

**For Information  
12 June 2008**

## **LEGCO PANEL ON WELFARE SERVICES**

### **Subcommittee on Strategy and Measures to Tackle Family Violence**

#### **Pilot Project on Batterer Intervention Programme**

#### **Introduction**

To promote the development of Batterer Intervention Programmes (BIPs) in Hong Kong and identify effective treatment modalities for batterers with different degrees of battering behaviour, the Social Welfare Department (SWD) launched a pilot project of BIP (Pilot Project) from January 2006 to March 2008. This paper briefs Members on the findings of the Pilot Project and the way forward.

#### **Background**

2. Domestic violence is a complex problem rooted in a mixed array of personal, social and cultural factors. Over the years, there have been debates on whether, and the extent to which, treatment of batterers might help prevent domestic violence. Despite the vast amount of studies carried out abroad in the past two decades, the effectiveness of BIPs remains inconclusive. Local studies in this area are comparatively scanty and of very small scale. Against this background, SWD has initiated the Pilot Project to study whether and how BIPs would work in the Hong Kong context.

#### **The Pilot Project**

3. The Pilot Project was divided into two parts, which were conducted concurrently. Part I was conducted by a non-governmental organisation, the Hong Kong Family Welfare Society (HKFWS), targeting batterers who were involved in “milder” spouse battering cases that might not be known to any existing social service providers. Extensive publicity and promotional activities were conducted during the recruitment process to reach out to potential clients, helping them realize the gravity of their problems and motivating them to join the BIP groups.

4. Part II of the Pilot Project was conducted by SWD, which was characterised by the inclusion of a comparison group and an experimental

group to facilitate outcome evaluation. Clients in the comparison group received regular social work intervention while those in the experimental group participated in the BIP in addition to regular social work intervention. To facilitate further analysis, participants in the experimental group were divided into three sub-groups, viz those joining on a voluntary basis (“non-statutory” group), those subject to a bind over order (“bind over” group) and those subject to a probation order (“probation” group).

5. More details of the Pilot Project are set out at Appendix I. An Advisory Group comprising academia, psychiatrists, clinical psychologist and social work practitioners was set up to advise and oversee the development of the Pilot Project. The membership list of the Advisory Group is at Appendix II.

### **Findings and Observations**

6. The findings of the Pilot Project are summarised at Appendix III. Given that the sample sizes for both parts of the Pilot Project were relatively small and in light of the inherent methodological difficulties, the findings of the Pilot Project should be interpreted with caution and should not be subject to over-generalisation.

7. With the above caveats, the following findings were observed :

- (a) The value of BIPs in terms of its contribution to changes in the batterers’ attitudes and awareness is affirmed by the findings of both the HKFWS and SWD programmes. Cessation of violence is a commonly accepted goal in the treatment of batterers, but it may not be easily attained. Increased awareness of the adverse consequences of using violence and the willingness of the batterers as well as their partners to keep improving their strategies in coping with their conflicts may be more important goals to be achieved.
- (b) It is important to provide a suitable environment and adequate peer and social work support for the treatment of the batterers. The skills and attitudes of the convenors of groups, and atmosphere of comradeship among participants are of particular importance.
- (c) There is ample evidence that concurrent changes and support from spouses / partners are important to initiate and maintain changes in the batterers, and feedback from spouses / partners will be useful indicator to track the progress of batterers. It may be worthwhile to examine the need of involving spouses / partners of the batterers in future programmes.

- (d) Different types of batterers respond to the BIPs differently. It is necessary to conduct further study and analysis to develop suitable programmes that cater for different types of batterers.
- (e) Comparing the three sub-groups of batterers (namely, non-statutory, bind over and probation groups) under the SWD programme, the treatment results for batterers who were mandated in some ways to join the programme were less favourable than those who participated on a voluntary basis.
- (f) Social work intervention is essential to complement BIP group intervention.
- (g) Public education on BIPs should be strengthened to reach out to the community and increase awareness of the programme so that prospective participants would become more receptive or motivated to receive treatment.
- (h) While most of the groups were conducted in the evenings and some on Saturday afternoons, some participants expressed difficulties in attending the groups because of their long working hours.

### **The Way Forward**

8. The HKFWS programme was completed and a final report would be published. For the SWD programme, 6-month and 12-month follow-up data would be collected for further analysis and an interim report would be prepared for the time being. On the next step, SWD and HKFWS would conduct briefings or workshops for social workers and other practitioners to share the findings notwithstanding the limitations of the Pilot Project. SWD and HKFWS will also develop user manuals for the two programmes respectively for professional use with a view to standardising the intervention and sharing the experience gained from the Pilot Project.

