

**立法會**  
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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 12 May 2015**

**Handling of abuse cases involving children and young persons**

**Purpose**

This paper gives an account of the past discussions by Members on issues relating to the handling of abuse cases involving children and young persons since the Fourth Legislative Council ("LegCo").

**Background**

2. According to the Administration, the Social Welfare Department ("SWD") adopts a multi-disciplinary and cross-sectoral model to assist victims of domestic and sexual violence including children and young persons, safeguard the best interests of children, protect victims or suspected victims of child abuse and ensure co-operation among all relevant stakeholders. SWD has joined hands with the relevant departments to develop the "Procedural Guide for Handling Child Abuse Cases" ("Procedural Guide"), which sets out the codes of practice for reference by different professionals working in the departments and organisations to provide appropriate support for those in need.

3. In addition, the 65 Integrated Family Service Centres ("IFSCs") over the territory run by SWD and non-governmental organisations ("NGOs")

provide needy families with support services, including assisting children and adolescents to resolve their family and developmental problems. The 138 Integrated Children and Youth Services Centres across the territory also provide a series of preventive, support and remedial services to meet the multifarious needs of children and youth aged six to 24.

## **Members' deliberations**

### Definition of child abuse

4. Members noted that a set of definition and indicators for child abuse were set out in the Procedural Guide. There were views that children witnessing domestic violence should be regarded as suffering from a form of child abuse. The Administration advised that various factors had to be considered to determine whether a case of witnessing domestic violence should be taken as a case of child abuse. It depended on, for example, how the incident took place and how the child reacted, and it would be inappropriate to prescribe the same conclusion for all cases. The responsible professionals would make assessment case by case and take into consideration the actual circumstances and various factors.

### Support services for child abuse cases

5. Given that domestic violence not only inflicted physical harms on the victims but also brought negative impacts on the children, Members expressed concern whether the services and support for the abused children were adequate. According to the Administration, apart from case services, SWD had since 2007 launched the Family Support Programmes in IFSCs/Integrated Services Centres, Family and Child Protective Services Units ("FCPSUs") and Psychiatric Medical Social Services Units. Through telephone contacts, home visits and other outreaching services, SWD proactively reached out to vulnerable families that were unmotivated to seek help, and encouraged children and adolescents in families at risk of domestic violence to receive appropriate support services to prevent further deterioration of their problems.

6. The Administration further advised that SWD had also launched the Victim Support Programme for Victims of Family Violence ("VSP") since June 2010 to provide comprehensive support services to victims, including child witnesses and abused children, to facilitate their early return to normal

lives. Under VSP, emotional support and relevant information on the judicial proceedings and social support services were provided for victims of spouse/cohabitant battering and child abuse cases, particularly those undergoing judicial proceedings. VSP had been since July 2013 further enhanced to extend its child visitation services to victims of domestic violence living outside refuge centres and Multi-purpose Crisis Intervention and Support Centre.

7. Some Members were concerned that the psychological problems of children witnessing domestic violence might only emerge when they grew up. Noting that there was currently no structured service programme dedicated for children witnessing domestic violence, these Members called on the Administration to seriously consider providing dedicated services for such children. The Administration advised that front-line staff of SWD including social workers and clinical psychologists would offer assistance to batterers, victims and their children. As not all children who were witnesses to domestic violence required counselling services from clinical psychologists or psychiatrists, clinical psychologists would provide treatment service for child witnesses when necessary. Some Members remained of the view that all children encountering domestic violence would be affected psychologically to a certain extent and considered the current arrangement inadequate to meet the needs of the child victims.

8. As regards the follow-up in respect of child abuse cases, Members were advised that the Police would handle and investigate all complaints or reports of child abuse, domestic violence and sexual violence cases. The police officers of Child Abuse Investigation Units ("CAIUs") and social workers of SWD's FCPSUs would form the Child Protection Special Investigation Team to conduct joint investigation in serious child abuse cases that fell within the charter of CAIUs as stipulated in the Procedural Guide. Investigation into child abuse cases which fell outside the charter of CAIU would be undertaken by Police Divisional/District Crime Units. To reduce the child victim's anxiety, video-recorded interviews with child victims will be conducted in the specially designed video interview suites. Where there was a need for statutory protection for the children, social workers of SWD might initiate care or protection proceedings for the children under the Protection of Children and Juveniles Ordinance (Cap. 213).

## **Relevant papers**

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

Council Business Division 2  
Legislative Council Secretariat  
7 May 2015

**Relevant papers on the handling of abuse cases  
involving children and young persons**

Committee	Date of meeting	Paper
Legislative Council	26 January 2011	<a href="#">Council question (No. 2) on "Child abuse"</a>
Panel on Welfare Services	14 January 2013 (Item V)	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>
Finance Committee	3 April 2014	Administration's replies to Members' initial written questions in examining the Estimates of Expenditure 2014-2015 ( <a href="#">Reply Serial No. LWB(WW)0412</a> )
		Administration's replies to Members' initial written questions in examining the Estimates of Expenditure 2014-2015 ( <a href="#">Reply Serial No. LWB(WW)0478</a> )