

For discussion  
on 6 October 2015

**Legislative Council Panel on Welfare Services**

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

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

**Purpose**

This paper briefs Members on the various support services for ethnic minorities suffering from domestic violence and sexual violence.

**Principle**

2. It is the objective of the Social Welfare Department (SWD) to assist all people in need, regardless of their age, gender, race and sexual orientation, by providing appropriate services to them. To support victims of domestic or sexual violence and families in need (including ethnic minorities), a series of preventive, supportive and specialised services are provided by SWD, or subvented non-governmental organisations (NGOs), 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. The ethnic minorities in Hong Kong, same as other people here, can also receive the above services.

**Procedural Guidelines**

3. To assist social workers and other relevant professionals in handling child abuse, spouse/cohabitant abuse and sexual violence cases

(including cases involving ethnic minorities), SWD has, in co-operation with the relevant departments and organisations, developed the “Procedural Guide for Handling Child Abuse Cases”, “Procedural Guide for Handling Intimate Partner Violence Cases” and “Procedural Guidelines for Handling Adult Sexual Violence Cases”. These three sets of guidelines are made available to different professionals working in the government departments (including social welfare service units of SWD, the Hong Kong Police Force (the Police), and Department of Health and Legal Aid Department) and in Hospital Authority (HA), schools and other NGOs who may come across child abuse, intimate partner violence and sexual violence cases for reference and use. The abovementioned guidelines are applicable to people with different backgrounds and needs, including ethnic minorities, new arrivals and sexual minorities.

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

4. Comprising experienced social workers, FCPSUs are set up to specifically handle cases of child abuse and spouse/cohabitant abuse (including cases involving ethnic minorities). Upon receipt of a case, a social worker of the unit will assess the case’s situation and needs, and provide 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 to tide over the difficult period, lessen the trauma and live a new life. At the same time, the social worker also arranges counselling 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 and 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 grown-up children (including cases involving ethnic minorities). The IFSCs/ISCs will assess the needs of their clients and

provide appropriate services according to their needs.

6. SWD has also subvented an NGO in the provision of community education programmes and group services for ethnic minorities on the prevention of child abuse.

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

7. Since 2007, SWD has adopted a new service model to support sexual violence victims (including those of ethnic 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/accompanying the victim to go through all necessary procedures. Irrespective of the district or department which first takes up the case, the designated social worker will provide 24-hour outreaching services for the victim and arrange for other services in locations accessible to the victim. To enable victims to receive the services and go through all relevant procedures in a convenient, safe, confidential and supportive setting and minimise the need for them to recount the unpleasant experience, SWD will continue to enhance the collaboration amongst various departments and service units in providing people-oriented one-stop services.

8. 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 their crisis and distress.

### **Shelter Service for Ethnic Minorities in Need**

9. Ethnic minorities and their families suffering from domestic or sexual violence may need shelter service. SWD-subvented refuge centres for women and CEASE arrange for temporary refuge for domestic

violence victims as well as families and individuals in crisis, while FCSC provides short-term accommodation for individuals in crisis or in distress. During their stay in a centre, social workers of the centre will offer individual and/or group counselling to the victims of domestic or sexual violence to help them tackle stress and emotional problems and work out future plans. Service referrals will be made where necessary. Throughout the process, social workers of the centre and other social workers or professionals concerned will maintain close contact to follow up the cases collectively. The centre will also organise therapeutic groups to help victims cope with the trauma of domestic/sexual violence and build up their resilience against adversity through group counselling. For discharged residents, the social workers will provide after-care service to help them adapt to their new life.

10. To meet the special needs of ethnic minorities in respect of their languages, cultures and lifestyles, the refuge centres for women and CEASE will arrange simultaneous interpretation and/or translation services as needed, provide appropriate daily necessities and refer the ethnic minorities to other support services suitable for them. The centres will organise sharing sessions to enhance the understanding of the needs of ethnic minorities and foster mutual acceptance among residents. Internal professional training will also be provided for the staff of the centres to help them better understand the service needs of ethnic minorities.

### **Training for Front-line Social Workers**

11. Having regard to the different cultures and lifestyles of ethnic minorities, SWD provides front-line social workers with training of different themes with multiple perspectives, including courses related to services for ethnic minorities. The training aims at enhancing front-line social workers' knowledge about the service needs of ethnic minorities so that they can conduct professional and comprehensive assessments when dealing with cases in their care and provide services appropriate to the individual needs of ethnic minorities. The Staff Development and Training Section of SWD organised a total of 23 training courses on ethnic minorities in 2014-15. The courses were attended by social workers from SWD, NGOs and HA, with a total of about 900 attendances.

