability.

### Inspiration for Teachers and Children

Chu Ka-lai, a teacher at Healthy Kids Nursery School, said, 'The *Package* has thrown light on my teaching strategies. I realised that rote learning is no longer the only way to learn a language. Children can improve their language ability through play. There are clear objectives behind each activity in the *Package* for teachers to achieve. Children become more ready to apply their knowledge in daily life. For example, when they encounter a new Chinese character, they would try to find out the meaning from the components. This is a testimony to the effectiveness of the teaching methodology in enhancing children's interest and ability in language.'

### Enhanced Edition for Free Distribution

Published in May 2014, *The Language Learning Package for Pre-primary Children (Enhanced Edition)* is enriched with clinical experience of educational psychologists, speech therapists, occupational therapists and preschool teachers, as well as sample teaching activities for illustration. It is distributed free of charge to teachers at kindergartens and nurseries. *The Guide to Language Development of Pre-primary Children for Parents*, compiled by the same professional team, is also distributed to parents for training their children at risk of dyslexia. For details, please visit our website ([www.heephong.org](http://www.heephong.org)) or call 2391 2939.



◀ The *Enhanced Edition* and *Guide for Parents* are available for free distribution to teachers and parents.



▼ Endless optimism and laughter help Mrs Tse and her sons tackle life challenges.



◀ Mrs Tse (left) joined Fanling PRC 10 years ago and began her longstanding partnership and friendship with Ms Tsang (right).



◀ Kwai-wah now studies at a mainstream secondary school with top grades. His artistic talent is evident.

# Super Positive Mom of Three Special Needs Sons

*Mrs Tse is medium built. Her round face added a childlike air to her. Whenever she encounters adversity, she says, in close-to-perfect Cantonese, 'No worries. We will find a solution.'*

Mrs Tse migrated from Taiwan to Hong Kong years ago, dreaming of a happy family life with her husband and children. Never in her wildest dreams could she imagine that her eldest son Kwai-wah would be diagnosed with autism, her second son Chung-wah with autistic tendencies and her youngest son Ka-wah with developmental delay. Beset with difficulties, Mrs Tse stood her ground and bounced back like a roly-poly toy. She said, 'It cuts both ways to have children with special needs. As Kwai-wah has been brought up well, I am confident that I can take care of my other two kids as well.'

The three brothers have their own unique personality traits: The eldest one is stubborn and emotional; the middle child could only speak a few dozen words at the age of two and lacked confidence; the youngest one refused to go to school and often threw tantrums. Without relatives in Hong Kong, Mrs Tse understood that, having three special needs children, optimism alone did not suffice and she needed to count on someone reliable. After Kwai-wah was diagnosed with autism at the age of three, Mrs Tse joined the Fanling Parents Resource Centre (Fanling PRC) of Heep Hong Society. She said, 'The support offered by Fanling PRC far exceeded my expectation. There are numerous interest classes, training courses, parenting workshops and family activities. Most importantly, professionals are always there to give me advice during difficult times.'

One of the professionals she talked about is Ms Tsang, Social Worker at Fanling PRC. Ms Tsang accompanied Mrs Tse over the past 10 years of upheavals, witnessing the growth of Chung-wah and Ka-wah. Knowing the strengths and weaknesses of the three brothers, she recommended suitable training groups and interest classes to develop their potential. When Kwai-wah was about to enter primary school, Mrs Tse opted for special schools, but Ms Tsang saw that Kwai-wah was constantly improving. She convinced Mrs Tse to enroll her son in a mainstream primary school. At the same time, Mrs Tse equipped herself with the knowledge of

parenting by joining various support groups.

