

For Information
8 October 2007

LEGCO PANEL ON WELFARE SERVICES

Subcommittee on Strategy and Measures to Tackle Family Violence

Progress of Implementation

The Police Improvement Measures on Handling Domestic Violence

INTRODUCTION

Further to the papers setting out the Police improvement measures on the handling of domestic violence prepared for discussion for previous Subcommittee meetings held on 28 March 2006 [LC Paper No. CB(2) 1439/05-06(01)], 15 June 2006 [LC Paper No. CB(2) 2389/05-06(01)] and 20 September 2006 [LC Paper No. CB(2) 3027/05-06(01)] respectively, this Information Paper sets out the latest progress of the implementation.

LATEST PROGRESS

Rollout of Improvement Measures

2. Since 20 November 2006, a series of improvement measures to strengthen the response and the capabilities of the Hong Kong Police Force at the initial handling and subsequent investigation stage of domestic violence reports have been fully implemented.

Initial Handling of Domestic Violence Reports

Enhanced Frontline Supervision

3. To enhance frontline supervision and to ensure a quality response, an officer at the rank of Sergeant or above would take charge of the initial investigations at the scene of all domestic violence reports and incidents occurring in a domestic context to ensure proper classification, handling and documentation.

Emergency Referral Questionnaire & Action Checklist

4. The Emergency Referral Questionnaire (ERQ) and the Action Checklist (AC) have been introduced as an effective risk assessment tool and quick reference guide to assist police officers in identifying risk factors, better appreciating the family situation and thereby making a more informed decision on whether any emergency referral is required. An all-in-one pocket-sized Domestic Violence Booklet containing an ERQ, an AC and other necessary documentation required in handling domestic violence report have also been issued to all frontline officers for use.

Enhanced Documentation

5. The assessment on the ERQ and the completed AC have to be reviewed and endorsed by a supervisory officer at the rank of Sergeant or above before relevant information is electronically inputted into the Central Domestic Violence Database (CDVD) to facilitate ready access and retrieval for the purpose of case monitoring and also as a basis for future reference by frontline officers handling the same family.

Alert Mechanism

6. Divisional and District management of high-risk cases has also been strengthened by the establishment of an Alert Mechanism in the CDVD to automatically generate repeated cases occurring within 12 months or less for the attention of the Divisional/District supervisory officers for the purpose of more

intensive monitoring as well as closer collaborative efforts with the social welfare units.

Direct Referral Line for Police

7. A 24-hour Direct Referral Line has been established with the Social Welfare Department (SWD) for the Police to seek urgent professional advice and/or support services from the SWD outreaching team so as to provide timely assistance to victims of domestic violence and their children.

Investigations of Domestic Violence Cases

Three-tiered Investigative Response

8. The Force has established a three-tiered structure to provide a graded investigative response to domestic violence reports by investigation units at different levels, taking into account the seriousness of the cases as well as taking into consideration the existence of high risk factors in the family.

Designated Domestic Violence Investigation Units

9. Designated Domestic Violence Investigation Units (DV Units), comprising specially trained officers with strong investigative background, have been set up at all Police Districts to investigate serious domestic violence cases. The accumulation of expertise within the units and the strengthened collaboration between the DV Units and the local welfare units would assist in the handling of serious cases.

Investigations of Repeated Miscellaneous (Non-crime) Cases

10. In addition to assigning the investigation of serious cases to DV Units, repeated miscellaneous (non-crime) cases previously handled by the Uniform Branch are being taken up by Divisional crime investigation teams so as to enhance on the early identification and management of risk factors. The Uniform Branch officers will only handle non-repetitive miscellaneous cases.

'One Family One Team' Concept

11. To overcome the complications arising from different investigation units handling different cases involving the same family, the 'One Family One Team' approach has been adopted. The same investigation unit, be it DV Units or other crime investigation teams will take over all subsequent cases involving the same family so as to provide a more coordinated approach as familiarity with the background of the family would enhance the unit's ability in identifying risk factors for early intervention and facilitate closer collaborative efforts with the social welfare units.

Training

Enhanced Training for Frontline Officers

12. In preparation for the full implementation of the Police improvement measures, a new training package was rolled out to all frontline officers between July and October 2006 in conjunction with social workers and clinical psychologists. Apart from equipping officers with the skills in conducting risk assessments, the training also placed particular focus on raising awareness of victim's psychology, need for sensitivity and cross-disciplinary collaborations.

Specialised Training for Officers of DVUs

13. Apart from general training to equip all frontline officers, specialised training was also tailor-made for DV Units in the handling of high-risk cases. The Child Protection Policy Unit in conjunction with the SWD and the Police Psychological Services Group has recently completed a training programme run between June and August 2007 specially designed for all officers from DV Units to enhance their capability in the early identification of high risk factors and the effective handling of serious cases. The training focused on the dynamics of domestic violence, psychology and behavioural patterns of the parties involved, handling and interviewing techniques, follow-up measures on safety issues as well as service interface with social welfare units.

WAY FORWARD

14. To conclude, the effectiveness of the package of improvement measures which were devised to improve the initial Police response as well as the subsequent investigation has been closely monitored since its implementation and would be subjected to review in 2008.

15. Police will strive for continuous improvement in the handling of domestic violence. Combating domestic violence has been a priority for the Police and the Commissioner of Police's Operational Priorities 2007 further affirm the Force commitment to professionally handle and investigate all reports of domestic violence.

Hong Kong Police Force
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