

**Progress Report on
Motion on “Actively promoting family-friendly policies”
at the Legislative Council meeting of 5 June 2013**

Purpose

At the Legislative Council (LegCo) Meeting held on 5 June 2013, the motion on “Actively promoting family-friendly policies” moved by Hon Starry LEE, amended by Hon WONG Kwok-hing, Hon CHEUNG Kwok-che and Hon Claudia MO was carried. The wording of the motion is at **Annex A**. This report informs Members of the follow-up actions taken by the Administration in respect of the motion.

Domestic Violence

Domestic violence in Hong Kong

2. To keep in view the trend and understand the characteristics of domestic violence cases in Hong Kong, two central information systems¹, maintained by the Social Welfare Department (SWD), are to capture information of domestic violence cases² of the victims reported by different parties. SWD has long been adopting multi-disciplinary and cross-sectoral collaboration to handle and support families at-risk and, over the past few years, new resources has been continuously provided to enhance the preventive, supportive and specialised services for victims of domestic violence and families in need, with details as set out at **Annex B**. In view of the growing number of male victims in recent years, SWD has also started organising counselling groups for women using violence on a trial basis since 2010, and will continue to assess the needs of families at-risk and provide appropriate services to them.

¹ “Central Information System on Spouse / Cohabitant Battering Cases and Sexual Violence Cases” and the “Child Protection Registry”.

² According to the “Central Information System on Spouse / Cohabitant Battering Cases and Sexual Violence Cases” of SWD, there were 2,734 newly reported spouse / cohabitant battering cases in 2012. Among them, the number of cases involving male victims was 434 (i.e. 15.9%). In 2011, there were 3,174 newly reported spouse / cohabitant battering cases among which the number of cases involving male victims was 558 (i.e. 17.6%).

Conditional Tenancy Scheme and the Comprehensive Social Security Scheme

3. Conditional Tenancy (CT) under Compassionate Rehousing (CR) is a form of housing assistance, which aims at providing housing assistance to individuals and families with genuine, imminent and long-term housing problems which cannot be solved by themselves. The CT Scheme also covers victims of domestic violence who have petitioned for divorce. SWD would consider all the special circumstances of the applicants before making recommendations for applications under CR or the CT Scheme to the Housing Department (HD). In making relevant recommendations, SWD will make professional assessment on individual circumstances of each case, including consideration on the medical grounds and/or social grounds of the relevant applicants. Subject to the availability of resources, HD will base on the recommendation of SWD (including exemption of the residence requirement), to arrange public rental housing (PRH) allocation promptly.

4. In exceptional circumstances, Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) may be granted at the discretion of the Director of Social Welfare (DSW) to a person who does not satisfy the residence rule. Before exercising the discretion, DSW will consider all relevant factors to ensure that the applicant is facing genuine hardship. If an applicant, with neither income nor other resources, is being forced to move away from his/her spouse with his/her young children because of domestic violence, DSW will normally exercise discretion to waive the residence rule.

Training to frontline professionals on handling domestic violence and Counselling Services to Abusers

5. Details of training for frontline professionals on handling domestic violence and counselling services to abusers are set out at **Annex C**.

Publicity, Assistance to Female Victims of Domestic Violence and Setting Up of a Domestic Violence Court

6. SWD has, through different channels, been enhancing the understanding of the relevant organisations and public on the legal protection, welfare and support services for the victims of domestic violence. SWD has also set up a website of “Support for Victims of Child Abuse, Spouse /

Cohabitant Battering and Sexual Violence” to help concerned departments, agencies and individuals understand various support services for victims in Hong Kong. SWD will continue with its publicity and public education efforts to enhance public awareness of the problem of domestic violence. To further support victims of domestic violence, SWD has launched the Victim Support Programme for Victims of Family Violence (VSP) since June 2010 to provide the victims with emotional support and relevant information on community services.

7. As regards the suggestion to set up a domestic violence court, the District Court and the Magistrates' Courts have already put in place an expedited mechanism since 2009 to enable suitable domestic violence cases to be fast-tracked for listing. This mechanism is found to be working satisfactorily. The situation will continue to be closely monitored to ensure that domestic violence cases are appropriately dealt with.