When Ka-wah was two years old, she wanted to take three sons on a cross-Hong Kong trip. Ms Tsang used her free time to join Mrs Tse and the boys. Mrs Tse still praises her up to this day, 'Ms Tsang sacrificed her free time for our family. Even my relatives could not do this.' Hot on the heels of the close partnership between the two, Mrs Tse received her 'report card':

13 year-old Kwai-wah is now studying at a mainstream secondary school. He passed every subject with no effort. He was top three in History and scored 80 marks in Science. His artistic talent is prominent. 11 year-old Chung-wah has made significant improvement in language ability and social skills. An avid sports fan, he has been practising kickboxing at Fanling PRC for three years and is now a green-belt holder. He said to his coach, brimmed with confidence, 'I will be a black-belt before 16 and become a coach.' 9 year-old Ka-wah has learnt to control his emotions. He has joined the football class at the centre for four years and would choose football over a day at the theme park without a second thought. As the captain, he looks after his teammates. 'I am very grateful for Ms Tsang. She unleashed the potential of my sons and gave them a happy childhood,' said Mrs Tse.

Influenced by their mother, the three boys are very optimistic and cheerful. Every night, the first 30 minutes of dinner is the time for gags. Dinner is always filled with laughter.

Mrs Tse always sees the bright side. She said, 'If I give up, how can I teach my sons to overcome hardship? There are many life challenges, but there will always be a solution.'



▲ Chung-wah is an athlete and aspiring kickboxing coach.



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◀ The ADHD Hero app includes 60 games for training executive functions.



◀ Parents can search the keywords 'Heep Hong Society' or 'The ADHD Hero' on Apple iTunes Store to download the app.

◀ Heep Hong Society has newly developed The ADHD Hero to help AD/HD children gain confidence and improve learning efficiency.

# How to Help Children with AD/HD Plan First and Act Later?

*Do you know why children with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD) are always hyperactive, impulsive and inattentive? Their behavior is only the symptoms. The underlying cause is abnormalities in the frontal lobe of the brain, which weaken their executive functions. Therefore, their ability to suppress impulsive reactions, plan and organise details is not on a par with their normal peers.*

Executive functions in a broad sense refer to the abilities to control, organise and execute a series of actions to achieve a predetermined goal. Taking grocery shopping as an example, while ordinary children will analyse, organise, schedule and complete the task efficiently, children with AD/HD will jump directly to action without any planning or organisation and end up in failure due to weaker executive functions. In the long run, they may lose their self-confidence.

Executive functions are essential to child development. Trevor Yung Wai-kit, Educational Psychologist of Heep Hong Society, said, 'Many components have been defined as executive functions. Among all, inhibition, working memory and set-shifting are the most important. These three executive functions are key to children's development of self-control and self-regulation. To help children with AD/HD regain confidence and improve learning efficiency, we should address the root cause and help them to understand, practise and apply these abilities in real life.'

### Innovative App Makes Training Fun

Executive functions can be reinforced through training. Research has shown that computer programmes can effectively enhance working memory, inhibit impulsiveness, and alleviate the problems of inattentiveness and hyperactivity. After three years of research, Trevor and an occupational therapist specialised in AD/HD at the Society have jointly developed The ADHD Hero, the first iPad

training application (app) in Hong Kong, to help therapists and parents provide effective and interesting training for children with AD/HD.

The ADHD Hero, due to be launched by the end of 2014, is an educational app with instructions in Chinese designed for improving the executive functions of children with AD/HD aged eight to ten. The use of computer-based intervention is free from the constraints of time and space and serves to improve the executive functions of children through repeated training. 📱

### Content of The ADHD Hero:

A total of 60 games are offered on six planets to provide training of the following executive functions:

- Inhibition of behavioral responses
- Basic working memory
- Working memory refresh
- Applying foresight in processing information
- Composite memory and reaction inhibition.

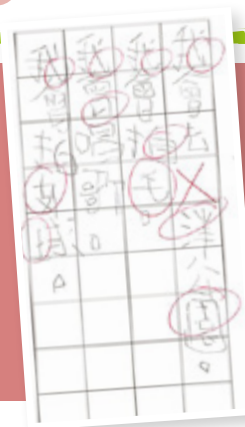
### The ADHD Hero – Effectiveness Study

In order to gain a better understanding of the effectiveness of the app and children's thoughts on the app, the Society is recruiting children with AD/HD to participate in the effectiveness study. For enquiry, please call 3618 6897.



