

For discussion  
on 9 June 2015

**Legislative Council Panel on Welfare Services**

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

**Support Services for Sexual Minorities  
Facing Domestic Violence and Sexual Violence**

**Purpose**

This paper briefs Members on the support services for sexual minorities facing domestic violence and sexual violence, and provides responses to the questions raised by the LGBT Against Domestic Violence Alliance in its letter of 23 April 2015.

**Principle**

2. It is the objective of the Social Welfare Department (SWD) to assist all families and individuals in need by providing appropriate services - regardless of age, gender, race and sexual orientation. To support victims of domestic or sexual violence and families in need, a series of preventive, supportive and specialised services are provided through the Integrated Family Service Centres (IFSCs)/Integrated Services Centres (ISCs), Family and Child Protective Services Units (FCPSUs), Clinical Psychology Unit, Family Support Networking Teams, refuge centres for women, Family Crisis Support Centre, Multi-purpose Crisis Intervention and Support Centre (named as CEASE), Victim Support Programme for Victims of Family Violence, etc. These support services operated by SWD or subvented non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are also available to sexual minorities in need. Moreover, to tie in with the implementation of the Domestic and Cohabitation Relationships Violence Ordinance (Cap. 189) (the “Ordinance”)<sup>1</sup>, SWD has

---

<sup>1</sup> The Domestic Violence (Amendment) Ordinance 2009 seeks to further extend the coverage of the Domestic Violence Ordinance (DVO) to same-sex cohabitants, former same-sex cohabitants and their children. The short title of the DVO was revised to read as Domestic and Cohabitation Relationships Violence Ordinance, which took effect in January 2010.

been providing training to the frontline social workers to enhance their understanding of the Ordinance and the knowledge about same-sex cohabitation relationships, with a view to enhancing their sensitivity in handling domestic violence cases involving same-sex cohabitant and applying for injunctions under the Ordinance.

### **Procedural Guidelines**

3. When handling child abuse, spouse/cohabitant battering and sexual violence cases (including cases involving sexual minorities), social workers will make reference to the procedural guidelines, which have been developed by SWD jointly with the relevant departments and organisations, namely the “Procedural Guide for Handling Intimate Partner Violence Cases”, “Procedural Guide for Handling Child Abuse Cases” and “Procedural Guidelines for Handling Adult Sexual Violence Cases”. These three sets of procedural guidelines are for reference and use by different professionals working in the government departments and NGOs (including social welfare service units, the Hong Kong Police Force (the Police), the Hospital Authority (HA), Department of Health (DH), Legal Aid Department (LAD) and schools, etc.) who may come across child abuse, intimate partner violence and sexual violence cases. The abovementioned guidelines are applicable to people with different backgrounds and needs, including new arrivals, ethnic minorities and sexual minorities.

### **Handling Domestic Violence Cases Involving Sexual Minorities**

4. Comprising experienced social workers, FCPSUs are set up to specifically handle cases of child abuse and spouse/cohabitant abuse (including cases involving sexual minorities). Upon receipt of a case, the social worker assesses the case’s situation and needs, and provides a co-ordinated package of one-stop service for the victims, their family members and abusers. Multi-disciplinary support is provided to help the victims and their children tide over the difficult period, lessen the trauma and live a new life, while counselling is arranged for abusers to help change their abusive attitude and behaviour. Social workers of FCPSUs perform the role of a case manager to co-ordinate a wide range of services and assistance, including crisis intervention, short-term accommodation (at refuge centres or other crisis centres), counselling, clinical psychological services, medical treatment, housing assistance, financial assistance, etc. Statutory protection for children is also provided where necessary.

5. Also, the 65 IFSCs and two ISCs in the territory operated by SWD and NGOs provide a spectrum of preventive, supportive and remedial services for other types of persons affected by domestic violence, for example, domestic violence between grown-up children and their parents; or between the grown-up children (including cases involving sexual minorities). Each IFSC/ISC serves a well-defined geographical service area under the guiding principles of easy access, early identification, integrated services and partnership. Integrated services are provided for individuals and families according to their needs as assessed, which may include family life education, parent-child activities, consultation, volunteer training, outreaching services, group activities and programmes, counselling, service referrals, etc.

