

**For discussion on
26 April 2004**

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PANEL ON SECURITY AND PANEL ON WELFARE SERVICES

An Update on Strategy and Measures to Prevent and Tackle Family Violence

PURPOSE

At the meetings of the Panel on Welfare Services held on 11 March 2002 and 10 February 2003, Members discussed the Administration's strategy and measures to prevent and tackle family violence [vide Panel Paper No. CB(2)1265/01-02(05) and Panel Paper No. CB(2)1104/02-03(03)]. At its meeting on 13 April 2004, in the light of a family tragedy in Tin Shui Wai, Members decided to hold a special meeting to discuss issues relating to family violence. This paper updates Members on the progress made and recent developments in respect of preventing and tackling family violence.

UPDATED STATISTICS

2. According to the enhanced Central Information System on Battered Spouse Cases and Sexual Violence Cases, the total number of newly reported battered spouse cases was 3 298 in 2003, representing an 8.7% increase compared with 2002 (3 034 cases). Physical abuse, comprising 78% (2 575 cases) of all the cases, was the major type of abuse. Regarding the district distribution of incidents, Tuen Mun had the highest number of incidents (598 cases) followed by Yuen Long (347 cases). Details are at Annex 1.

3. As captured by the enhanced Child Protection Registry, 481 newly reported child abuse cases were recorded in 2003, representing a drop of 7.5% as compared to the number of 520 in 2002. Physical abuse was also the major type of abuse (277 cases) followed by sexual abuse (150 cases). Yuen Long District had the highest number of incidence (70 cases) followed by Tuen Mun (59 cases). Details are at [Annex 2](#).

MULTI-DISCIPLINARY COLLABORATION

4. We are committed to combating family violence and have continued to step up our efforts in this regard. Given the nature of the problem, family violence can only be effectively tackled by collaboration among all parties involved. These parties may come from different disciplines. Both Government departments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) need to work closely. In this connection, two dedicated multi-disciplinary committees have been set up: the Committee on Child Abuse and the Working Group on Combating Violence. The lists of membership are at [Annexes 3 & 4](#). At the district level, there are also District Coordinating Committees on Family and Child Welfare chaired by the District Social Welfare Officers and attended by representatives from local NGOs, Government departments at the district level, community leaders and other interested parties. These district committees, inter alia, coordinate service provision relating to family violence at the district level to meet the specific needs in the district.

Procedures for Handling Child Abuse Cases (Revised 1998)

5. To address the growing concern of parents on the Multi-disciplinary Conference on Child Abuse (MDCC), the “Guide to Participants of the MDCC in Appendix XIX of the “Procedures for Handling Child Abuse Case- Revised 1998” (Procedures) was revised in 2002 to promote participation of parents in the MDCC and to further strengthen multi-disciplinary co-operation through providing more specific guidelines on the pre-conference and post-conference arrangements. Further to that, a “Reference Kit for Chairperson of MDCC” was also produced in 2003 to enable the chairpersons to convene the MDCC more effectively.

Procedural Guidelines for Handling Battered Spouse Cases (the Guidelines)

6. The revised Guidelines endorsed by the Working Group on Combating Violence (WGCV) have just been distributed to related professionals in April 2004. Apart from the updated information on the services available for victims of battered spouse cases, knowledge on the characteristics of victims, batterers and children witnessing domestic violence, and risk assessment are included to enhance the understanding and handling of battered spouse cases. Besides, to facilitate multi-disciplinary co-operation in handling battered spouse cases, the Guidelines also provide reference on the arrangement of case conference for specific cases and guidelines for various related sectors, including social welfare services units, the Hospital Authority, the Department of Health, the Police, the Legal Aid Department, the Department of Justice, schools, the Housing Department and other organizations. To prepare for the implementation of the Guidelines on 1 May 2004, a briefing session was conducted for related professionals on 21 April 2004.

