

LEGCO PANEL ON WELARE SERVICES

Subcommittee on Strategy and Measures to Tackle Family Violence

Supplementary Information Requested by Members at the Meeting held on 3 March 2005

INTRODUCTION

At the meeting of the Subcommittee on Strategy and Measures to Tackle Family Violence held on 3 March 2005, Members requested the Administration to provide supplementary information about the details on the training for Police officers in handling family violence, the timetable for introducing legislative amendments to the Domestic Violence Ordinance and the factors considered by the Social Welfare Department for planning welfare needs at district level. This note sets out the supplementary information requested.

DETAILS

(A) Training for Police officers on domestic violence

2. The Police Force has been providing training on the handling of domestic violence for Police Officers throughout various stages of their career. For instance, a police constable will have received at least 11 training sessions on “Domestic Violence” during the course of their first five years of service. These sessions include the “Basic Training” upon joining the Force, “On The Job Training” upon joining a Division, and “Continuation and Development Training” before and upon reaching the officer’s fifth year of service. Refresher trainings are offered in “Promotion Courses for Station Sergeants and Sergeants”, through

“Divisional Training Day” programmes and seminars delivered by overseas experts organised by the Social Welfare Department.

3. Other topics like “Victim Psychology”, “Empathetic Listening and Response” and “Victim’s Charter”, which equip officers with relevant skills required for handling domestic violence, are also included in the various training programmes.

Objective(s) of the training

4. The main objective of these trainings is to equip Police Officers with the necessary competencies to handle domestic violence. Whilst the content and duration of each training programme may differ, all trainings have the following three focuses:-

- (a) importance of Police intervention in domestic violence incidents;
- (b) proper handling and referral procedures; and
- (c) caring, sensitivity, non-judgmental attitude and communication skills to build up trust.

Format of the trainings and number of Police Officers trained

5. The Basic Training, Development Training and Promotion Courses are conducted at the Police Training School and the instructors are experienced Station Sergeants and Chief Inspectors who have received training on teaching. Both lectures and practical exercises are used in the training sessions.

6. All new recruits have to undergo Basic Training and all Junior Police Officers have to undergo Continuation and Development training within their first five years of service. Upon promotion, Junior Police Officers are required to attend Promotion Courses.

7. As a kind of on-the-job training, each new police constable is to be tutored by a designated Tutor Police Constable (TPC) for the first four weeks after passing out from the Police Training School. Every TPC has to successfully complete the Tutor PC Training.

Frequency of refresher training

8. For refresher as well as on-the-job trainings, all Junior Police Officers (below the rank of Inspector) are required to attend a full-day Training Day (TD) programme which is held once every six to eight weeks. A TD package will be produced for each topic and the Formation Training Team (from Chief Inspector to Sergeant), who are trained and given Training Manual on each topic, will deliver the training to frontline police officers of their own formation.

9. “Child Abuse”, “Domestic Violence” and “Victim Psychology” were included as TD Topic in December 1998, Jan 2001 and March 2004 respectively. In early 2004, “Domestic Violence” was scheduled as TD topic again and the TD package was completely revised with emphasis on showing the dynamics and dilemmas of domestic violence, and hence the need for sensitivity to complaints of domestic violence. To achieve this, the new TD package has incorporated experience sharings from not only individuals involved in previous cases but also a renowned family therapist. Discussion session based on real case study is included to stimulate thoughts. The importance of risk assessment and referral of parties to Social Welfare Department or Non-governmental organisations were repeated in the new TD package.

10. About 16,000 (75%) Junior Police Officers attended the TDs held between July and October 2004. During the TDs, local social workers were invited to share their experience with police officers. The TD package can also be used for refresher training on the discretion of Formation Training Officers when necessary.

11. Discussion seminars have been and will continue to be held as part of the training drive to foster understanding of the problem of domestic violence among divisional supervisory officers. Frontline and Supervisory Officers will continue to attend courses presented by overseas or local professionals.

12. The Police Force is committed to continuing and enhancing its training on domestic violence for Police Officers. Training contents, duration and format will be revised in tandem with the changing needs required of in domestic violence situations, and with the necessary expertise or assistance from other professionals. For easy reference of

all Police Officers, the TD package on “Domestic Violence” has been uploaded onto the Police internal computer system.

(B) Timetable for amending Domestic Violence Ordinance

13. The Government has in place a comprehensive legal framework to tackle domestic violence. Among others, the Domestic Violence Ordinance (Chapter 189) provides protection to married or cohabitating couples and their children from domestic violence. The Government is now reviewing the Domestic Violence Ordinance to examine whether, and if so, how the existing legislative framework may be further strengthened. Key issues under examination include whether the scope of the Ordinance should be expanded to cover other family members; whether the definition of family violence should be revised and if so, how; whether the power of the court to attach power of arrest to injunction orders should be further expanded; whether the duration of the injunction order should be extended; whether mandatory counselling for batterers should be introduced as a sentencing option; whether it is possible to include provisions on prohibition against stalking behaviours in the Ordinance. We will examine these issues carefully, taking into account the suggestions made by LegCo Members and deputations, as well as overseas experience.

14. The review is now underway and we hope to be able to come up with a conclusion as soon as possible. Where legislative amendment is needed, we will consult the Legislative Council and introduce the amendment bill in accordance with normal procedures.

(C) District Welfare Planning

15. The District Social Welfare Officers (DSWOs) of the Social Welfare Department have been performing their roles at the district level in the assessment of district welfare needs, district welfare planning and service co-ordination through a variety of approaches and means. They would also facilitate the Department in identifying service needs and gaps as well as in implementing social welfare policies. Prior to the development of a district welfare planning protocol and a set of social indicators on district welfare needs, DSWOs have been adopting some commonly shared practices and approaches to facilitate district welfare planning. Factors considered for district welfare planning include district demographic and socio-economic data, district characteristics and

dynamics, service provision in the district, policy directives, etc.

16. For instance, to facilitate the re-engineering exercise of family services to form Integrated Family Service Centres, a number of social indicators, among others, have been considered to assess the complexity of social problems in the district. They include new arrivals, elderly population, family service caseload, child abuse and battered spouse cases, CSSA cases under categories of single parent family, low earning and unemployment, youth crime, low educational attainment, etc.

17. The district welfare planning protocol now being developed aims to consolidate good practices currently exercised by DSWOs. It also sets out a more standardised planning framework and approach for DSWOs to follow while at the same time allow flexibility for addressing specific characteristics and needs of individual districts. A set of social indicators are also incorporated as part of the protocol to provide consistent measurements of the multi-dimensional societal conditions at the districts and to serve as one of the means to map out district welfare needs profile and identify service gap. The draft protocol and the set of social indicators are to be made ready for external consultation during the first quarter in 2005-06.

Health, Welfare and Food Bureau,
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Hong Kong Police Force
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