Social Welfare Department  
June 2008

**Pilot Project on Batterer Intervention Programme**

	<b>Programme of HKFWS</b>	<b>Programme of SWD</b>
<b>Name of programme</b>	Peace Project (和平計劃)	No More Violence - Growth Groups for Men (家暴不再 — 男士成長小組)
<b>Objectives</b>	To end intimate partner violence by helping participants to be aware of their disrespectful beliefs and to learn to use non-abusive methods in relating with their intimate partners.	To control the use of physical violence and other forms of partner abuse; to promote gender equality values, emotional control and relationship enhancement; and to lay the groundwork for further treatment.
<b>Target</b>	Batterers with intimate partner violence who are known to Integrated Family Service Centres or recruited from the community	Male batterers of spousal battering referred by the Family and Child Protective Services Units and Probation Offices of SWD
<b>No. of sessions in each group</b>	12 sessions	13 sessions
<b>No. of hours in each session</b>	2 hours	2-3 hours
<b>No. of groups conducted</b>	13 groups (three groups were conducted for female batterers)	20 groups
<b>Total no. of participants</b>	96 participants	171 participants
<b>Programme content</b>	The programme was divided into three parts: <u>Part I</u> To help participants accept their responsibility for the use of violence. <u>Part II</u> To help participants identify their disrespectful beliefs which promoted violent behaviour and to develop respectful relationship.	The four components are : (a) Understanding the various forms and impact of domestic violence (b) Understanding emotions and learning of emotion (especially anger) regulation strategies (c) Self-understanding regarding the influence of family of origin, expectation and values towards personal

	<b>Programme of HKFWS</b>	<b>Programme of SWD</b>
	<u>Part III</u> To help participants acquire more adaptive skills in managing their anger and conflicts in their relationship.	development, marriage and family relationship (d) Learning of conflict resolution and relationship enhancement skills

**Membership of the Advisory Group on  
Pilot Project on Batterer Intervention Programme**

**Convenor**

Mr Helios LAU  
Chief Clinical Psychologist  
Social Welfare Department

**Secretary**

Dr Helen CHAN  
Senior Clinical Psychologist  
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**Members**

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|-------------------------|--|
| 1. Mrs Anna MAK         | Assistant Director (Family and Child Welfare)<br>Social Welfare Department |
| 2. Ms Angie LAI         | Social work practitioner<br>Caritas-Hong Kong                              |
| 3. Ms Jessie YU Sau-chu | Social work practitioner<br>Hong Kong Single Parents Association           |
| 4. Dr Pauline SUNG      | Academia<br>The Hong Kong Polytechnic University                           |
| 5. Dr YEUNG Ka-ching    | Academia<br>The University of Hong Kong                                    |
| 6. Dr Ben CHEUNG        | Psychiatrist   |
| 7. Dr Benjamin LAI      | Psychiatrist   |

**Findings of Pilot Project on Batterer Intervention Programme**

Peace Project (和平計劃) conducted by the Hong Kong Family Welfare Society

1. There was a general reduction in both physical and psychological forms of aggression of the participants though violence was not totally eliminated.
2. There were changes in the participants' abusive beliefs. Participants gained awareness of their emotional escalation, attained better anger control, became more tolerant of their partners and could admit responsibility for their violent behaviour. They were more able to see things from their partners' point of views and become more capable in handling conflicts.
3. Participants' motivation increased as the group progressed. However, the effectiveness of the group treatment as rated or reported by the partners of the batterers was much lower than that as rated or reported by the batterers themselves.
4. Despite the positive outcome, improvement of abusive behaviour faded out after 6-month post-group period. Nevertheless, the improvement in terms of abusive beliefs, knowledge about battering and motivational level was maintained.

No More Violence - Growth Groups for Men (家暴不再 — 男士成長小組) conducted by the Social Welfare Department

1. BIP participants who had completed 9 sessions or more out of the 13 sessions (referred to as "BIP completers" herein below) had a very positive appraisal of the BIP service. They demonstrated statistically significant positive changes in reducing their violent behaviour and enhancing their marital relationship after joining the group programme. These results were reflected in both the men and their partners' ratings.
  - (a) For BIP completers in the non-statutory group, they demonstrated statistically significant positive changes in reducing their violent behaviour and enhancing their marital relationship after joining the group programme. Again, the findings were consistent between the batterers and their partners' ratings.
  - (b) For those in the bind over group, statistically significant positive changes were found in the batterers' marital relationship (as rated by both the batterers and their partners) but not in their use of violence against their partners.
  - (c) For those in the probation group, statistically significant positive changes were found only in the batterers' ratings of marital satisfaction.

2. Those batterers in the comparison group also demonstrated statistically significant positive changes over the 3-month period but mainly in terms of controlling their violent behaviour (as rated by both the batterers and their partners).
3. No statistically significant difference was found between BIP completers and the comparison group in controlling their violent behaviour. However, the BIP completers tended to show more positive changes than the comparison group in enhancing their marital relationship. Although members of both groups showed control over their violent behaviour, it is expected that the BIP completers, having gained more positive changes in their marital relationships, should stand a better chance in continuing with their non-violent ways as conflicts in marital relationships are among the important factors leading to violence. Further analysis would be conducted with the 6-month and 12-month data.
4. The qualitative study echoed the positive results of the outcome study. The group participants perceived the BIP as a useful means for them to achieve their goal of stopping violence and improving marital relationship. The group facilitators and caseworkers also believed that casework service supplemented by BIP could achieve more than what casework service alone could achieve. They recommended that group work should become a key component of treatment for batterers.