

For Discussion
on 20 June 2005

LEGCO PANEL ON WELFARE SERVICES

Subcommittee on Strategy and Measures to Tackle Family Violence

INTRODUCTION

This paper recapitulates the current Government policy to tackle family violence and the existing mechanisms for effective collaboration with different departments, professionals and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in preventing and tackling family violence.

DETAILS

Government Policy

2. As set out in LC Paper No. CB(2)631/04-05(01) submitted to the Subcommittee on Strategy and Measures to Tackle Family Violence, the Government does not tolerate family violence. Recognising the multi-faceted and complex nature of family violence, our policy objectives are to -

- (a) prevent family violence as far as practicable

We believe that the problem of family violence should be tackled at source. Family violence is an extremely complex phenomenon with its roots in the interaction of many factors at individual and societal levels. We therefore seek to enhance the

protective factors (such as education and community support etc.) and minimize the occurrence of the risk factors (such as lack of family solidarity, social isolation etc.) to reduce domestic violence as far as feasible. Public education programmes are also carried out to educate the society, particularly those individuals at risks, to condemn family violence and to seek early assistance from professionals where necessary.

(b) ensure safety and provide support for victims of family violence

The focus is to provide timely response to violence. Our guiding principle puts safety of victims and children as the first priority. A wide range of services and assistance (including crisis intervention, refuge centres, counselling/clinical psychological treatment, medical treatment, housing assistance etc.) are provided to ensure their safety and provide necessary support to help them tide over the difficult period, lessen trauma associated with violence and live a new life. Legal provision (e.g. injunction order) is also available to provide additional protection for victims.

(c) stop batterers from committing family violence acts

Different types of services e.g. counselling, group programmes and clinical psychological service, etc. are available to help the batterers stop their violent behaviours. Legislation is also in place to penalise batterers committing family violence involving assaults or other criminal offences, thereby deterring them from further abuses.

3. To achieve the above objectives, we have adopted a three-pronged approach to tackle family violence, including –

- (a) preventive measures (such as publicity, community education and enhancing social capital);
- (b) supportive services (such as family services, housing assistance, financial assistance and child care services); and
- (c) specialised services and crisis intervention (such as Family and Child Protective Services Units, a Family Crisis Support Centre

and refuge centres for women etc).

Details of the services available have been set out in our submission to the Panel on Welfare Services [Paper No.CB(2) 145/04-05(05)].

Central Mechanism for Tackling Family Violence

4. As set out in LC Paper No. CB(2)631/04-05(01), the Government recognizes the importance of coordination of the joint efforts of different departments, professionals and NGOs in preventing and tackling family violence. A Working Group on Combating Violence (WGCV) has been set up in 2001 to provide high-level coordination amongst parties concerned to tackle family and sexual violence. One of its tasks is to map out strategies and approaches in handling the problem, from prevention, service provision to inter-sector collaboration etc. The WGCV is chaired by the Director of Social Welfare (DSW) and comprises representatives from relevant policy bureaux, departments and NGOs. The Committee on Child Abuse, also chaired by DSW, is in place to deal with the problem of child abuse, whereas similar working groups are established to deal with elder abuse and publicity campaigns in a coordinated manner.

5. While we consider that appropriate central mechanism is already in place to coordinate multi-sectoral effort to tackle family violence, some members of the WGCV have suggested a review of its roles and functions. This will be followed up by the WGCV.

Health, Welfare and Food Bureau/
Social Welfare Department
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