Manpower enhancement

8. To meet the service demand, SWD had increased the number of medical social workers (MSWs) in public hospitals and clinics in the past few years. From 2006-07 to 2012-13, resources was allocated to provide for 82 additional MSWs to bring the provision from 349 to the current level of 431 MSWs, representing an increase of 23%. A Medical Social Services Unit with 4 MSWs will also be set up in the new North Lantau Hospital in 2013-14 to strengthen the provision of medical social services to patients and their families and to dovetail with the new initiatives of the Hospital Authority.

9. The number of Family and Child Protective Services units (FCPSUs) of SWD has increased from five in 2004-05 to 11 in 2007-08 while the number of social workers of FCPSUs also increased from 133 in 2006-07 to 168 in 2009-10. Meanwhile, SWD has also increased the number of clinical psychologists and deployed welfare workers to FCPSUs to alleviate and support the work of social workers. SWD will closely monitor the situation and, if necessary, seek new resources or redeploy existing resources to enhance the manpower in this area of work.

Transitional Residential Service Centres

10. At present, there are five refuge centres for women in Hong Kong with a total capacity of 260 places. In 2012-13, the average utilization rate of five refuge centres for women was 85.6% and there was no occasion that all places of five refuge centres were fully occupied at the same time. In addition, the Family Crisis Support Centre and the Multi-purpose Crisis Intervention and Support Centre (CEASE Crisis Centre) provide a total of 120 places of short-term accommodation to individuals and families in crisis or distress. Refuge centres for women seek to provide safe and temporary accommodation for women and their children at risk of domestic violence or facing crisis. Those admitted to the refuge centres may stay at the refuge for two weeks but the period of stay may be extended to a maximum period of three months. Refuge centres may consider further arrangements if there are extraordinary circumstances.

Comprehensive and Long Term Policy on Men

11. The Government is very concerned about the needs and development of both genders. With assistance of the Women's Commission (WoC), the Government has been implementing gender mainstreaming³ since 2002. Whilst collaborating with WoC to promote women's interests and well-being, the Government has been promulgating various policies and measures to assist men to overcome different difficulties and challenges. The Government notes that there is no community consensus on the setting up of a men's commission. As a statutory body responsible for promotion of equality, the Equal Opportunities Commission will continue to maintain liaison with the groups which are concerned about men's rights and convey these groups' requests to the Government where necessary so that men's interests and well-being will continue to be protected.

³ Gender mainstreaming means the incorporation of the perspectives and needs of both genders (not restricted to a single gender) into the formulation of policies, legislation and measures as a basic consideration such that both genders can equally benefit from the community's resources and opportunities.

Healthcare services for men

12. The Government attaches great importance to the health conditions of the general public (including those of different gender). The Department of Health and the Hospital Authority provide the public with comprehensive public healthcare services. Details of how they promote men's health are set out at **Annex D**. The Government will continue to rally efforts of all sectors to promote public health, and provide relevant services in response to the health needs and risks of different genders.

Work of the Family Council

13. Home Affairs Bureau (HAB) briefed Members of the work of the Family Council vide LC Paper No. CB(2)496/12-13(02) issued in January 2013 and LC Paper No. CB(2)2617/11-12(01) issued in July 2012 respectively. In particular, as from 1 April 2013, the established approach of including family perspectives in the policy-making process has been further enhanced by introducing a mandatory assessment of family implications and impact on family for all polices. Bureaux/departments are encouraged to consult the Family Council on policies which may carry family implications. Since the implementation of these new initiatives, the assessment of family implications becomes a mandatory and integral part of the decision-making process within the Government. In light of implementation experience, HAB, in consultation with the Family Council, will continue to review the effectiveness of the assessment framework, with reference to experience of new development in overseas countries and findings of related researches. Regarding family education, the Family Council will introduce new family education packages in early 2014, with special focus on addressing the needs of different types of families, including young families, underprivileged families and cross-border families.

14. To celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the “International Year of the Family” in 2014, the Family Council will plan a series of programmes and seek more opportunities to collaborate with relevant stakeholders, such as the Consortium of Institutes of Family in the Asian Region and the Hong Kong Council of Social Service to promote the importance of family in the community.

Family Education

15. Apart from the Family Council, both the Education Bureau (EDB) and SWD play active role in the promotion of family education. The school is one of the important avenues for promoting family education. A holistic curriculum and relevant learning experience incorporating knowledge, skills and values are continuously provided by EDB for the whole-person development of students (including the provision of family education in schools in order to establish positive attitudes on marriage and family, cultivate respect and care for family members, learn to build up and maintain family harmony). EDB also provides secretariat support to the Committee on Home-School Co-operation to promote home-school co-operation and to release Home-school Co-operation Grant to schools, Parent-Teacher Associations and Federations of Parent-Teacher Associations for supporting them to organize home-school co-operation activities including parent education programmes.