Referral of Family Violence Cases for Welfare Services Without the Consent of the Victims

7. Since January 2003, the Police have started to refer cases to Social Welfare Department (SWD) for follow-up support services even without the consent of the victim/alleged offender. Since then, a notable increase of referrals of family violence cases is recorded. During the year of 2003, a total number of 1 617 cases (91 were without the consent of victims/alleged offenders) were referred by the Police to the Family and Child Protective Services Units (FCPSUs) of SWD. Most of these cases were battered spouse cases, with a small portion involving other types of family disputes, such as in-law conflicts and conflicts between parents and their adult children, etc.

8. SWD and the Police have been working closely to ensure smooth implementation of the revised mechanism. The revised referral mechanism has enabled more family violence cases to be brought to the attention of social service units.

Development of Website and Booklet on Victim Support Services

9. Upon the endorsement of the WGCV, a website and a booklet were developed in June 2003 to promote the services available for the victims of spouse battering, child abuse and sexual violence, and facilitate the access/sharing of information among the helping professionals especially frontline workers handling these cases. The website, attached to the homepage of SWD, is hyper-linked to other relevant websites and homepages such as the government information website and homepages of NGOs. It will continuously be updated to provide a comprehensive list of resources/services/training opportunities available. The booklet provides information similar to the content of the website and serves as useful reference material for those who have difficulty in gaining access to computer. During the period from end of June to end of December 2003, there was a monthly average of 2 727 counts of entries to the website.

Housing Assistance

10. To assist battered spouses with or without dependent children on divorce proceedings in resolving their genuine and imminent housing problems, different housing assistances were rendered to victims of battered spouse cases. In 2003, 167 cases involving domestic violence were recommended for Conditional Tenancy and Compassionate Rehousing. Besides, under the streamlined referral mechanism between the Housing Department and SWD in handling applications for splitting of household and house transfer for needy public rental housing tenants, 11 cases involving domestic violence were recommended for splitting of household in 2003. As regards housing arrangements for public rental housing (PRH) divorcees, 955 divorced households were approved for re-arrangement of their tenancies without allocation of additional PRH units, whereas separate PRH units were offered to another 91 divorced households in 2003.

MULTI-DISCIPLINARY TRAINING

11. To enhance the skills and knowledge on handling domestic violence and multi-disciplinary collaboration in combating violence, SWD

has continuously conducted different training programmes for social workers as well as other professionals, such as police, teachers and medical professionals etc. The programmes covered various topics including intervention on child abuse and spouse battering cases, risk and safety assessment, treatment for perpetrators, victims and children witnessing domestic violence, and the understanding of domestic violence from different perspectives. During the period from April 2003 to March 2004, over 1 000 professionals of various disciplines have attended 20 programmes conducted by local trainers and overseas experts.

THREE-PRONGED APPROACH

12. As reported in previous papers, the Government has adopted a three-pronged approach to provide a continuum of preventive, supportive and specialized services at primary, secondary and tertiary levels to prevent family problems and to deal with them when they arise. Some of the developments achieved under this approach with the joint efforts of Government departments and NGOs over the past months are highlighted below.

Publicity and Community Education

13. A publicity campaign entitled “Strengthening Families and Combating Violence” has been launched in August 2002 under the steer of the Working Group convened by SWD and comprising representatives from the Information Services Department and NGOs. The campaign aims at enhancing public awareness of the need to strengthen family solidarity, encourage early help-seeking and prevent violence including spouse battering, child abuse, elder abuse and sexual violence. The publicity activities included theme days and interactive exhibition booth, search of Resilient Family Ambassadors, short radio messages, radio series, television announcement of public interest, liquid electronic display of slogans, printing of slogans on electricity bills, display of roadside banners/plywood boards/posters, production and distribution of other publicity materials such as tissue packs/holders/boxes, garbage bins, magnets, calendars, telephone cards, leaflets etc. Besides, activities such as seminar, family camp and exhibition were held at various districts to echo the campaign.