The topics covered, inter alia, understanding of the service needs of ethnic minorities, skills in counselling and handling family disputes, marriage problems and domestic violence issues of ethnic minorities, and existing legislation on equal opportunities and anti-discrimination.

### **Other Information, Interpretation and Translation Services**

12. SWD has produced leaflets on mainstream welfare services (including service leaflets of FCPSUs and IFSCs) as well as leaflets on prevention of child abuse and support services for victims of spouse/cohabitant abuse in six ethnic languages<sup>1</sup> in addition to Chinese and English. The leaflets are available at various venues and the SWD website.

13. SWD will arrange interpretation services, such as those of the Centre for Harmony and Enhancement of Ethnic Minority Residents (CHEER)<sup>2</sup> operated by the Hong Kong Christian Service, as appropriate when providing social welfare services for the ethnic minorities. Since March 2011, SWD has installed web-cam facilities in ten service units for conducting tripartite video conferencing among service users, staff of service units and interpreters when needed. This will enable the ethnic minorities who have language barrier to access the welfare services they need.

### **The Police's Handling of Domestic Violence and Sexual Violence Cases Involving Ethnic Minorities**

#### *Domestic Violence Cases*

14. The Police has all along been handling all domestic violence and sexual violence cases, including cases involving ethnic minorities, in a professional and impartial manner. Upon receiving a case of domestic violence, the Police will deploy an officer of the rank of Sergeant or above to go to the scene to ensure that the case is properly handled. If

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<sup>1</sup> Leaflets are printed in ethnic minority languages including Tagalog, Bahasa Indonesia, Thai, Nepali, Hindi and Pakistani.

<sup>2</sup> The CHEER provides interpretation and translation services in ethnic minority languages, including Tagalog, Bahasa Indonesia, Thai, Nepali, Hindi, Punjabi and Urdu.

the person reporting the case is involved in a report of a similar nature made earlier by the same family, the Police will deploy the investigation team which handled the earlier case to take over the new case for an integrated investigation of all reports made by that family.

15. By making reference to the “Enhanced Central Domestic Violence Database” which contains the information of previous domestic violence cases and the “Emergency Referral Questionnaire” and “Action Checklist” specially designed for handling domestic violence, the Police will assess the risk of recurrence of domestic violence in the family concerned and take appropriate actions accordingly.

16. Besides, the Police will also give a “Family Support Service Information Card”, which has been prepared by the Police in collaboration with SWD, to those in need (including victims and offenders) so that they may contact the service providers for assistance. With the consent of the people concerned, the Police may refer cases to SWD for follow-up. To cater for the needs of ethnic minorities, the “Family Support Service Information Card” has been translated into 12 languages<sup>3</sup> and all the versions have been uploaded to the Police website.

### *Sexual Violence Cases*

17. Upon receiving a report of suspected sexual violence (including cases involving ethnic minorities), the Police’s priority is to ensure the personal safety of victims, protect them from further harm and arrange medical treatment for them. The Police will also start the investigation and follow up the case. They will take a statement from the victims as soon as practicable. When sufficient evidence is gathered, the Police will arrest the perpetrators.

18. The Police endeavours to reduce the pressure on victims of sexual violence who are assisting in investigation. In this connection, immediate referral and one-stop service are provided. At the first contact with victims of sexual violence, police officers will introduce to the victims the crisis intervention services for victims of sexual violence

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<sup>3</sup> The 12 languages include Chinese, English, Hindi, Bahasa Indonesia, Japanese, Korean, Nepali, Sinhalese, Tagalog, Thai, Urdu and Vietnamese.

provided by NGOs. Referral can be made at once with the victims' consent. With the one-stop service model in place, statement-taking and forensic examination for a victim will be conducted in the same public hospital where the victim is receiving treatment as far as practicable. This will avoid the need for the victim to travel and will expedite the investigation process. Victims can also request the presence of any person of their choice when attending police interviews and forensic examination.

### *Arrangements for Statement-taking*

19. For those ethnic minorities who cannot speak fluent Cantonese or English, the Police can take statements from them in the languages or dialects used by them through an interpreter. Victims are allowed, where appropriate, to be accompanied by their family members, friends or the social worker responsible for the case during the statement-taking process. Besides, the Police launched a pilot project named "TRANSLINK" in Kowloon West Region in November 2014 in collaboration with CHEER. The project provides instant telephone interpretation services in seven common ethnic minority languages<sup>4</sup> through teleconferencing to help non-ethnic Chinese persons communicate with police officers.