16. SWD has all along recognised and valued the importance and service needs of family. It provides a series of educational or promotional family life education programmes to enhance family functioning, strengthen family relationships and prevent family problems. Besides, SWD actively promotes positive family values including parenting, parent-child relationship and ethics. To meet the district needs, the welfare service units in the districts, including Family Life Education Units, Integrated Family Service Centres (IFSCs)/ Integrated Services Centres, Integrated Children and Youth Service Centres etc., organise appropriate family life education programmes in the forms of seminars, lectures, group, family activities and exhibitions.

Child Care Support Services to Dual-income Parents

17. At present, the Government provides subvention to non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to run a variety and flexible day child care services, to cater to the needs of different families (including dual-income parents). Services include Child Care Centres, Occasional Child Care Service, Extended Hours Service and Mutual Help Child Care Centres. The general service hours of the above day child care services covers the mornings and afternoons of weekdays and Saturdays. In order to provide more flexible and accessible services, SWD launched the pilot Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project (NSCCP)⁴ in October 2008. NSCCP was regularised and extended to all 18 districts in October 2011, offering a total of at least 720 places to children aged under six through NGOs. Besides, SWD, through NGOs, provides “After School Care Programme” (ASCP)⁵ to children aged between 6 to 12, on a fee charging and self-financing model. The Government will continue review the operation of various services in order to address the changing demands.

18. Under the "School-based After-school Learning and Support Programmes" (Programme), EDB provides funding for schools and NGOs to organise school- and community-based after-school activities for Primary 1 to Secondary 6 students coming from families in receipt of the CSSA and those in receipt of full grant under the Student Financial Assistance Scheme (Full Grant) with a view to facilitating their all-round development. The Programme covers a wide spectrum of after-school activities. Apart from tutorial courses, cultural and art activities, sports, leadership training, voluntary service and visits are provided. In the 2012/13 school year, the total provision of the Programme is about \$208 million for around 217,100 eligible students.

19. In addition, the Community Care Fund (CCF) has provided \$28 million for the implementation of the After-school Care Pilot Scheme (“the Scheme”) in the 2012/13 school year for participating schools and NGOs to

⁴ NSCCP consists of two service components: home-based child care service which operate from 7am to 11pm, and centre-based care group which usually operate till at least 9pm on weekdays, and cover Saturdays and some public holidays. The service operators have the flexibility to increase the number of home-based child care places on top of the minimum requirement set by SWD to meet the actual service demand.

⁵ At present, the 145 ASCP centres in the territory provide around 5,500 places. In general, ASCP centres provide services in various sessions from Monday to Friday till 7 pm. Depending on the actual need in the community, individual centres may extend the service hours to 8-9 pm and operate on Saturday to accommodate the special needs of parent.

consolidate the after-school activities and other support being provided for the needy Primary 1 to Secondary 3 students with new elements to be introduced as appropriate. Upon review of the Scheme, the Commission on Poverty has earmarked \$40 million to extend the Scheme to the 2013/14 school year. The target beneficiaries will be expanded to cover students in receipt of half grant under the Student Financial Assistance Scheme in addition to those coming from families in receipt of CSSA and Full Grant recipients. Besides, participating schools and NGOs will continue to have 25% discretion to take care of other needy students including those students whose parents are both working.

Family-friendly Employment Policies and Practices

20. The Government has all along been dedicated to encouraging employers to adopt employee-oriented good people management measures and to implement family-friendly employment practices (FFEPs) with a view to helping employees balance their roles and responsibilities in work and family. Making the workplace family-friendly is a shared responsibility of the entire society. Employers may adopt different types of FFEPs, which include granting special leave to meet employees' family needs, making flexible work arrangements and providing support for employees, to serve the best interests of their employees and organisations, having regard to their size, resources and culture.

21. On the promotional front, both the Family Council and the Labour Department (LD) play active role. In 2011, the Family Council launched the first territory-wide "Family-Friendly Employers Award Scheme" (Award Scheme) under which business firms were awarded for the family-friendly measures they implemented. Some 1,110 companies signed up for the Scheme. The Award Scheme had successfully raised the awareness of the business sector of the importance of FFEPs. In view of its success, the Family Council will launch the 2013-14 Award Scheme in September this year and expand its scope to cover organizations outside the business sector, including NGOs and social enterprises. Subject to the selection and adjudication process, the announcement on the results and presentation of awards will take place in the second quarter of 2014.