### **Handling Sexual Violence Cases Involving Sexual Minorities**

6. Since 2007, SWD has adopted a new service model to support sexual violence victims (including sexual minorities). For each case there is a designated social worker acting as the case manager to co-ordinate and provide immediate support and follow-up services, including emotional support, counselling, reporting to the Police, arranging medical treatment and forensic examination, as well as escorting and accompanying the victim to go through all necessary procedures. Irrespective of which district or department first takes up the case, the designated social worker provides 24-hour outreaching services for the victim and arranges for other services in locations accessible to the victim. To enable victims to receive services and go through all relevant procedures in a convenient, safe, confidential and supportive environment and minimise the need for them to recount the unpleasant experience, SWD continues to enhance the collaboration between departments and services units in providing the person-centred one-stop service. As an integral part of this new service model, CEASE, set up by SWD in 2007, provides immediate crisis intervention and support services (including short-term accommodation) and makes referrals to relevant social and medical service units for domestic or sexual violence victims as well as individuals/families in crisis or in distress so as to assist them to handle the crisis and distress.

### **Shelter Service**

7. Sexual minorities and their families suffering from domestic or sexual violence may need shelter service. SWD-subsidised refuge centres for women and CEASE arrange for temporary refuge for domestic violence victims as well as families and individuals in crisis, while the Family Crisis Support Centre

provides short-term accommodation for individuals in crisis or in distress. If in need, sexual minorities facing domestic or sexual violence can also obtain support services from SWD. For example, CEASE may provide temporary accommodation and support services for victims abused by same-sex cohabitants or transgender victims. Refuge centres for women may offer short-term accommodation and support services for women abused by same-sex cohabitants. Same-sex cohabitants in crisis or in distress may get a placement at the Family Crisis Support Centre.

8. For sexual minorities faced with domestic or sexual violence admitted to the centres mentioned above, the centres will handle the case with care and ensure that those in need can receive the appropriate services. Having regard to the special circumstances of the sexual minorities, the centres will make suitable arrangements to meet their personal needs during their stay. For instance, separate bedrooms and shower facilities may be assigned as far as possible, and the use of laundry facilities could be flexibly arranged to avoid situations that may cause embarrassment. The centres will also organise sharing sessions to enhance the understanding of the needs of sexual minorities and foster mutual acceptance among residents. Internal professional training for the staff of the centres is held on a regular basis to enhance their sensitivity and skills in handling cases involving sexual minorities.

9. In 2014-15, the average utilisation rates of the five refuge centres for women and CEASE were 95% and 89% respectively, slightly lower than the corresponding figures recorded in 2013-14. Moreover, the refuge centres are flexible in admission and have set up a common referral mechanism to ensure that those in need will not be denied the service because a refuge centre is full. In view of the fluctuating service demand, SWD will monitor closely the utilisation of each centre. It will also explore with the centres the feasibility of increasing the number of places in their existing premises, and actively seek the necessary resources to meet the extra manpower and infrastructure requirements for the additional places.

### **Training for Frontline Social Workers**

10. SWD provides frontline social workers with training of different themes with multiple perspectives, including courses related to sexual minorities, to enhance their knowledge on relevant topics so that they can conduct professional, comprehensive and independent assessments when dealing with cases in their care and provide services appropriate to the needs of individual

service users. Given the unique circumstances and needs of sexual minorities, SWD has strengthened staff training to enhance frontline social workers' understanding of sexual minorities, working skills and sensitivity, in order to offer assistance to sexual minorities faced with domestic and sexual violence.

11. From 2010-11 to 2014-15, a total of 12 training courses on sexual orientation and transgender issues were organised by the Staff Development and Training Section of SWD and attended by about 680 participants, including social workers from SWD, NGOs and the Hospital Authority. The topics covered, inter alia, assistance for sexual minorities to handle life's challenges and violence, youth sexual orientation and counselling, the Ordinance, and injunction application procedure. As a general practice, feedback from participants was collected by questionnaire after each course to evaluate its effectiveness. The findings show that the courses were satisfactorily effective. Information about the abovementioned courses is detailed at **Annex**.

### **Publicity and Public Education**

12. SWD and subvented organisations promotes the message of prevention of domestic and sexual violence through various media, with sexual minorities being one of the target groups. The publicity channels used in the past five years included broadcasting docu-dramas and publicity videos on television, showing educational short films on transportation systems/the Internet, posting posters at public venues and transportation systems, launching games and competitions on the Internet, distributing promotional leaflets and premiums, etc. In 2013, SWD produced jointly with the Radio Television Hong Kong a new series of docu-drama, "The Moment 2". One of the episodes looked into family conflicts over gender identity issues and ways to handle the matter. Public education activities of anti-domestic violence are also organised from time to time by SWD's District Social Welfare Offices. To encourage sexual minorities facing domestic or sexual violence to seek assistance, it is highlighted in SWD's leaflets and websites that support services against domestic and sexual violence are provided to all victims regardless of gender, race and sexual orientation. In addition, various activities targeted at the sexual minorities are conducted by SWD-subvented organisations to promote the message of prevention of domestic and sexual violence and early help-seeking. For example, since 2012, the relevant organisation has distributed, on a regular basis, publicity materials at places frequented by sexual minorities to promote the message of prevention of domestic and sexual violence and introduce its services. Also, tertiary students are recruited as volunteers to participate in

