

**Legislative Council Panel on Welfare Services
Subcommittee on Strategy and Measures to Tackle Family Violence**

Supplementary information

- (a) **To establish regular communication / liaison among Police / Social Welfare Department (SWD) / Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in handling domestic violence**

Established mechanisms for communication and liaison

To enhance multi-disciplinary collaboration and coordination in tackling domestic violence, various mechanisms for regular communication and liaison among the Police / SWD / NGOs are in operation at the central, district and case level –

- At the central level, the Director of Social Welfare chairs a Working Group on Combating Violence (WGCV) to map out strategies and coordinate actions among different government bureaux, departments (including the Police) and NGOs in addressing the problem of domestic violence in Hong Kong. WGCV comprises 24 representatives from 8 NGOs and 12 government bureaux and departments. The Police are represented at superintendent level. The WGCV meets regularly to examine issues pertaining to domestic violence and provides an effective platform to strengthen multi-disciplinary collaboration and coordination among government, NGOs and professionals in handling and combating the problem.
- At the district level, there are currently 11 District Liaison Groups on Family Violence (DLGFV) chaired by the respective District Social Welfare Officers or their deputies. The Police are represented by the respective Assistant Divisional Commanders. DLGFV strengthens communication amongst the Police, SWD and relevant local NGO service units at the district level, and considers measures to enhance collaboration in handling domestic violence cases including the high-risk ones. Meetings are held on a regular basis according to the needs of individual districts. The multi-disciplinary collaboration has been enhanced through sharing of relevant guidelines and good practices, exchange of views on each other's roles, sharing of operational difficulties, planning of joint actions and programmes, and streamlining referral procedures.
- At the case level, further enhancement measures have been introduced to facilitate effective liaison and management of serious domestic violence cases between social workers and the designated domestic violence investigation units of the Police. There is also an established mechanism of conducting multi-disciplinary case conferences when necessary. It is convened by the caseworker, and subject to individual case, representative from the Police (police officers-in-charge of investigation) and the

professionals concerned will be invited to attend the meeting to share information on the case and work together in formulating the most appropriate welfare plans for the victims and their families.

Referral mechanism between SWD and the Police

A referral mechanism has also been established between the Police and SWD since 2003 through which the Police, having obtained the consent from victims and/or alleged batterers of domestic violence cases, will refer their cases to SWD for follow-up service. Through the mechanism, non-consensual referrals will also be made if the case is assessed as high-risk and a Superintendent of Police, having personally reviewed the case, decides that such referral is warranted so as to mitigate the risk of the situation deteriorating. An acknowledgement system is also put in place to strengthen the communication between frontline police officers and social workers during the case referral process. On receiving a police referral, SWD will acknowledge receipt and inform the Police of the contact details of the responsible social worker, and whether or not the victims and/or batterers have accepted the follow-up service.

To facilitate the Police in seeking urgent professional advice and/or immediate social work support in handling urgent and high-risk cases, a 24-hour Direct Referral Line has been set up since October 2006 between SWD and the Police. In case of need, social workers will offer professional advice and/or perform outreaching duties to assist the Police in handling crisis situations.

Other measures to strengthen collaboration with stakeholders

SWD arranges training programmes for social workers (including NGO workers) and related professionals, including teachers, childcare professionals, medical and allied health professionals, and the Police, on handling domestic violence cases. SWD also publishes and updates from time to time relevant procedural guidelines for professionals in the relevant field to strengthen multi-disciplinary collaboration in handling domestic violence cases. The guidelines are uploaded onto the SWD homepage for easy reference by relevant professionals.

SWD and the Police also attend from time to time forum and arrange briefing sessions for various sectors (including the Legislative Council, Government advisory bodies, relevant professionals, NGOs and women's groups etc) to brief parties concerned on their policy, strategies and measures in tackling and preventing domestic violence, and make use of such platform to collect and exchange views.

Both departments have also actively participated in various publicity campaigns, seminars and activities organised by themselves or NGOs / community groups etc in combating and preventing domestic violence.

SWD and the Police will continue to strengthen collaboration and liaison with all stakeholders concerned.

(b) To compare with overseas countries the social work manpower in handling domestic violence

Based on the information collected by SWD staff during their visits and attachment programmes to the United Kingdom (London), New Zealand (Christchurch), and Australia (Melbourne), etc., it is noted that services for domestic violence cases in these countries are mainly provided by NGOs. Their major funding sources include fund-raising, donation and fee-charging, with minimal financial support from the Government. The major role of the government department is discharging statutory duty. The governments concerned have not imposed any specific requirements on NGOs' social work manpower and service provision, including target clientele, number of service recipients to be served, scope of services and mode of service delivery. Services for domestic violence cases are usually provided by different professionals and trained staff, like advocates and volunteers, with limited social work manpower.

In Hong Kong, services to domestic violence victims are provided by both SWD and NGOs, which are heavily subsidised by the Government. There is also a wide range of preventive, supportive and specialised services, provided through the Integrated Family Service Centres / Integrated Services Centres, Family and Child Protective Services Units, Clinical Psychology Units, refuge centres for women, Family Crisis Support Centre, Multi-purpose Crisis Intervention and Support Centre, residential care placements for children and child care centres, etc., to support victims of domestic violence and families in need. These services are mainly provided by registered social workers with involvement of volunteers. Additional resources and manpower have been allocated over the past few years to implement a series of improvement measures in tackling domestic violence, such as setting up a new crisis intervention and support centre, launching the Family Support Programme and the Comprehensive Child Development Service.

In view of the differences in cultural, social and economic contexts, service systems and mode of service delivery, it is not meaningful to conduct any like-to-like comparison regarding the social work manpower in handling domestic violence cases in Hong Kong and those in overseas countries.

(c) No. of cases handled by CEASE Crisis Centre as compared with that of Rainlily

The Multi-purpose Crisis Intervention and Support Centre, i.e. the CEASE Crisis Centre, operated by the Tung Wah Group of Hospitals to provide services for victims of sexual violence, has since 26 March 2007 commenced its first phase of service providing 24-hour hotline, outreaching / crisis intervention services, and case consultation. The second phase of service providing short-term residential service is expected to commence in the second quarter of 2008. **As at the end of December 2007 (i.e. about 8 months of operation)**, the CEASE Crisis Centre has handled 82 adult sexual violence

cases (outreaching visits were paid to half of the cases which required immediate crisis intervention), received 9 266 hotline calls and launched 52 programmes.

SWD does not have the caseload statistics of Rainlily. According to the Report on Analysis of Statistical Information of Cases Requesting for Assistance from Rainlily published by the Association concerning Sexual Violence against Women in January 2005, Rainlily handled a total of 466 sexual violence cases **during the 3.5 years between 2001 to first half of 2004.** Around 40% of its clients received services within seven days after the occurrence of the sexual violence incident. Rainlily also received 5 656 hotline calls during the same period.

It should be noted that the service target and service delivery mode of the CEASE Crisis Centre and those of Rainlily are not exactly the same, they are hence not directly comparable.

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