22. LD has been acting as a facilitator in encouraging employers of public and private organisations to adopt FFEPs and disseminating relevant information to the general public through a wide range of publicity channels and various promotional activities such as publications, large-scale seminars, thematic exhibitions, educational DVDs, newspaper supplements, feature articles as well as regular meetings and exchanges with business executives and human resources practitioners.

23. In addition, having consulted the Labour Advisory Board and the Panel on Manpower of the LegCo, the Government will legislate for three days' paternity leave with pay so as to allow an employee who has a newborn may take leave around the time of delivery by the mother for providing support to the mother and to bond with the newborn child. The Labour and Welfare Bureau and LD are pressing ahead with the preparatory work for the legislation.

24. The Government always strives to provide civil servants with a family-friendly working environment that caters for their operational and family needs at the same time. The Government will continue to encourage B/Ds to explore possible ways to migrate more staff to a five-day week, subject to the four basic principles⁶ and after conducting staff consultation. B/Ds concerned will continue monitoring the situation and arrange staff who are still working more than five days a week to rotate to five-day week posts within the same department where operational and other circumstances permit. Besides, the provision of five working days of full-pay paternity leave to eligible government employees has been implemented with effect from 1 April 2012. In the first year (i.e. from 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2013) of the implementation of the initiative, B/Ds approved a total of 2,898 applications for paternity leave from government employees (including 2,776 civil servants and 122 non-civil servants).

⁶ The four basic principles are (a) no additional staffing resources; (b) no reduction in the conditioned hours of service of individual staff; (c) no reduction in emergency services; and (d) continued provision of some essential counter services on Saturdays.

Paid Statutory Holidays

25. There are views that the number of statutory holidays should be increased from 12 days to 17 days so that it aligns with that of general holidays other than Sundays. For the purpose of studying this subject in more detail, LD has commissioned the Census and Statistics Department to collect statistics on the percentage and characteristics of employees taking statutory holidays and general holidays in Hong Kong. Based on the data collected, an in-depth analysis is currently being conducted. Upon completion of the study, we will consult the Labour Advisory Board on the subject.

Child Allowance, Pre-primary Education and Paid Maternity Leave

Child allowance

26. To further alleviate people's burden in raising their children, the 2013-14 Budget proposes to increase the basic and additional child allowances from \$63,000 to \$70,000 for each child with effect from the year of assessment 2013/14. The proposal has now been put into practice following passage of the relevant legislative amendments by the Legislative Council on 26 June 2013.

Pre-primary education

27. On pre-primary education, EDB set up the Committee on Free Kindergarten Education in April 2013 to examine the various issues relating to the provision of free kindergarten education and make practicable recommendations on how to implement free kindergarten education. The Committee has held three meetings since its establishment. Five Sub-committees have also been formed under the Committee to study and analyse in detail issues in specific areas and report their findings to the Committee. In view of the intricacies of the issues involved and the far-reaching implications of the new policy on free kindergarten education, the Committee will take about two years to complete its tasks and make recommendations to the Government.

Paid maternity leave

28. Regarding paid maternity leave, a pregnant employee employed under a continuous contract is entitled to 10 weeks' paid maternity leave if she fulfils other eligibility criteria under the Employment Ordinance (EO). At present, all the various employment rights and benefits under EO are confined to employees engaged under a contract of employment, and the relevant employment benefits are basically borne by the employer. The proposal of extending the applicability of the aforesaid benefit to staff engaged under non-employment contracts would be a major departure from this cardinal principle.

Housing Policy

29. The Government has all along been promoting a housing policy which fosters inter-generational harmony. On the PRH policy, the Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA) has implemented relevant policies so as to encourage the younger generation and their elderly parents/ dependent relatives to live together for mutual support. The HA also enhanced various measures including the Harmonious Families Priority Scheme (HFPS), the Harmonious Families Transfer Scheme (HFT), the Harmonious Families Addition Scheme (HFAD), as well as the Harmonious Families Amalgamation Scheme (HFAM), etc for PRH tenants, so as to build up a family-oriented supporting network to facilitate family harmony. The various enhanced measures have been fully implemented since January 2009 and are well received by PRH applicants and tenants. As at end March 2013, the cumulative households benefited from these initiatives were about 25,610, including 12,750 through the HFPS, 1,270 through the HFT, 11,050 through the HFAD, and 540 through the HFAM.