Improved Accessibility to Services

14. To facilitate the needy in seeking early assistance to prevent deterioration of their emotional or family problems, the hotline service of the Family Crisis Support Centre (FCSC) was enhanced in May 2003 such that a total of 8 lines (including 3 warm lines answered by trained volunteers) are available to provide immediate counselling or support to persons in emotional distress or family crisis. An average of 1 400 calls have been received by its 24-hour hotline per month since its coming into service in November 2001.

15. Since January 2003, the Departmental Hotline Service Unit (DHSU) of SWD has put in place a call transfer system between DHSU and FCSC. Under the new arrangement, calls ringing up DHSU outside the operating hours can be transferred directly to the 24-hour hotline services of FCSC. Backup support is also made available from the Suicide Crisis Intervention Centre (SCIC) and SWD's after office hours outreaching teams for child abuse, battered spouse and psychiatric emergency to provide 24-hour outreach and crisis intervention services as and when necessary.

16. To promote the service users' accessibility to services, all integrated family service centres (IFSCs)/family services centres (FSCs) have adopted flexibility in arranging interviews and home visits outside normal office hours while some of them have also provided regular extended hours service during weekday evenings, Saturday and Sunday. Besides, the medical social services units operated by SWD at six major hospitals with Accident and Emergency Departments namely Queen Mary Hospital, Pamela Youde Nethersole Eastern Hospital, Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Tuen Mun Hospital, Princess Margaret Hospital and Prince of Wales Hospital have also extended their service hours to 8:00 p.m. (on weekdays) and 3:00 p.m. (on Saturdays) starting from 1 April 2003.

Supportive Services

17. In view of the effectiveness of IFSCs in strengthening the networking and outreaching functions to facilitate early identification of problems and provision of early intervention to individuals and families, there is a plan to transfer all existing FSCs / counselling units to become into IFSCs in 2004/2005. Each IFSC will comprise three components, namely Family

Resource Unit, Family Support Unit and Family Counselling Unit. A continuum of preventive, supportive and remedial services will be provided with regular extended hour services in the evening/ Saturday /Sunday. Service components would also include family life education, services for new arrivals, single parents, street sleepers, etc. Through this re-engineering exercise, attempt will be made to achieve an overall territory-wide re-distribution of resources based on a combination of factors including the population to be served, complexity of social problems and district needs etc.

18. To enhance the residential services for child abuse victims or children witnessing domestic violence who are not suitable to return to their homes, additional resources were allocated to expand foster care services from 580 places in 2002 to 745 places (including 45 emergency foster care places) in 2004 to cater for the vulnerable children in need of care or protection.

Specialized Services and Crisis Intervention

19. In light of the increasing number of family violence cases, apart from the additional provision of 42 frontline social workers to its Family and Child Protective Services Units (FCPSUs) since April 2000, SWD is planning to further strengthen the manpower of the specialised FCPSUs by expanding to six teams through re-deployment of manpower resources generated from re-engineering of family services centres.

20. Other than casework counselling, FCPSUs also organize different types of groups for the victims, batterers and children witnessing violence in collaboration with clinical psychologists. During the period from April 2003 to March 2004, 44 groups were organized for 470 participants with positive feedback. Moreover, FCPSUs have strengthened networking with NGOs such as Save the Children Hong Kong (e.g. providing tutorial and outing services for children) so as to optimize the use of existing resources to help the families affected by family violence.

21. As most batterers are men, FCPSUs and NGOs operating refuge centres for women have been providing a variety of services for men, such as hotline and group work service.

22. The fourth refuge centre for women has commenced full operation in December 2002. At present, a total of 162 places are provided by the four refuge centres for women (one SWD and three NGOs), with round-the-clock admission. During the period from April 2003 to December 2003, a total of 641 women and 605 children have been admitted to the refuge centres. Based on the feedback given by the abused women upon their discharge from the refuge centres, 97% were satisfied with the services provided and nearly 86% of them have acquired the basic skills in protecting and planning for themselves and the children.