publicity events after receiving training organised jointly with the sexual minority groups, so as to help promote the events as well as foster mutual respect and acceptance among people of different sexual orientations. Moreover, the relevant organisation also provides a series of activities on prevention of domestic violence and support services for sexual minorities every year. Various types of talks, group activities or educational/developmental programmes are organised or jointly organised with sexual minority groups. For example, through the “playback theatre – harmonious relationship” which featured activities, sharing sessions, workshops, etc., sexual minorities can learn how to prevent and handle domestic violence, enhance their resilience and raise their self-esteem, get along with their partners and improve mutual communication.

### **Working Group on Combating Violence**

13. The Working Group on Combating Violence (the Working Group) under SWD is set up to formulate policies to combat domestic and sexual violence through an inter-departmental and multi-disciplinary approach. The Working Group comprises representatives from relevant government bureaux and departments and NGOs serving victims of domestic/sexual violence. It is tasked to map out strategies and approaches in combating the problem, including prevention, public education, publicity and provision of services; examine the existing procedures and guidelines; and recommend improvement measures; strengthen co-ordination and co-operation among government departments, NGOs and professionals in handling and combating the problem; and co-ordinate statistics and facilitate research studies. Given its extensive purview, the Working Group already has a total of 23 members (including the Chairman). Further expansion in structure and organisation is not advisable for its effective operation and function.

14. SWD attaches great importance to the needs of different strata and groups in the community. Currently, there are various bodies/organisations in Hong Kong which are concerned about domestic violence against specific groups, such as ethnic minorities, male victims, new arrivals and sexual minorities. They each have their distinct founding objectives, matters of concern and working targets. To solicit their views on the issues of domestic/sexual violence and related support services more effectively, SWD has all along been making use of different channels to collect their views. It is hoped that through regular meetings and communication with different groups, there can be in-depth and focused discussions and exchanges.

15. Since 2011, SWD has met with sexual minority groups on a regular basis to discuss about domestic violence issues involving sexual minorities and views on various support services. Having regard to the concerns of sexual minorities, meetings have also been organised between the NGOs operating refuge centres, the Police and the relevant groups to discuss services of the refuge centres and the handling of domestic violence cases involving sexual minorities by the Police. The meetings have enabled relevant organisations/service units and sexual minorities to have better understanding of the handling of domestic violence problems and facilitate the improvement of services.

### **Reporting Mechanism of Spouse/Cohabitant Battering Cases and Sexual Violence Cases**

16. SWD maintains the Central Information System on Spouse/Cohabitant Battering Cases and Sexual Violence Cases (the “Central Information System”) to collect data on cases of spouse/cohabitant battering and sexual violence handled by different departments and organisations. In 2013, the data input form of the Central Information System was revised to include more data categories, such as abuse involving same-sex cohabitation relationship. At present, the reporting agencies include service units operated by SWD and NGOs, HA, the Police, DH and LAD. An extensive range of cases of spouse/cohabitant battering and sexual violence handled by frontline personnel of the departments and organisations are covered, including cases which involve sexual minority victims. When handling a domestic or sexual violence case, frontline social workers and professionals of the organisations will conduct a professional assessment on the nature of the case before reporting it to the Central Information System. The particulars to be reported include the type of abuse, the victim’s and abuser’s gender, age, years of residence, ethnicity, academic qualifications, occupation, and the abuser’s relationship with the victim.

17. To ensure data accuracy, the Central Information System does not accept reporting by individuals or groups at the moment. In pursuance to the Procedural Guide for Handling Intimate Partner Violence Cases, victims of intimate partner violence and their family members may come to the attention of different organisations, e.g. kindergartens, child care centres and social service units, at different junctures. To ensure timely offer of assistance, staff of any organisation coming across a case of intimate partner violence should, with the victim’s consent, seek advice from or refer the case to FCPSUs of SWD or IFSCs/ISCs of SWD/NGOs at the earliest possible time. These service units will report the case to the Central Information System where necessary.

## **Way Forward**

18. SWD will continue to maintain close liaison and communication with various sectors, improve its services and enhance the training of frontline social workers, with a view to providing better support for individuals and families (including sexual minorities) faced with domestic or sexual violence.