30. On the hardware, the HA has been adopting universal design in planning and developing public housing estates to promote a harmonious living environment for all. The HA provided fitness and recreational facilities for tenants of all ages to encourage parent-child activities and promote inter-generational harmony. Also, when carrying out estate improvement works, the HA will take into account the needs of the elderly and the youth so as to provide corresponding facilities or make appropriate improvements. To encourage parent-child activities, the HA provides seating at common areas in

the domestic blocks. The HA also provides landscaped open space and communal farms, etc at external areas to encourage family interactive activities.

Comprehensive Social Security Allowance

31. Applicants of the CSSA scheme are subject to income tests to ensure that CSSA payments are provided to families and individuals with genuine financial difficulties. Elderly persons or persons with disabilities who apply for CSSA on their own must submit a “declaration” on their financial situation to verify whether they have other sources of income. Under special circumstances, for example, poor relationship with family members, SWD may allow these applicants to apply for CSSA on their own.

Schemes to Encourage and Support Students from Low-income Families to Participate in After-school Activities

32. The Government cares about the education needs and whole-person development of youths, especially those from low-income families. There are many different schemes to encourage and support students from low-income families to participate in various kinds of after-school activities. These include the “School-based After-School Learning and Support Programmes” and the “Hong Kong Jockey Club Life-wide Learning Fund”. Funding for these two programmes, including funding from EDB and the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust, amounted to over \$275 million in the 2011/12 school year, benefitting some 230,000 students during the year. The Community Care Fund has also launched the “After-school Care Pilot Scheme” in 2012/13 school year with the participation of 73 schools and NGOs, providing after-school service to over 5,400 primary and junior secondary students from low-income families. The Commission on Poverty has agreed to extend the scheme for one year in 2013/14 school year. These measures can effectively provide support to children from low-income families to participate in after-school learning and extra-curricular activities.

Employment Support Schemes and Employees Retraining Services

Employment support services

33. LD is committed to helping job seekers, including single parents find work. Through a network of 12 job centres, two industry-based recruitment centres, a Telephone Employment Service Hotline, an Interactive Employment Service (iES) website and numerous vacancy search terminals installed at various locations, LD provides comprehensive and free employment services for job seekers.

34. Job seekers, including among others single parents, may access and browse the vacancy information on LD's iES website at any time, or visit any LD's job centre and make use of the job search facilities available there to find work. They may also call the Telephone Employment Service Hotline or visit any job centre to obtain job referral service. Given that some single parents may wish to find part-time work as they need to take care of their children, LD has set up a dedicated webpage on part-time vacancies at the iES website to help them find suitable jobs.

35. All LD's job centres provide employment advisory services, where job seekers, including, among others single parents, can meet employment officers. Depending on the situation of the job seekers, employment officers will provide them with the latest information on the labour market and training/retraining courses, give job search advice, and/or conduct career aptitude assessment, etc. Job seekers may enrol in LD's "Work Trial Scheme" to undergo work trials in real working environment so as to gain hands-on working experience in accordance with their employment needs. On-the-job training allowance is provided under LD's "Employment Programme for the Middle-Aged" to encourage employers to hire middle-aged persons aged 40 or above with employment difficulties and provide on-the-job training. Employers who employ qualified single parents through the programme can also apply for the on-the-job training allowance. In addition, LD organises large-scale and district-based job fairs regularly to enhance the dissemination of vacancy information in order to shorten the time needed by job seekers including single parents in job search.

Employees retraining services

36. By adopting a market-driven and employment-oriented approach, the Employees Retraining Board offers a diversified range of training courses for eligible employees in Hong Kong aged 15 or above with education attainment of sub-degree or below. Eligible persons, including among others single parents, who fulfil the entry requirements of the courses concerned may enrol in these courses according to their own employment aspirations and training needs. Priority will be accorded to applicants who are single parents with the need to look after children aged under 18.

Financial Assistance to All Low-income Single-parent Families

37. SWD has all along valued the healthy development of children. Currently there are 65 IFSCs and two Integrated Services Centres providing a range of preventive, supportive and remedial family services to address the needs of individuals and families (including single-parent families). Apart from the various support services set out above, the CSSA Scheme provides financial support for families in need to meet their basic needs. Special assistance including higher standard rate is provided to single parents and family carers under the CSSA Scheme. Single parents are also provided with a monthly supplement in recognition of the difficulties they may face in taking care of a family single-handedly. The proposal of providing low-income household with living allowance involves major policy and resource considerations and, as such, calls for careful handling. We keep an open mind on the issue and will listen carefully to the views from various sectors of the community.