▲ Occupational therapists design professional training activities to improve children's handwriting.

▼ The Support Programme for Children with Specific Learning Difficulties is extended to 2016.



◀ Mirror images and disproportionate characters are often found in the writing samples of children with visual spatial perceptual difficulties.

## Visual Spatial Perceptual Problems

*If children aged four to six lack interest in activities such as building blocks and drawing, and are scared of walking up and down the stairs or crossing the gap; or make frequent mistakes of missing strokes and messing up the orientation of the characters when writing, parents should stay alert as these may suggest that the children encounter problems in visual spatial perception.*

### Disorders in the Brain Visual Spatial Perceptual Region

Albert Chan Chi-ho, Occupational Therapist of Heep Hong Society, explained, 'Despite their normal eyesight, children might have visual spatial perceptual problems due to malfunctioning of the visual perceptual area in the left brain, or that information cannot be properly processed in the central nervous system, or because of poor extra-ocular muscle control. As set out below, different visual spatial perceptual deficits affect children in different aspects:

#### Spatial Relations

When children with weak spatial relations write, their Chinese characters often look slanted and the components disproportionate. They also have difficulty discriminating similar characters.

#### Visual Discrimination/Figure-ground Perception

Some children are weak in visual discrimination. They may not be able to identify specific objects from a background of many others. Every time they copy a word, they need to search for it from the whole text again, resulting in slow copying and falling behind the lesson. They may also encounter difficulties in finding specific books from their schoolbag or stationery item from the desk.

#### Form Constancy and Visual Memory

When children with poor form constancy or visual memory write, their letters (characters) may appear as mirror images. For example, 'b' becomes 'd', and 'p' becomes 'q'. This is due to their weaker ability to retrieve the visual picture of letters (characters). As they fail to memorise the sequence and number of strokes, and the combination of components, they are slower and less accurate in copying and dictation.

#### Games to Improve Visual Spatial Perception

If parents suspect that their children have visual spatial perceptual problems, they can consult an occupational therapist for standardised assessment and professional training. At the same time, parents can incorporate training in their daily activities to improve the children's ability.

Albert said, 'Jigsaw puzzles, tangram and "Spot the Difference" can enhance visual spatial sense; "Picture Card Snap" can improve visual memory. When parents take their children to the supermarket, they can ask the children to find a particular object on the shelves as a training activity of figure-ground discrimination. They can teach the children to highlight or underline the words they need to copy and use their fingertips to measure the space between two words when they write English words. This would enhance their learning interest and performance.'

#### Support Programme for Children with Specific Learning Difficulties

A new round of the Support Programme for Children with Specific Learning Difficulties will be held from September to December 2014. The handwriting group, conducted by an occupational therapist, is tailored to the needs of children with visual spatial perceptual difficulties. A fee of HK\$300 will cover 12 sessions. A concession is available for low-income families at HK\$100. The courses are now open for enrollment. With the sponsorship from the Community Chest, the Programme is extended to 2016 to provide timely and professional training to more P.1 children with special education needs studying at mainstream schools. For details, please visit our website. 🌟



▼ Island Shangri-La initiated the Heep Hong Mooncake Charity Sale.



◀ 'Shine Bright' and the 1,700 elephant statues painted by Heep Hong children are showcased to raise public awareness of children with special needs.



▲ Children play social adaptation games at the Carnival.

# Heep Hong and Elephant Parade Paint a Brighter Future Together

**H**eep Hong Society was delighted to participate in the Elephant Parade as the sole local beneficiary. Over 1,700 baby elephant statues painted by Heep Hong children were on display in Cityplaza, Phase 1, from 1 August to 9 September 2014.

'Shine Bright' – the life-size elephant statue hand-painted by international action star Mr Donnie Yen and his wife Ms Cecilia Wang – was on exhibition during the same period of time. It was auctioned off by Sotheby's with net proceeds to the Society. Our appreciation goes to our generous donors.

