

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)1991/14-15(01)

Ref : CB2/PS/5/12

Panel on Welfare Services

Proposed continuation of work of Subcommittee on Strategy and Measures to Tackle Domestic Violence and Sexual Violence

Purpose

This paper reports on the progress of work of the Subcommittee on Strategy and Measures to Tackle Domestic Violence and Sexual Violence ("the Subcommittee") and invite members of the Panel on Welfare Services ("the Panel") to endorse the proposal of the Subcommittee to extend the period of its work and continue to operate for two more months until 2 February 2016.

Background

2. The Panel agreed at its meeting on 21 January 2013 to appoint a subcommittee on strategy and measures to tackle family violence. The approval of the House Committee was obtained at its meeting on 15 November 2013 for the activation of the Subcommittee upon the completion of work of the Joint Subcommittee on Long-term Care Policy formed under the Panel and the Panel on Health Services. The Panel subsequently agreed at its meeting on 10 November 2014 that the name of the subcommittee would be changed to "Subcommittee on Strategy and Measures to Tackle Domestic Violence and Sexual Violence" and its terms of reference be revised accordingly. The Subcommittee subsequently held its first meeting on 3 December 2014. According to its terms of reference and work plan, the Subcommittee would focus its work on the following areas -

- (a) identification and assessment of domestic violence and sexual violence cases;

- (b) policies for handling domestic violence and sexual violence as well as various support and follow-up services for those involved in such cases;
- (c) coordination of work among government departments and relevant organizations in handling domestic violence and sexual violence;
- (d) legal proceedings relating to cases of domestic violence and sexual violence;
- (e) anti-violence programmes and counselling services for batterers;
- (f) education and preventive measures against domestic violence and sexual violence; and
- (g) recommendations on strategy and measures in handling cases of domestic violence and sexual violence.

Progress of work of the Subcommittee

3. Since December 2014, the Subcommittee has held eight meetings with the Administration and received views of deputations at seven of these meetings. The Subcommittee has studied the following major issues -

- (a) definitions of domestic violence and sexual violence;
- (b) identification and assessment of domestic violence and sexual violence cases;
- (c) reporting and referral mechanisms as well as the procedural guidelines and classification system adopted by the Social Welfare Department and the Police for handling different groups of victims facing domestic violence and sexual violence;
- (d) cooperation among government departments and relevant organizations in providing support and follow-up services for victims of domestic violence and sexual violence;

- (e) housing assistance and shelter service for victims of domestic violence and sexual violence;
- (f) support services for specific groups of victims facing violence (including sexual violence) in domestic setting who are children and young persons, sexual minorities and foreign domestic helpers;
- (g) training for frontline social workers and police officers to enhance their sensitivity, knowledge and professional skills in handling domestic violence and sexual violence cases; and
- (h) publicity and public education to increase the public awareness and understanding of the issue of domestic violence and promote the concepts of gender equality and family values.

Need for continuation of work in the 2015-2016 session

4. The Subcommittee will schedule further meetings from October to December 2015 to deliberate on issues relating to support services for ethnic minority victims facing domestic violence and sexual violence, support and follow-up services for victims in cases of sexual violence as well as the implementation of anti-violence programmes and counselling services for batterers.

5. Rule 26(c) of the House Rules provides that a subcommittee should complete its work within 12 months of its commencement and report to the relevant Panel(s). If it is necessary for a subcommittee to work beyond 12 months, the subcommittee should, after obtaining the endorsement of the relevant Panel(s), report to the House Committee and give justifications for an extension of the 12-month period.

6. The Subcommittee will have worked for 12 months by 2 December 2015. Although the Subcommittee will have largely completed its deliberation on the issues which it is tasked to examine by that time, it has yet to conclude its study, finalize its recommendations and submit its report to the Panel, and it may be necessary to revisit some of the issues examined during the process. The Subcommittee agrees that it should continue to work until early February 2016.

Advice sought

7. Members are invited to note the progress of work of the Subcommittee and endorse the proposal of the Subcommittee to extend its work and continue to operate for two more months until 2 February 2016. Subject to the views of members of the Panel, a report will be made to the House Committee for seeking its approval of the proposal.

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7 August 2015