Integrated Family Service Centres

38. The above-mentioned IFSCs across the territory provide a range of preventive, supportive and remedial family services to individuals and families. To more effectively prevent and handle family problems, to keep them from further aggravating, and to alleviate the workload of social workers, the Government allocated additional resources in the past two years to set up four

new IFSCs in districts with higher service demand including Kwun Tong District, Yuen Long District, Shamshuipo District, and Kowloon City / Yau Tsim Mong District, thereby increasing the number of IFSCs from 61 in 2011 to 65 in 2013. SWD will keep in view the service needs and consider manpower enhancement and additional resources where necessary.

Civil Service Bureau

Education Bureau

Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau

Food and Health Bureau

Home Affairs Bureau

Labour and Welfare Bureau

Transport and Housing Bureau

August 2013

(Translation)

**Motion on
“Actively promoting family-friendly policies”
Moved by Hon Starry LEE
at the Council meeting of 5 June 2013**

**Motion as amended by Hon WONG Kwok-hing, Hon CHEUNG Kwok-che
and Hon Claudia MO**

That with the occurrence of a number of family tragedies in Hong Kong in recent years, which has greatly shocked the society and reflected the existence of many unhealthy trends in today’s society gradually breaking up, damaging and distorting the social and family relationships, this Council urges that the Government should make stronger efforts in promoting family-friendly policies, enhancing family cohesion and individual resilience against adversities, restoring mutual love among family members and building up positive family values, so as to create a harmonious society; the proposed measures include:

- (1) the relevant departments should assess the gravity of domestic violence in Hong Kong at present (with particular attention to the gradual increase in recent years in the number of cases of men being abused), enhance the relevant social welfare services, review the modes of professional services for handling and supporting families in crisis and the corresponding effectiveness of inter-departmental support services, and strengthen outreach services, so as to provide families in crisis with highly efficient, timely and targeted services, and, at the same time, allocate additional resources to assist men in resolving family problems, for example, setting up at service units special hotlines for men which are operated by male social workers or counsellors to provide dedicated crisis intervention and shelter services, etc. for abused men;
- (2) targetting on men’s roles and problems connected with their family status, to formulate a comprehensive and long-term policy on men, and allocate resources correspondingly (for example, considering the setting up of a Men’s Commission, studying the conduct of surveys on men’s health, and establishing men’s specialist clinics to promote men’s health);

- (3) to expeditiously implement an impact assessment system in respect of public policies on families to assess the impact of existing social policies, legislation and measures on families, so as to make the relevant improvements;
- (4) to enhance the functions of the Family Council, and set up a ‘social fund for families’ to subsidize social welfare organizations to organize programmes and activities related to family education;
- (5) to actively step up publicity on positive family education on parenting, child duties and ethics, and promote family education through community service organizations, schools and the media, etc.;
- (6) to provide more child care support services to dual-income parents (including expanding community child-minding services, increasing the child-minding places in various districts, providing flexible-hour child-minding services, etc.); develop after-school remedial centres to enable children of dual-income parents to receive appropriate care after school;
- (7) to encourage public and private organizations to implement family-friendly employment policies more proactively for creating a family-friendly working environment, including encouraging organizations to provide staff with child care services and implementing a flexible working hour system with ‘flexible hours and flexible places’;
- (8) to include all public holidays other than Sundays as paid statutory holidays; and promote ‘International Day of Families’ to call on the community to cherish the value of family;
- (9) to raise the Child Allowance, subsidize the pre-primary education across the board, and conduct studies on extending the applicability of existing paid maternity leave to employees engaged under non-employment contracts, etc. so as to alleviate the financial burden on families in Hong Kong; and
- (10) to promote a housing policy which fosters inter-generational harmony, encourage the inclusion of residential complementary facilities suitable for both the elderly and the young in the designs of private and public housing, and improve community facilities to provide families with more room for parent-child activities;