## **Advice Sought**

19. Members are invited to note the content of this paper.

**Labour and Welfare Bureau**  
**Social Welfare Department**  
**June 2015**



### Training on issues related to sexual minority

**2010-11**

Name of Programme	Contents	Date / No. of Course Hours	Target Participants Remarks	No. of Participants	Name of Trainer
Training Course on Understanding the “Domestic and Cohabitation Relationships Violence Ordinance (Cap. 189)” and use of Injunction Order for Protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Introduction of background and development of Domestic and Cohabitation Relationships Violence Ordinance</li> <li>● Coverage and highlights of the Ordinance</li> <li>● Procedures of injunctions against domestic violence and child protection</li> </ul>	17.12.2010 / 3 hours	Social workers of SWD, NGOs and HA	46	Mr Ho Chi-kuen, Dennis Solicitor
<b>Total:</b>				<b>46</b>	

Remarks: SWD – Social Welfare Department; NGOs – Non-governmental organisations; HA – Hospital Authority; TMCJH – Tuen Mun Children and Juvenile Home

**2011-12**

Name of Programme	Contents	Date / No. of Course Hours	Target Participants	No. of Participants	Name of Trainer
Workshop on Working with Same-sex Individual Facing Intimate Partner Violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Explore participants' perceptions on sexual minorities in Hong Kong</li> <li>● Highlight knowledge and ethical debates in social work profession related to sexual minorities in social service provision.</li> <li>● Case studies:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Explore individual and institutional help-seeking barriers using affirmative counselling approach</li> <li>b) Address the barriers using affirmative counselling approach</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	17.5.2011 / 7 hours	Social workers of SWD, NGOs and HA	25	Ms Kwok-kan, Diana Lecturer, Department of Applied Social Science, City University of Hong Kong
Talks on Giving Guidance to Same-Sex Attracted Youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Basic concepts and definitions on sexual identity</li> <li>● Issues relating to same-sex attraction</li> <li>● Understanding the developmental needs / difficulties faced by same-sex attracted young people</li> <li>● Skills that can be employed to work with same-sex attracted young people and their parents</li> </ul>	17.6.2011 / 7 hours	Social Workers from SWD service units of all districts and TMCJH	55	Dr Hong Kwai-wah Psychiatrist

Remarks: SWD – Social Welfare Department; NGOs – Non-governmental organisations; HA – Hospital Authority; TMCJH – Tuen Mun Children and Juvenile Home

Name of Programme	Contents	Date / No. of Course Hours	Target Participants	No. of Participants	Name of Trainer
Training Course on Understanding the “Domestic and Cohabitation Relationships Violence Ordinance (Cap. 189)” and use of Injunction Order for Protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Introduction of background and development of Domestic and Cohabitation Relationships Violence Ordinance</li> <li>● Coverage and highlights of the Ordinance</li> <li>● Procedures of injunctions against domestic violence and child protection</li> </ul>	29.11.2011 / 3 hours	Social workers of SWD, NGOs and HA	84	Mr Ho Chi-kuen, Dennis Solicitor
<b>Total:</b>				<b>164</b>	

Remarks: SWD – Social Welfare Department; NGOs – Non-governmental organisations; HA – Hospital Authority; TMCJH – Tuen Mun Children and Juvenile Home

**2012-13**

Name of Programme	Contents	Date / No. of Course Hours	Target Participants	No. of Participants	Name of Trainer
Training Course on Working with Youth over Sexual Orientation Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Basic concepts and definitions on sexual identity</li> <li>● Issues relating to same-sex attraction</li> <li>● Understanding the developmental needs / difficulties faced by same-sex attracted young people</li> <li>● Skills that can be employed to work with same-sex attracted young people and their parents</li> </ul>	12.9.2012 / 7 hours	Social workers from SWD service units of all districts and TMCJH	69	Mr Alex Lam, Clinical Psychologist, SWD
Sharing Session on Handling Intimate Partner Violence Cases of Homosexuality and Transgender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Theoretical and scientific understanding of homosexual and transgender</li> <li>● Challenges faced by potential service users and providers in the Hong Kong context</li> <li>● Discuss and explore appropriate ways of handling relevant homosexual and transgender cases facing intimate partner violence brought up by participants</li> </ul>	16.10.2012 / 3.5 hours	Social workers of SWD, NGOs and HA	57	Prof. Ng Man-lun, Psychiatrist and sexologist
Training Course on Understanding the “Domestic and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Introduction of background and development of Domestic and Cohabitation Relationships Violence</li> </ul>	22.11.2012 / 3 hours	Social workers of SWD, NGOs and HA	42	Dr Cheng Kwok-kit, Edwin, Consultant Solicitor

