

For Discussion  
on 9 July 2007

## **LEGCO PANEL ON WELFARE SERVICES**

### **Services of the New Multi-purpose Crisis Intervention and Support Centre**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

At the meetings of the Panel on Welfare Services and its Subcommittee on Strategy and Measures to Tackle Family Violence (the Subcommittee) held on 3 July and 31 July 2006 respectively, the Administration informed Members of the review of services for victims of sexual violence and the service components of the new service mode, including the setting up of a new Multi-purpose Crisis Intervention and Support Centre (the Crisis Centre). This paper gives an account of the services provided by the Crisis Centre.

#### **BACKGROUND**

2. The Administration has long recognised the uniqueness and importance of the services provided to victims of sexual violence. Following a review of the services for such victims conducted by the Health, Welfare and Food Bureau and the Social Welfare Department (SWD) in collaboration with the Hospital Authority (HA), the Police and the Forensic Pathology Service of the Department of Health, we have put in place a new service model since 26 March 2007 which is based on the principles detailed in paragraph 6 of the Subcommittee paper (LC Paper No. CB(2)2852/05-06(01)), including the provision of timely, professional and specialised services to victims of both genders and their family members on a 24-hour basis with easy accessibility and enhanced multi-disciplinary

collaboration. The establishment of the Crisis Centre is one of the core components to implement the new service mode.

3. In order to select an operator to run the Crisis Centre, SWD invited interested non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to make detailed proposals on the service components and mode of operation of the Crisis Centre in August 2006. A Vetting Committee with membership comprising representatives from the Social Welfare Advisory Committee, Women's Commission, HA and the Police was formed to assess the proposals received. Adopting a 100% quality-based assessment and upon the recommendation of the Vetting Committee, SWD has commissioned the Tung Wah Group of Hospitals (TWGHs) to set up and operate the Crisis Centre on a three-year pilot basis till the end of December 2009. The Crisis Centre is funded by a Lotteries Fund grant of \$20 million as operating costs for three years, with a separate grant on the costs of building repair works and fitting-out works of the premises as well as the purchase of furniture and equipment.

## **SERVICES OF THE CRISIS CENTRE**

### ***Preparatory Work***

4. To implement the new service model and set up the Crisis Centre, SWD has been working closely with TWGHs and related parties on the following arrangements:

- (i) set up a specialised pool of 48 designated social workers, comprising about 3 to 5 social workers in each of the 12 SWD districts, to handle sexual violence cases during office hours;
- (ii) between June 2006 and February 2007, conducted a series of five training courses relating to sexual violence, with three of them tailor-made to equip the designated social workers with knowledge and skills in handling such cases;
- (iii) amended the "Procedural Guidelines for Handling Adult Sexual Violence Cases" with the joint effort of related disciplines and

departments to facilitate effective multi-disciplinary collaboration;  
and

- (iv) conducted a briefing session on the new service model for professionals of the welfare sector and members of the Working Group on Combating Violence in February 2007.

Separately, the HA and the Police have also organised training sessions for their staff on the new service model in February and March 2007 respectively.

5. In order to ensure a smooth implementation of the new service model, SWD and TWGHs arranged several test-runs of the Crisis Centre's hotline system and conducted drills on handling of sexual violence cases with the involvement of HA and the Police prior to the commencement of the new service model and the operation of the Crisis Centre. Besides, SWD and TWGHs have widely publicised the Crisis Centre through meeting with the press, the broadcast of television / radio announcement for public interest and distribution of service leaflets to all related professionals and service units.

### ***Services Provided by the Crisis Centre***

6. The Crisis Centre has employed a supervisor and team of 19 (29 upon full implementation of the Crisis Centre) registered social workers and supporting staff to provide round-the-clock service throughout the year in two phases. The non-premises-tied services in the first phase, commenced on 26 March 2007, include a 24-hour hotline [18281] for the public. Services provided include immediate counselling to the callers over phone, immediate outreaching / crisis intervention for sexual violence cases or elder abuse cases received after office hours and linking those in need of welfare services to appropriate service units for follow-up. There is another designated telephone line to enable fast track contact by the Police and related professionals.

7. On receipt of calls / referrals concerning adult sexual violence during office hours, the Crisis Centre will arrange the designated social workers of SWD to render crisis intervention service for the victims

through the established mechanism. For those adult sexual violence cases reported to the Crisis Centre after office hours, the Crisis Centre will take over the cases for follow up. Crisis intervention services to the victims, provided by the designated social workers of either SWD or the Crisis Centre, include immediate outreaching to support victims in hospitals, police stations or other places convenient to them. Depending on the victims' needs, services to be provided include arranging / accompanying victims to the nearest hospital with Accident and Emergency Department for immediate medical services (i.e. medical examination and treatment, emergency contraception, and screening test for Hepatitis B) and designated clinic for medical after-care services (including screening of sexually transmitted diseases, AIDS, and other medical treatment as required), arranging / accompanying victims during statement taking by the Police and examination by Forensic Pathologist, counselling, referrals for emergency placement as well as other community support services, and also assistance to the victims in facing court proceedings if required. To ensure the continuity of service, the same designated social worker of SWD or the Crisis Centre will act as the case manager and follow through the case for at least six months as far as practicable to help the victims get over the traumatic experience.

8. The second phase of services will commence when the premises with a capacity of 80 is ready for providing short-term accommodation service. Admission of target service users will be on a 24-hour basis throughout the year. For privacy and safety concerns, the address of the Crisis Centre is kept confidential. Besides, the Crisis Centre will put in place appropriate measures to address different clienteles' needs and to ensure privacy. These measures include thorough pre-admission screening by social workers, provision of independent / self-contained / segregated flats for different clienteles, provision of escort service to pick up clients at places convenient to them, etc. Depending on their circumstances and needs, service users have the choice of using other existing short-term accommodation services, including the refuges for women, the Family Crisis Support Centre, etc.

9. With close collaboration with related professionals and service units, the implementation of the new service model and the operation of the Crisis Centre have been smooth in the past three months. As at the end of

May 2007, a total of 27 sexual violence cases have been handled under the new service model and 15 of them require immediate outreaching service by the Crisis Centre or the designated social workers of SWD. The Crisis Centre has taken over 18 such cases for follow up and the remaining nine cases are being followed up by the designated social workers of SWD. To minimize distress to victims of sexual violence, medical staff of HA and the Police handle these cases with tact and sensitivity. For instance, apart from introducing the available social services to them in a timely manner, HA staff have made arrangements such that the interviews or medical examinations are conducted in a place with privacy. Arrangement has also been made by the Police to interview the victim at a suitable venue convenient to the victim with adequate privacy.

## **WAY FORWARD**

10. To consolidate the experience of how different disciplines work together to achieve effective delivery of services for victims of sexual violence, SWD has arranged a sharing session, with involvement of HA and the Police, for the designated social workers and staff concerned of SWD and the Crisis Centre on 29 June 2007. We will continue to monitor the operation of the Crisis Centre and report progress regularly to the Lotteries Fund.

**Social Welfare Department**  
**June 2007**