- (11) to review the Conditional Tenancy Scheme and the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance ('CSSA') Scheme to allow domestic violence victims who are new arrivals to apply for public housing and CSSA without having to have resided in Hong Kong for at least seven years, so that they can get assistance and rebuild a healthy family life;
- (12) to improve gender awareness and sexual orientation training for judicial, legal and healthcare personnel as well as social workers in handling domestic violence problems, and require abusers to receive counseling services;
- (13) to strengthen publicity and assist female victims of domestic violence in seeking legal protection, and set up a domestic violence court dedicated to handling the relevant issues, so that the judicial sector can accumulate experience to help abusers and victims in the legal respect;
- (14) to increase the number of medical social workers and the manpower of counselling and supportive grades of the Family and Child Protective Services Units of the Social Welfare Department to assist in handling domestic violence cases;
- (15) to set up transitional residential service centres, increase the places at refuge centres, support centres and singleton hostels and the resources for domestic violence victims, so as to resolve the existing problems of short duration of residence and the lack of catering services in such centres, enabling victims to avoid suffering from domestic violence and live a normal family life again;
- (16) to immediately allow elderly persons and persons with disabilities to apply for CSSA on an individual basis, and exempt their family members from having to make any declaration arrangement for not providing support to them, so as to stop breaking up the families of elderly persons and persons with disabilities; and
- (17) to introduce an extra-curriculum activity subsidy to reduce family frictions and social problems arising from the inability of low-income families to allow their children to participate in extra-curriculum activities due to financial difficulties;
- (18) to extend the service targets of the Government's existing employment support schemes, retraining services and child-minding services to all single-parent families to assist all single carers in finding jobs, so as to

improve their family incomes and enable their children to grow up in a better environment;

- (19) to provide financial assistance to all low-income single-parent families, so as to help children in single-parent families grow up healthily; and
- (20) to allocate additional resources to set up more Integrated Family Service Centres in districts with greater service demands, and increase the numbers of case-handling professional grade staff and other support staff, so as to provide families in need with more suitable activities and services.

Efforts of Social Welfare Department in Supporting Families at Risk

Social Welfare Department (SWD) has long been adopting multi-disciplinary and cross-sectoral collaboration to handle and support families at-risk. SWD has set up inter-departmental and cross-sectoral committees / working groups, including the Committee on Child Abuse and the Working Group on Combating Violence, to map out strategies to prevent domestic violence. At district level, SWD has set up District Coordinating Committee on Family and Child Welfare Services and District Liaison Group on Family Violence in each of its 11 social welfare districts to coordinate the services provided by different departments and sectors to strengthen families and prevent domestic violence. The mechanism of multi-disciplinary case conference is also established for social workers and related professionals to exchange views on individual domestic violence cases and formulate appropriate welfare plans for the victims and their families. SWD will review the operation of these mechanisms as appropriate so as to enhance their effectiveness in handling and supporting families at-risk.

2. In the provision of specialised services, SWD has currently 11 Family and Child Protective Services Units (FCPSUs), which are specialised units in handling spouse / cohabitant battering and child abuse cases and provide statutory protection for children. FCPSUs provide one-stop service and, through multi-disciplinary collaboration, arrange various services, including outreaching, crisis intervention and follow-up counselling, etc, for victims, their families and batterers in domestic violence cases to protect the safety of the victims and their family members, assist them tide over the difficult period, reduce the trauma caused by violence and help them lead a new life.

3. For families which might be disturbed by domestic violence, psychiatric problems and social isolation but are reluctant to receive services from any social worker, SWD has launched a Family Support Programme (FSP) since 2007. Under the FSP, through telephone contacts, home visits, groups and other activities, these families are connected to various support services available and are motivated to receive services to prevent further deterioration of their problems. Volunteers including those who have overcome their own family / personal problems or crises are recruited and trained to contact these families and to provide them with support and assistance. In addition, a SWD Hotline, operated on a 24-hour basis, provides

immediate consultation and counselling services to persons in need. Where necessary, outreaching services would also be arranged to deal with urgent cases.

4. Over the past few years, SWD has been continuously providing new resources to enhance the preventive, supportive and specialised services for victims of domestic violence and families in need. These services include -

- (a) increasing social work manpower of FCPSUs;
- (b) enhancing the 24-hour hotline service of SWD;
- (c) increasing the capacity and support services of refuge centres for women;
- (d) setting up a new Multi-purpose Crisis Intervention and Support Centre (CEASE Crisis Centre);
- (e) launching a Family Support Programme to reach out to vulnerable families for early intervention;
- (f) sustaining efforts in publicity and public education to increase public awareness on the domestic violence problem and encourage those in need to seek early assistance;
- (g) enhancing the training for relevant frontline professionals;
- (h) strengthening clinical psychological support for victims of domestic violence;
- (i) implementing the Batterer Intervention Programme and Anti-violence Programme (AVP) for changing the attitude and behaviour of batterers;
- (j) enhancing support services for victims of domestic violence through implementation of Victim Support Programme for Victims of Family Violence; and
- (k) enhancing child care support services including the regularization of the Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project.

