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

**Background brief prepared by Legislative Council Secretariat
for the meeting on 9 February 2015**

Shelter service for victims of domestic violence and sexual violence

Purpose

This paper provides background information and gives an account of the past discussions by Members on shelter service for victims of domestic violence and sexual violence since the Third Legislative Council ("LegCo").

Background

2. According to the Administration, individuals and families in crisis of domestic violence can seek temporary accommodation at emergency shelters. At present, the Social Welfare Department ("SWD") subvents non-governmental organisations to operate five refuge centres for women, namely Wai On Home for Women, Harmony House, Serene Court, Sunrise Court and Dawn Court, offering a total of 260 temporary residential places to females and their children in face of domestic violence or family crisis. The five refuge centres accept referrals from social workers and the Police. Request for the service can be made through casework service units of SWD. Refuge centres also accept admission on a 24-hour basis. Cases admitted to the refuge centres may stay at the refuge for two weeks, but the period of stay may be extended to a maximum period of three months.

3. In addition, the CEASE Crisis Centre ("CEASE"), a multi-purpose crisis intervention and support centre operated by the Tung Wah Group of Hospitals, provides 80 short-term residential places for victims of sexual violence and individuals/families encountering domestic violence or other family crises. The Family Crisis Support Centre operated by the Caritas-Hong Kong also provided 40 places of short-term accommodation for individuals and families in crisis or distress. Direct application or referral by any organisations to refuge centres and crisis centres is accepted.

Members' deliberations

4. Members expressed concern about the length of stay at the refuge centres for women, which was generally limited to two weeks due to heavy demand for shelter service and the long waiting time for the allocation of public rental housing flats. Noting that the average utilisation rate of the five refuge centres for women and that of the crisis centres reached 80% and 90% respectively in 2011-2012, Members considered the provision of short-term accommodation for victims of domestic violence and sexual violence inadequate to address their needs. There was a view that the Administration should formulate a long-term plan to increase the supply of temporary residential places for these victims to meet future demand.

5. The Administration advised that the establishment of refuge centres for women was to meet the immediate and temporary housing needs of victims of domestic violence. Depending on the needs of individual cases, extension up to one month or more to a maximum of three months had been granted. As there had been an increase in the average utilisation of refuge centres for women in 2013-2014, the refuge centres had exercised flexibility in admission with a view to meeting the service demand as far as possible. Notably, a mutual referral mechanism had been adopted among the five refuge centres to ensure that women and children in need would not be denied access to the service due to the shortage of residential places in the refuge centre that the victim approached. The Administration assured Members that SWD would continue to closely monitor and review the utilisation of the refuge centres, and consider increasing the residential places of refuge centres when necessary.

6. In response to the call from Members for the provision of shelter service specifically for sexual minorities suffering from domestic violence and sexual violence, the Administration considered the existing accommodation service provided by the five refuge centres for women and

the crisis centres capable to cater for the needs of persons with different sexual orientations facing domestic violence and sexual violence. As such, the Administration did not see the need to provide specialised support services for sexual minorities.

Relevant papers

7. A list of the relevant papers on the LegCo website is in the **Appendix**.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
4 February 2015

**Relevant papers on shelter service for
victims of domestic violence and sexual violence**

Committee	Date of meeting	Paper
Subcommittee on Strategy and Measures to Tackle Family Violence	-	Report (issued on 27 June 2008)
Legislative Council	7 January 2009	Written question (No.18) on "CEASE Crisis Centre"
Panel on Welfare Services	14 January 2013 (Item V)	Agenda Minutes
	30 June 2014 (Item II)	Agenda Minutes
Legislative Council	5 November 2014	Written question (No.9) on "Domestic violence"

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