23. The Family Crisis Support Centre (FCSC) has also provided temporary accommodation for cases in crisis situation. Upon commencement of full operation of the FCSC in March 2002, a total of 723 women, 251 men and 410 children have been admitted for temporary accommodation as at end of December 2003. The overall feedback indicated that more than 90% of the service users having used the temporary accommodation facilities expressed positive response in overcoming the immediate crisis with emotional control regained upon leaving the FCSC.

24. The Suicide Crisis Intervention Centre (SCIC) of The Samaritan Befrienders Hong Kong (SBHK), which was set up in September 2002, provides round-the-clock outreaching, crisis intervention/intensive counselling to persons in crisis situation and at high/ moderate suicidal risks. Up to end of February 2004, SCIC has handled 1 318 cases with high/moderate suicidal risks and has conducted 272 outreaching/on-site visits.

RESEARCH

25. The Centre for Criminology of the University of Hong Kong has been commissioned to conduct a study on homicide-suicide in Hong Kong in November 2002. The research team has completed the first stage of study in mid 2003, with preliminary findings on the social, forensic and epidemiological data for both offenders and victims and other relevant variable relating to homicide-suicide cases happened during the period from 1989 to 1998. The second stage on qualitative retrospective follow of the cases is in progress. The study will also develop an assessment tool for frontline social workers in the third stage which is scheduled to be completed

by end of 2004.

26. The University of Hong Kong has also been commissioned to conduct a study on child abuse and spouse battering in April 2003. While the research team has completed the focus groups and literature review, the household survey and case study are still in progress. Part one of the study on the prevalence rate of child abuse and spouse battering in Hong Kong and elements contributing to effective prevention and intervention will be completed by mid 2004. Part two of the study on the development and validation of assessment tools and training to 500 frontline professionals for use of the assessment tools is scheduled to be completed by April 2005.

LEGAL CONCERNS

27. Some groups have proposed to amend the Domestic Violence Ordinance (DVO), such as to widen the coverage (to cover all family members) and scope (not only physical violence but also other types of family violence including psychological abuse, marital rape and sexual abuse) etc. The study mentioned in paragraph 26 above will, inter alia, identify possible areas of improvement, including those that may involve legislation. In parallel, relevant statistics from the Judiciary are being collected to assess the effectiveness of the existing legal remedies provided under the Domestic Violence Ordinance. These will help to shed light on the way forward.

ENHANCING SOCIAL CAPITAL

28. To promote the building up of social capital, the Community Investment and Inclusion Fund has been providing seed funding to support community-initiated and neighbourhood-based projects that seek to build the capacities of individuals and groups for self-help, mutual help and support, and to mobilize cross-sectoral collaboration for shared solutions to local problems. The “Sunny Community Project” in Tung Chung (a new town) and another project in Po Tin (the largest interim housing estate) are examples in point. Individuals and families that might be vulnerable or at risk are encouraged to build strong networks of support to help themselves and each other. There are three CIIF projects focusing specifically on the Tin Shui

Wai area for the purposes of a) developing individual capacities and resilience; b) establishing mutual help networks and c) increasing local participation and employment opportunities. Details are at [Annex 5](#).

WELFARE SERVICES IN TIN SHUI WAI

29. Presently, there are 2 IFSCs and 1 FSC with a total of 28 social workers serving Tin Shui Wai, including 1 IFSC (with 8 social workers) which was run by International Social Service Hong Kong Branch (ISS) and set up in July 2003 by pooling of the NGO's scattered casework resources. Following the re-engineering of FSCs as mentioned in paragraph 17, further resources will be pooled to enhance ISS's IFSC and transform Caritas' FSC to become IFSC by end of 2004. By then, there will be a total number of 3 IFSCs and number of social workers will be increased to 41.