5. Except refuge centres for women which are specifically for women, other services units, including Integrated Family Service Centres (IFSCs)/ Integrated Service Centres, FCPSUs, Clinical Psychological Service, Family Support Networking Teams, Family Crisis Support Centre, Multi-purpose Crisis Intervention and Support Centre, Victim Support Programme for Victims of Family Violence and

residential child care services and child care centres etc., also provide support services for victims of domestic violence, regardless of their gender, as appropriate.

6. The CEASE Crisis Centre of Tung Wah Group of Hospitals, subvented by SWD, provides short-term accommodation service for victims of sexual violence and individuals / families facing domestic violence or in crisis (including abused men). Besides, Caritas Family Crisis Support Centre subvented by SWD, or other temporary shelters / urban hostels for single persons also provide temporary residential service for men (including abused men). Among the various hotline services supporting victims of domestic violence and family crisis, Caritas-Hong Kong, Harmony House and Po Leung Kuk also provide specific hotline service for men.

Training to Frontline Professionals on Handling Domestic Violence and Counselling Services to Abusers

The Staff Development and Training Section and District Social Welfare Offices of SWD have from time to time organised training programmes on handling domestic violence for social workers and other frontline professionals including police officers and medical and health care personnel. Training content on raising sensitivity on gender and sexual orientation has been incorporated into these training programmes.

2. At present, some of the batterers in domestic violence cases are put on statutory supervision under Probation Order or Community Service Order because of their abusive behaviours and are mandatorily required to attend specific counselling, psychiatric / psychological treatments or group activities. Besides, under the “Domestic and Cohabitation Relationship Violence Ordinance”, the Court may, in granting an injunction order against a batterer, require him / her to attend “programme approved by the Director of Social Welfare” (also called AVP), with the aim of changing his / her abusive attitude and behaviour.

3. Nevertheless, the majority of batterers do not belong to the above categories, and people involved in domestic violence do not always seek Police assistance for various reasons. Even though the case is subsequently dealt with by the Court, the batterer may not be convicted. Moreover, as the Court has to take into consideration various legal factors such as the severity of the incident and previous history when making its judgment, batterers in domestic violence cases of less serious nature are more likely to receive bind-over instead of statutory supervision. Under such arrangement, the Court will not require the batterers to receive mandatory counselling.

4. In order to motivate the majority of the batterers who are not under any statutory supervision to receive service, frontline workers like social workers in IFSCs, FCPSUs, Probation and Community Service Orders Offices, Medical Social Services Units, police officers and medical professionals, will actively explore the needs of the persons affected (including the batterers), introduce various services and make referrals under the existing mechanism when contacting each person seeking

assistance because of domestic violence. Taking the “Batterer Intervention Programme” which has been implemented since 2006 as an example, participants voluntarily joining the programme has consistently out-numbered those who are mandated to attend; and those participants without court orders have better performance in terms of behavioural change than those who are subject to court orders. With these in view, the Government does not recommend that we should mandate all batterers to receive counselling.

Efforts in Promoting Men's Health

The Department of Health (DH) and the Hospital Authority (HA) provide the public with comprehensive public healthcare services. DH collects information on health-related behaviours of the Hong Kong adult population through the Behavioural Risk Factor Surveillance System. The information can be used to monitor the trend of health-related behaviours to facilitate the early identification of emerging health issues so that we can plan, support and evaluate health promotion and disease prevention programmes.

2. Besides, DH maintains close co-operation with District Councils, community groups and district personalities to organise a number of community-based health promotion programmes. It has also been providing tips on healthy living and health maintenance to the public through various publicity channels, including announcements of public interest on television and different kinds of health education materials and websites, so as to promote health, prevent diseases and protect public health. DH has set up the Men's Health Programme to provide health information to the public in order to raise men's awareness about their health.

3. HA's healthcare service is patient-centered. The service model is to provide disease-based and specialty-based care to cater for the healthcare needs of patients of both genders. Currently, the Specialty of Urology in public hospitals is coordinating treatment for men-specific diseases.