

For discussion
on 28 March 2006

LEGCO PANEL ON WELFARE SERVICES

Subcommittee on Strategy and Measures to Tackle Family Violence

Improvement Measures of the Police

INTRODUCTION

This paper sets out the improvement measures to be implemented by Police on the handling of domestic violence in response to the recommendations made by the Coroner's Court in the death inquest into the Tin Shui Wai incident occurring in April 2004.

IMPROVEMENT MEASURES ON HANDLING OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

2. Following the death inquest into the Tin Shui Wai incident, Police set up a Force Working Group to carefully review the recommendations in relation to the Police and examine ways to take them forward. Whilst some of the recommendations are in line with the Police's ongoing initiatives, the new improvement measures to be implemented could be broadly categorized into four areas, namely:

Enhanced Investigation Capabilities

3. To improve Police response to domestic violence reports and to ensure standardization of investigations, an Emergency Referral Questionnaire and an Action Checklist will be introduced.

4. The Questionnaire has adopted the concept of risk assessment that is universally employed in the policing of domestic violence. It is designed as an assessment tool to guide officers to reveal existing high risk factors within the victim family by going through a series of simple but crucial threat assessment questions, e.g. recent assault history, severity of injuries, use of weapons. The answers will lead to a decision on whether immediate threat management is required to remove the victim and his/her children to a place of refuge or alternatively of immediate turning out of the Social Welfare Department response team.

5. In recognition of the complexity involved in domestic violence and the number of procedures to be followed, the Action Checklist (AC) has been designed to guide officers to take the necessary and proper actions at the scene of a domestic violence incident.

Enhanced Documentation

6. To assist frontline officers to better document all actions at the scene for future reference, an enhancement in the police electronic documentation system has been sought to upload the information on the Emergency Referral Questionnaire and Action Checklist to the Central Domestic Violence Database. Besides allowing easy retrieval and reference of the information, this will enhance monitoring by supervisory officers.

Enhanced Supervision

7. To enhance the professionalism and expertise in handling reports, an officer of the rank of Sergeant or above will be deployed to the scene to take charge of the investigation.

8. In addition to tightening up frontline supervision, an alert mechanism will also be installed into the Central Domestic Violence Database to automatically generate alarm to the attention of Divisional supervisory officers in respect of repetitive incidents occurring within 12 months or less.

Enhanced Training

9. A newly revised Training Package will be rolled out in July 2006 to provide focus training on the attitude and skills to be adopted in conflict management through scenario exercises and discussions. The package will equip officers with the knowledge and skills required in the completion of the Emergency Referral Questionnaire. The training content, apart from covering the new procedures, will place an equal emphasis on the need to adopt a caring attitude; aware of the sensitivity and victims' psychology and behavioural traits. It will be updated regularly.

10. In addition to the Forcewide training delivered during regular training days, District Commanders will also arrange refresher and special training to address local needs, especially in Districts where the occurrence of domestic violence is of high frequency.

11. To provide better service quality to the public, a publicity drive will be run in parallel to the implementation of improvement initiatives. Furthermore a poster will be put up in every Police report room to advise informant of the right to obtain a Report Reference Card after having made a report to Police.

12. An action plan has been drawn up for the implementation of the various improvement measures. The attendance of an officer of the rank of Sergeant or above to the scene of a domestic violence report will take effect in April. Other measures in the package will be ready by August this year.

13. Police will continue to seek continuous improvement in handling cases of domestic violence so as to provide the best services to victims and their children.