## Heep Hong Carnival 2014

To strengthen public understanding and acceptance of children with developmental disorders, the Society rolled out the Heep Hong Carnival roving exhibitions this summer. A team of autistic youths who are participants of the Pre-job Training and Experiential Programme 2014-15 supported by MSIG have joined the Carnival as ambassadors to demonstrate the interactive apps developed by Heep Hong. The Carnival will visit shopping malls in the New Territories in September and October. You are welcome to join us! For details, please visit our website.

## Heep Hong Charity Dinner 2014

Heep Hong Society Charity Dinner 2014 will be held on 10 October 2014 at Island Shangri-La, Hong Kong. This year's theme is 'Paint A Brighter Future' – exploring children's artistic potential and encouraging them to express themselves through art. The funds raised from the Dinner will go to the Children Training Fund for helping waitlisted children from low-income families.

## Island Shangri-La, Heep Hong Mooncake Charity Sale

Island Shangri-La, Hong Kong, will donate all net proceeds from the sales of Heep Hong Society Charity Mooncakes to the Children Training Fund of the Society. We sincerely thank our corporate partner for their generosity!

## The 22nd Great Chefs of Hong Kong & Grand Raffle 2014 Draw Results

The 22nd Great Chefs of Hong Kong was successfully held on 19 June 2014 at Grand Hyatt Hong Kong. More than 1,200 guests enjoyed the finest delicacies served by 46 leading hotels, restaurants and beverage suppliers. The winners of the Grand Raffle 2014 were also drawn at the event. The results were published in *Sing Tao Daily*, *The Standard* and Heep Hong website on 27 June 2014. The funds raised from the Great Chefs and the Grand Raffle will go to our Parents Resource Centres to provide training and support services for children with special needs and their families. We sincerely thank all sponsors and donors for their generous support!

## Wellcome and Heep Hong Kicked Off 'I Can Do It Shopping Day 2014'

Wellcome and Heep Hong Society have been jointly organising the social adaptation training programme — 'I Can Do It Shopping Day' — for four consecutive years. This year's programme was kicked-off on 15 May 2014 in the Metrocity 3 Superstore. Under the guidance of teachers and Wellcome's volunteer team, Heep Hong children applied their shopping skills. It was a perfect start for the programme. 📷



▲ The volunteers of Wellcome, Heep Hong children and parents enjoy an exciting shopping day together.



◀ Thanks to the sponsorship from Eu Yan Sang Charitable Foundation, Heep Hong's Support Programme has been extended to 2015.



▲ Ms Ada To (right), multi-genre music artist, shares her own experience of her autistic son going to P.1.



▲ *Hope Stories*, a parent self-guidance book, illustrates positive psychology with the stories of 13 families.

# Eu Yan Sang Charitable Foundation – Caring for the Community

*Eu Yan Sang Charitable Foundation has sponsored Heep Hong Society to provide family-focused services and children support programmes every year, benefitting hundreds of families since 2012. 'Investing in children now paves the way for the future of society. We are pleased to work with Heep Hong Society for a good cause,' said Ms Alice Wong, Director of Eu Yan Sang Charitable Foundation.*

## Family Support and Positive Attitude

Witnessing the immense stress parents suffer while raising children with developmental disorders, and how they become at risk of depression, Eu Yan Sang Charitable Foundation sponsored the Society to launch the Positive Psychology Family Programme in 24 centres. A series of family support groups, seminars and activities were conducted to empower parents with the ability to face adversity, using positive psychology. Some 3,000 families have benefited from the programme publication *Hope Stories*, a collection of real-life stories and the territory's first parent self-guidance book based on positive psychology.

## Helping Autistic Children Adapt to Primary School Life

Going to primary school from kindergarten is a huge change for children, even more so for children with autism. To help children prepare for this challenge, Eu Yan Sang Charitable Foundation sponsored the Society's Support Programme for Prospective Primary One Students with Autism. A series of parents' talk and consultation, children training sessions and experience camps were organised to help children improve their self-management, adaptability and learning attitude.