Remarks: SWD – Social Welfare Department; NGOs – Non-governmental organisations; HA – Hospital Authority; TMCJH – Tuen Mun Children and Juvenile Home

Name of Programme	Contents	Date / No. of Course Hours	Target Participants	No. of Participants	Name of Trainer
Cohabitation Relationships Violence Ordinance (Cap. 189)” and the use of Injunction Order for Protection	Ordinance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Highlight of Domestic and Cohabitation Relationships Violence Ordinance (Cap. 189) with relevant cases</li> <li>● Application procedure for Injunction Order under Domestic and Cohabitation Relationships Violence Ordinance</li> </ul>				
<b>Total:</b>				<b>168</b>	

Remarks: SWD – Social Welfare Department; NGOs – Non-governmental organisations; HA – Hospital Authority; TMCJH – Tuen Mun Children and Juvenile Home

## 2013-14

Name of Programme	Contents	Date / No. of Course Hours	Target Participants	No. of Participants	Name of Trainer
Sharing Session on Working with Same-sex and Transsexual Couples Facing Intimate Partner Violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Understanding same-sex and transsexual/transgender couple relationship</li> <li>● Understanding same-sex couple violence</li> <li>● Working with same-sex and transsexual/transgender couples</li> </ul>	25.6.2013 / 3.5 hours	Social workers of SWD and NGOs	49	<p>Ms Ingrid Mak, Senior Clinical Psychologist, Hong Kong Police Force</p> <p>Dr Ephraem Tsui, Clinical Psychologist, Hong Kong Police Force</p>
Training Course on Working with Youth over Sexual Orientation Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Basic concepts and definitions on sexual identity</li> <li>● Issues relating to same-sex attraction</li> <li>● Understanding the developmental needs / difficulties faced by same-sex attracted young people</li> <li>● Skills that can be employed to work with same-sex attracted young people and their parents</li> </ul>	30.9.2013 / 7 hours	Social workers from SWD service units of all districts and TMCJH	48	Mr Alex Lam, Clinical Psychologist, Social Welfare Department
Domestic and Cohabitation Relationships Violence Ordinance (Capt. 189) and Application of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Introduction of background and development of Domestic and Cohabitation Relationships Violence Ordinance</li> <li>● Highlight of Domestic and Cohabitation Relationships Violence</li> </ul>	10.12.2013 / 3 hours	Social workers of SWD, NGOs and HA	78	Mr Leung Shek-lim, Solicitor

Remarks: SWD – Social Welfare Department; NGOs – Non-governmental organisations; HA – Hospital Authority; TMCJH – Tuen Mun Children and Juvenile Home

Name of Programme	Contents	Date / No. of Course Hours	Target Participants	No. of Participants	Name of Trainer
Injunction Order	Ordinance (Cap. 189) with relevant cases <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Application procedure for Injunction Order under Domestic and Cohabitation Relationships Violence Ordinance</li> </ul>				
<b>Total:</b>				<b>175</b>	

Remarks: SWD – Social Welfare Department; NGOs – Non-governmental organisations; HA – Hospital Authority; TMCJH – Tuen Mun Children and Juvenile Home

**2014-15**

Name of Programme	Contents	Date / No. of Course Hours	Target Participants	No. of Participants	Name of Trainer
Basic Training on Working with Transsexual and Transgender Persons Facing Life Challenges and Violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Overview of the transsexual and transgender persons and their situations in Hong Kong</li> <li>● Life challenges, mental health issues and violence faced by the transsexual and transgender persons</li> <li>● Sensitivity, skills and practice wisdom in working with the transsexual and transgender persons</li> </ul>	3.9.2014 / 3.5 hours	Social workers of SWD and NGOs; Clinical Psychologists of SWD	71	Dr Greg Mak Kai-lok, Associate Consultant, Castle Peak Hospital
Training Course on Working with Youth over Sexual Orientation Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Basic concepts and definitions on sexual identity</li> <li>● Issues relating to same-sex attraction</li> <li>● Understanding the developmental needs / difficulties faced by same-sex attracted young people</li> <li>● Skills that can be employed to work with same-sex attracted young people and their parents</li> </ul>	11.9.2014 / 7 hours	Social workers from SWD service units of all districts and TMCJH	58	Mr Alex Lam, Clinical Psychologist, Social Welfare Department
<b>Total:</b>				<b>129</b>	

Remarks: SWD – Social Welfare Department; NGOs – Non-governmental organisations; HA – Hospital Authority; TMCJH – Tuen Mun Children and Juvenile Home