

Adoptions being processed faster ⁷ _{16.3}

ADOPTION procedures have been streamlined and the backlog of applications has been greatly reduced, the Director of Social Welfare announced yesterday.

Mrs Anson Chan, said that over 120 applications had been cleared by the end of last year, and that the department had now built up a small pool of suitable prospective adopters.

During 1985-86, a total of 114 local homes were approved

for adoption of a child, an increase of 60% over the previous year.

Mrs Chan said that the Social Welfare Department aimed to reduce the time taken to place a child in a suitable adoptive home so as to minimise the children's stay in institutions.

Speaking at a luncheon meeting of the Rotary Club of Kowloon North, Mrs Chan also announced that a support group for first-time Chinese adoptive parents had been formed.

"This was very well

received and we intend to organise additional groups to equip adopters with parental knowledge and skills to help them adjust to their new responsibilities," she said.

Mrs Chan also said that an overseas adoption service had recently been reviewed with an eye to recruiting more overseas homes for parentless children and to effect earlier adoption placements.

"We have been able to speed up the average processing time from the previous 24 months to around 15 months for

the majority of our children," Mrs Chan said.

78 new overseas homes were recruited in the last six months, a 28% increase over the same period in 1985.

Noting the steady stream of applications from overseas Chinese families, Mrs Chan said she intended to conduct a survey of possible demands from overseas Chinese to adopt children from Hongkong.

"All things being equal, we believe that it is in the best interests of the child to place him or her with adoptive parents who share the same culture and ethnic background," said Mrs Chan.