Thanks to the generous sponsorship from Eu Yan Sang Charitable Foundation again, the programme has been extended to 2015 with the addition of occupational therapy to support children with handwriting, sensory and cognitive difficulties. The expansion of the programme will benefit a total of 120 children and 300 parents. 🌟

## Special thanks go to the following donors\* (in random order)

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 Mr 楊國生

\*which made donations of HK\$10,000 or above to Heep Hong between February and June 2014.

For online donation, please go to [www.heephong.org/donation](http://www.heephong.org/donation).





◀ The Pre-writing Fun Journey app wins the Best Digital Inclusion (Product/Application) Certificate of Merit.



▲ Heep Hong is honoured with the 2013/14 Distinguished Family-Friendly Employer Award.

# Intervention Scheme Gives Timely Support to Sandwich Class

At present, more than 7,000 preschool children are on the waitlist for government subsidised rehabilitation services. High-income families would be able to afford private services, and low-income families are subsidised by the Community Care Fund. To support sandwich-class families which are unable to afford private services, Koo's Giving Charitable Foundation supports Heep Hong Society to introduce 'A Timely Intervention for Underprivileged Families with Special Education Needs (SEN) Children' scheme. Sponsorship will be given to 100 preschool children with special needs who are waiting for government subsidised services to receive the Society's preschool training and speech therapy services. Eligible families should earn a household income equivalent to or lower than the Median Monthly Domestic Household Income (MMDHI) published in the Report on General Household Survey for First Quarter 2014. For enquiry and registration, please call 2788 1289 or visit our website ([www.heephong.org](http://www.heephong.org)).

## Heep Hong Named Distinguished Family-Friendly Employer

Heep Hong Society was awarded the Distinguished Family-Friendly Employer Award in the 2013/14 Family-Friendly Employers Award Scheme organised by the Family Council for its efforts in promoting work-life balance among employees and adoption of family-friendly policies. Of the 1,814 companies and organisations submitted to the Scheme, the Society was among 91 awarded the Distinguished Family-Friendly Employer Award and one of the 20 non-governmental organisations which claimed the honour. In future, the Society will continue to work with its employees to maintain a family-friendly workplace.

## Pilot Project to Support SEN Children in Kindergartens

With the generous sponsorship from the Lee Hysan Foundation, Heep Hong Society will launch a two-year pilot project in September to provide whole school-based support for 120 special needs children at 10 kindergartens. The children will receive individual or group therapies and training at five Early Education and Training Centres of the Society. Moreover, the Society will collaborate with the University of Hong Kong to study the effectiveness of the project and submit a report to the government as a reference for improving the quality of services.

## New Yau Lai EETC Centre Opens in October

Heep Hong Society will open its 13th Early Education and Training Centre – Yau Lai Centre – in October 2014. The 3,000 square metre new centre in Yau Lai Estate will serve 96 children special needs in Kowloon East.

## Pre-writing Fun Journey App Wins Award

The Pre-writing Fun Journey iPad application (app) of Heep Hong Society won the Best Digital Inclusion (Product/Application) Certificate of Merit in Hong Kong ICT Awards 2014 presented by the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer. Designed by the Occupational Therapy Team, the app is available for free on the Apple iTunes Store by entering the key words 'Heep Hong Society' or 'Pre-writing Fun Journey'.

## New Books

Heep Hong Society has published three new training books: *Sports Training for Lower Primary Students with Autism* (in Chinese) helps high-functioning autistic children strengthen their sports techniques and better adapt to physical education classes in mainstream schools; *Guide to Enhancing Children's Self-Care Skills* (English, Nepali and Urdu editions) explains the domestic self-care training strategies to parents of ethnic minorities; and *Infinity Star Academy: A Storybook on Integrated Education* (in Chinese) leads children on a journey to reflect on their attitude towards their classmates with special needs. The new books will be distributed for free to participants in relevant seminars or functions. Please visit our website to preview the contents. 📖



(If you do not wish to receive *Heep Hong Express* again, please write to us. 閣下如欲訂閱《協康匯訊》中文版本，請書面或以電郵通知我們。)