### *Training Courses for Police Officers*

20. The Police have incorporated relevant topics into their training courses to strengthen the skills, responsiveness and professional sensitivity of front-line officers in handling domestic and sexual violence cases, and to enhance their understanding of the relevant legislation. The relevant training materials will also be reviewed and updated on a regular basis.

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<sup>4</sup> Including Tagalog, Bahasa Indonesia, Thai, Nepali, Hindi, Punjabi and Urdu.

## **Medical Services for Ethnic Minorities in Need**

### *Domestic Violence Cases*

21. When an ethnic minority patient suspected to be a victim of domestic violence attends an accident and emergency (A&E) department of HA, the A&E doctor will examine the patient's history, perform physical examination, provide immediate treatment for any physical injuries and arrange for hospital admission if necessary. The doctor will document the details in the patient's medical record and advise the patient to report the incident to the police officers at the police counter of the A&E department.

22. The patient will also be referred to a Medical Social Worker (MSW) as appropriate for further assessment and follow-up. The MSW will assess the patient's need for services and provide counselling and shelter if necessary. The MSW will also follow the related procedural guidelines and collaborate closely with other parties such as medical teams, the Police, relevant welfare service units of SWD or NGOs to assess the needs of victims and their families and provide them with appropriate support and relevant services, e.g. counselling, financial aid and referral to other community resources. Victims who are emotionally unstable will be referred to psychiatrists and/or clinical psychologists for follow-up.

### *Sexual Violence Cases*

23. When an ethnic minority patient suspected to be a victim of sexual violence attends an A&E Department of HA, the A&E doctor will take the patient's medical history, perform physical examination, provide immediate treatment of any physical injuries and arrange for hospital admission if necessary. The doctor will document the details in the medical record and advise the patient to report the incident to the police officers at the police counter of the A&E department. Taking into consideration the emotional or medical condition of the patient, the doctor/nurse of the A&E department will introduce to the patient, at an appropriate juncture, the services provided by the designated social



workers for handling sexual violence cases, including round-the-clock outreach and crisis intervention service. If the patient does not wish to obtain service from the designated social worker, the service provided by MSW in the hospital or other relevant NGOs will be introduced.

24. To further facilitate communications between the staff of HA and ethnic minority patients in the provision of services, interpretation services in 18 ethnic minority languages<sup>5</sup> can be arranged through HA's service contractor. Depending on the needs of each case or upon request of the patient, the required interpretation services can be provided on-site or via telephone. To strengthen the communication between its frontline staff and the ethnic minority patients so as to facilitate the provision of services, HA has also provided its frontline staff with response cue cards, disease information sheets and consent forms in 18 ethnic minority languages. HA staff are trained to better understand the special needs of the ethnic minority patients. HA will also render the necessary support to the victim and his/her family having regard to individual case and circumstances.

### **Other Support Services for Ethnic Minorities in Need**

25. In addition, the Home Affairs Department (HAD) provides support services for ethnic minorities to help them integrate into the community. The major services include commissioning non-profit-making organisations to run six support service centres and two sub-centres for the ethnic minorities. The centres provide various tailor-made learning classes, interest classes and other integration activities. One of the centres also provides telephone interpretation and translation services to assist ethnic minorities in their use of public services<sup>6</sup>. HAD also sponsors two community support teams to provide special services for the ethnic minority groups through members of their own communities. In addition, HAD funds radio programmes and

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<sup>5</sup> The service contractor of HA provides interpretation services in 18 languages for ethnic minorities, namely Urdu, Hindi, Punjabi, Nepali, Bahasa Indonesia, Vietnamese, Thai, Korean, Bengali, Japanese, Tagalog, German, French, Sinhala, Spanish, Arabic, Malay and Portuguese.

<sup>6</sup> Government bureaux and departments may procure translation or interpretation services from the private sector when necessary to assist their ethnic minority service users. Sponsored by HAD, CHEER provides telephone interpretation and translation services in a number of ethnic minority languages (including Tagalog, Bahasa Indonesia, Thai, Nepali, Hindi, Punjabi and Urdu) to assist ethnic minorities in their use of public services.

publishes service guidebooks in various ethnic minority languages, administers the Harmony Scholarship Scheme, and implements the District-based Integration Programmes and Ambassador Schemes, etc.

### **Advice Sought**

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

**Labour and Welfare Bureau  
Home Affairs Department  
Hong Kong Police Force  
Hospital Authority  
Social Welfare Department**

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