30. In addition to family services, the FCPSU (New Territories West) is serving cases involving child abuse, spouse battering and child custody in Tin Shui Wai. Other social services include 17 child care services units, 2 family life education units, 6 units providing after school care programmes, 8 centres and 2 outreaching units providing youth services and 4 family services projects jointly run by SWD and NGOs units for single-parent and needy families, and residents newly moved in to Tin Shui Wai.

FOLLOW-UP ACTION ARISING FROM THE TRAGEDY CASE IN TIN SHUI WAI

31. In light of the current occurrence of family tragedy, a 3-person review panel has been set up to review the provision and service delivery process of family services in Tin Shui Wai, to recommend measures to strengthen the effectiveness, coordination and other aspects concerning service provision and delivery of family services in Tin Shui Wai, and to recommend any other general issues concerning the handling of family cases. The review panel will submit a report with recommendations to SWD in 6 months.

WAY FORWARD

32. Members may wish to note that the concerned departments and parties have dedicated considerable efforts in developing and enhancing services to combat family violence in the past two years. However, a harmonious and violence free community is never an accident. Social workers no doubt have a role to play in this regard, but the concerted efforts of all in the community is vital because family violence, in many instances, is a manifestation of how some individuals resort to tackle their problems and pressures. That is why from a broader perspective, we are working to ensure that our welfare programmes seek to enhance individual and community capacities so that both individuals and the community at large are better placed to face life's challenges.

33. We look forward to the findings of the studies mentioned in paragraphs 25-26 above for identifying future strategies to prevent and tackle family violence, meanwhile, we shall continue to seek improvements to strengthen our existing services as mentioned above.

April 2004

Health, Welfare and Food Bureau / Social Welfare Department

Newly Reported Battered Spouse Cases in 2002 and 2003

Table 1 - Distribution of Cases by Types of Abuse

Year	2002	2003
Types of Abuse		
Physical abuse	2 641	2 575
Sexual abuse	12	5
Psychological abuse	64	365
Multiple abuse	317	353
Total	3 034	3 298

Table 2 – District Distribution of Cases

Year	2002	2003
District		
Central/Western	90	63
Islands	39	44
Wanchai	16	29
Eastern	232	232
Southern	81	91
Yau Tsim Mong	126	115
Kowloon City	146	138
Shamshuipo	134	180
Wong Tai Sin	256	210
Kwun Tong	239	227
Sai Kung	180	146
Shatin	211	170
Tai Po	121	133
North	191	176
Yuen Long	364	347
Tsuen Wan	103	156
Kwai Tsing	140	210
Tuen Mun	365	598
Outside Hong Kong/Unknown	0	33
Total	3 034	3 298

Newly Reported Child Abuse Cases in 2002 and 2003

Table 1 - Distribution of Cases by Types of Abuse

Year	2002	2003
Types of Abuse		
Physical abuse	292	277
Neglect	17	20
Sexual abuse	179	150
Psychological abuse	11	4
Multiple abuse	21	30
Total	520	481

Table 2 – District Distribution of Cases

Year	2002	2003
District		
Central/Western & Islands	17	24
Eastern & Wanchai	38	24
Southern	19	6
Kowloon City	16	17
Yau Tsim Mong	28	14
Shamshuipo	22	33
Wong Tai Sin & Sai Kung	61	55
Kwun Tong	39	26
Tsuen Wan & Kwai Tsing	58	44
Tuen Mun	59	59
Yuen Long	78	70
Tai Po & North	49	50
Shatin	33	31
Outside Hong Kong	3	7
Unknown	0	21
Total	520	481

