

Proposed research outline

Strategies and measures in tackling domestic violence in selected places

1. Background

1.1 Following a number of family tragedies relating to family violence between 2002 and 2004, the Subcommittee on Strategy and Measures to Tackle Family Violence was set up under the Panel on Welfare Services. Building on two 2005 reports covering overseas experience on combating and reducing incidents of domestic violence published by the Department of Social Work and Social Administration of the University of Hong Kong and the Law Society of Hong Kong respectively, the Research and Library Services Division (RLSD) proposes to conduct a research on the latest experience of tackling domestic violence in the United Kingdom (UK), Canada and New Zealand to facilitate the deliberation of the Subcommittee on this subject.

2. Proposed places to be studied

2.1 In Hong Kong, the Government adopts a three-pronged approach to tackle domestic violence. The approach includes (a) developing preventive measures (such as publicity, community education and enhancing social capital); (b) providing supportive services (such as family services, housing assistance, financial assistance and child care services); and (c) operating specialized services and crisis intervention services (such as Family and Child Protective Services Units, a Family Crisis Support Centre and refuge centres for women). The Government also plans to amend the *Domestic Violence Ordinance*.

2.2 In the UK, the government developed a Domestic Violence National Action Plan in 2005 to strengthen support to victims and bring more perpetrators to justice. The Lessons Learned from Domestic Violence Enforcement Campaigns 2006, drawing from the experiences of 19 police forces applying innovative techniques over a four-month period in 2006, established guidelines on handling domestic violence for police, local authorities and support groups. According to the Women's Aid Federation of England¹, a draft version of the *National Service Standards for Domestic and Sexual Violence*, which is a new set of guidelines for the delivery of high-quality supporting services against domestic violence, will be finalized in 2007.

¹ The Women's Aid Federation of England is a national charity organization co-ordinating and supporting a network of over 370 local organizations in England in preventing domestic violence and advocating and ensuring the safety of abused women and children.

2.3 In Canada, the government has continued to strengthen the Family Violence Initiative, an on-going project tackling domestic violence from the social, justice and health perspectives. In particular, the Department of Justice Canada and its partners are working closely together to ensure that the criminal justice system responds more effectively to protect victims and hold abusers accountable. Key strategies, such as legal reform, public and professional education, research and support for programmes and services, have been developed.

2.4 In New Zealand, the Taskforce for Action on Violence within Families was established in June 2005 to advise the Family Violence Ministerial Team on how to make improvements to the way domestic violence is addressed, and to eliminate domestic violence in New Zealand. The Taskforce consists of decision-makers from the government and non-government sectors, the judiciary and Crown agencies. Its Ongoing Programme of Action, outlining the aims to be achieved and taking into account the lessons learnt during the implementation of the first Programme of Action, will be released in July 2007.

3. Research outline

3.1 RLSD proposes the following outline for the study:

Chapter 1 — Introduction

Chapter 2 — Hong Kong

Chapter 3 — The United Kingdom

Chapter 4 — Canada

Chapter 5 — New Zealand

Chapter 6 — Summary of findings

3.2 Chapter 2 to 5 discuss the latest strategies and measures adopted by the government in combating domestic violence in Hong Kong, the UK, Canada and New Zealand in terms of the following aspects:

- (a) responsible authorities;
- (b) enforcement tools;
- (c) funding arrangements;

- (d) victim protection;
- (e) performance measurement and evaluation; and
- (f) implementation concerns.

4. Completion date

- 4.1 RLSD proposes to complete the research report by September 2007.

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