

**Panel on Welfare Services**

**Subcommittee on Strategy and Measures to  
Tackle Domestic Violence and Sexual Violence**

**Summary of views and concerns expressed by deputations  
attending the meeting on 12 January 2015**

Definitions of domestic violence and sexual violence

- (a) government departments concerned should adopt a unitary definition of "domestic violence" in various operational procedures and guidelines for handling domestic violence cases. The definition should include abuse cases of non-physically violent nature, notably psychological abuse;
- (b) the definition of "sexual violence" for handling relevant cases should include, among others, marital rape, indecent assault, sexual contact or behaviour with sex workers without consent;

Identification and assessment of domestic violence and sexual violence cases

- (c) as the number of "domestic violence (miscellaneous)" cases had dropped drastically since the introduction of the "domestic incidents" category by the Police in 2009, some deputations were concerned that front-line police officers would become less sensitive to domestic violence and simply regarded domestic violence cases of non-violent nature as "domestic incidents";
- (d) as the number of newly reported domestic violence cases received by the Social Welfare Department ("SWD") represented only a small proportion of the number of domestic conflict cases handled by the Police, concern was raised about the collaboration between the Police and SWD in handling such cases. It was pointed out that the criteria for the Police to determine the classification of individual domestic conflict reports were ambiguous, thus resulting in incorrect assessment of the situation faced by victims of domestic violence and the need for making timely referrals for appropriate assistance and support services. There was a suggestion that a comprehensive review should be conducted in respect of the Police's classification system for domestic violence

cases, with a view to ensuring appropriate classification of these cases;

- (e) some deputations expressed concern about the effectiveness of early identification of families at-risk and suggested that consideration should be given to introducing universal screening for children attending hospitals, Maternal and Child Health Centres and schools so as to identify hidden cases of child abuse for providing early intervention and timely support for families at-risk;
- (f) concern was also expressed that only a small number of sexual violence cases (especially indecent assault) had been referred by the Police for social support services;
- (g) the Police should formulate clear procedural guidelines governing handling of sexual violence against sex workers, particularly the conduct of body searches on transgendered sex workers;

#### Support for families at-risk and sexual minorities

- (h) victims of domestic violence who were new arrival women with young children and had no family support in Hong Kong would often have limited means to assistance. Front-line social workers should give due attention to cater for the specific needs of these victims, such as their imminent need for housing assistance, and allow more flexibility in helping them;
- (i) apart from spousal violence, the Administration should attach equal importance to cases of elder abuse, same-sex couples and child psychological abuse, especially children witnessing domestic violence. More and necessary resources and support services should be provided for high-risk families, in particular new arrivals, and children with mental health problems. By making reference to the "one school social worker for each secondary school" scheme, the Administration should consider providing each police station with one social worker so as to render timely assistance to the victims of domestic violence and sexual violence;
- (j) the Administration should review the effectiveness of Comprehensive Child Development Service, which was launched in 2005, with the aim of identifying at an early stage children aged zero to five and their families with special needs and providing appropriate service. Consideration should be given to introducing

an infant home visiting programme to provide early intervention of child abuse. There was a view that the Child Fatality Review Panel should expand its scope to cover serious injury cases in addition to child death cases;

- (k) dedicated support services should be provided for sexual minorities suffering from domestic violence and sexual violence, such as the provision of accommodation at refuge centres;
- (l) representatives from sexual minorities should be invited to join the Working Group on Combating Violence, which was chaired by the Director of Social Welfare and responsible for mapping out strategies to address the problem of spouse battering and sexual violence;
- (m) concern was raised over the resources allocated for the support services specifically for victims of same-sex relationships suffering from domestic violence since the implementation of the Domestic and Cohabitation Relationships Violence Ordinance (Cap. 189) in 2010;

#### Training for different disciplines

- (n) concern was raised about whether front-line police officers had been provided with adequate and proper training on distinguishing domestic violence cases from domestic incidents;
- (o) front-line police officers and social workers should be provided with appropriate and adequate training relating to domestic violence and sexual violence, especially when handling cases involving same-sex relationships and transgendered issues, with a view to enhancing their sensitivity, professional knowledge and skills in handling such cases;

#### Publicity and public education

- (p) the Administration should allocate more resources to increase the public awareness and understanding of the issue of domestic violence, in particular psychological abuse, enhance public education on anti-domestic violence and step up efforts in promoting the concepts of gender equality and family values;

- (q) the Administration should enhance the public education programmes on support services for victims of domestic violence and sexual violence;

Statistics on domestic violence and sexual violence

- (r) the Administration should keep separate statistics on domestic violence and sexual violence cases involving same-sex couples as well as the respective referrals of such cases to SWD for follow-up; and
- (s) SWD's Central Information System on Spouse/Cohabitant Battering Cases and Sexual Violence Cases should maintain separate data on abuse cases of non-physically violent nature.

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