Membership of Committee on Child Abuse

Director of Social Welfare (Chairman)
Representative of Hong Kong Family Welfare Society
Representative of Against Child Abuse
Representative of Hong Kong Psychological Society
Representative of End Child Sexual Abuse Foundation
Representative of Hong Kong Council of Social Services
Representative of Health, Welfare and Food Bureau
Representative of Education and Manpower Bureau
Representative of Social Welfare Department
Representative of Information Services Department
Representative of Hong Kong Police Force
Representative of Home Affairs Department
Representative of Department of Health
Representative of Hospital Authority

Membership of Working Group on Combating Violence

Director of Social Welfare (Chairman)
Representative of Po Leung Kuk
Representative of Caritas- Hong Kong
Representative of Harmony House
Representative of Christian Family Service Centre
Representative of Association Concerning Sexual Violence Against Women
Representative of Hong Kong Association for the Survivors of Women Abuse
(Kwan Fook)
Representative of Hong Kong Council of Social Services
Representatives of Health, Welfare and Food Bureau
Representative of Education and Manpower Bureau
Representative of Security Bureau
Representative of Social Welfare Department
Representatives of Department of Justice
Representative of Legal Aid Department
Representative of Information Services Department
Representative of Hong Kong Police Force
Representative of Home Affairs Department
Representatives of Department of Health
Representative of Hospital Authority
Representative of Housing Department

**Building capacity –
Projects supported by the CIIF in the Tin Shui Wai district**

(a) **The "Project to promote family cohesion and more colourful family life" was being implemented by the Pok Oi Hospital Mrs. Chu Kwok King Memorial Day Nursery** over a 2 year period (\$180,000). This project seeks to engage the new arrival families and local families into developing a more supportive and inclusive community in the area.

- This project commenced in May 2003. No additional paid staff was involved. Instead, 80 volunteers from new arrivals and local families had been mobilized in the first year (and 104 by the second year) to take primary responsibilities as project organizers and as tutors for various community activities.
- These volunteer teams provided the collaborating platform to link up new arrivals and local families as equals. They learned to work together, enhance their respect for each other, train up their skills and increase confidence to jointly contribute to their local community and in the process helping themselves.
- These joint volunteer teams would run 94 programmes (including language and parenting skills, interest classes) that would benefit around 5,000 local residents.

(b) **The Star-bright Project by the Harmony House** (\$700,000) will mobilize the active involvement of local residents, schools and businesses to form networks of neighbourhood watch, promoting alternative coping strategies, providing neighbourly support to enhance the family safety and community well-being, with a view to addressing and reducing violence.

- This project will commence in May 2004, and expected to involve and mobilize support from 6 schools, 210 businesses, 3 large shopping malls, 15 local groups and NGOs and members of the District Councils.
- Over the 3-year period of the project, a total of 960 "Watching

Stars” comprising 300 student pioneers, 300 teachers and parents and 360 community members would be formed. Sixty (60) “Watching Stars” would become the Project ambassadors.

- Over 4800 students and 5000 community people will benefit as participants
- A local advisory group on addressing family violence would be formed; a local development trust fund established to sustain the Star-bright operation and a working manual would be produced.

(c) **The Community Angels of Tin Shui Wai project by the Mission for New Arrivals Ltd** (\$1,000,000) aims to encourage extensive cross-sectoral collaboration and build up a rich network of support for local residents in a community lacking in informal social support structures.

- A broad range of over 13 “Community Angel” groups will be formed. These include: Family Angels; Home Care Angels; Elders Angels; Guardian Angels for Schools; Caring Angels; Business Angles; Resources Angels; Ethnic Angels; Networking Angels, Employment Angels, Environmental Protection Angels, Natures Guardian Angels, and Activity Angels etc.
- These Community Angel groups are designed as practical ways to connect different resident groups who would otherwise have limited social support. The teams provide the pathways for locals to get involved as volunteers, learning new practical and inter-personal skills, gaining confidence for social participation, contributing to various support groups and increasing chances of getting employment.
- Around 1500 volunteers will be recruited and will be involved as participants and helpers.