

## Subcommittee on Children's Rights

### List of Follow-up to the discussion at the meeting on 23 January 2018

**(a) The statistics of newly reported child abuse cases by different informants received by the Social Welfare Department (SWD) in the past five years are set out in the table below -**

#### Number of newly reported child abuse cases by different informants

<b>Informants</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017 (January to June)</b>
The abused child	367	327	309	313	147
The abuser	52	36	46	46	30
#Other informants	544	493	519	533	300
<b>Total</b>	<b>963</b>	<b>856</b>	<b>874</b>	<b>892</b>	<b>477</b>

#### #The breakdown of other informants is as follows-

<b>Informants</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017 (January to June)</b>
The parents or family members of the abused child/relatives/ carergivers/ the parents or family members of the abuser	188	167	157	152	75
Social workers	67	64	80	67	37
Medical professionals/ clinical psychologists/ psychiatrists	57	75	82	133	85
School Personnel (including kindergartens, kindergarten-cum-child care centres and child care centres)	133	114	111	111	61
Police officers/ Government departments	65	42	43	33	25
Schoolmates/friends/ neighbours/other abused child in the abused case/the public/mass media/others	34	31	46	37	17
<b>Total</b>	<b>544</b>	<b>493</b>	<b>519</b>	<b>533</b>	<b>300</b>

**(b) The number of children who witnessed domestic violence and were referred to clinical psychologists by SWD in the past five years**

2. SWD does not collate the relevant statistics.

**(c) The number of domestic conflict cases received and handled by the Hong Kong Police Force (the Police) and among them, the number of cases referred to SWD for follow-up in the past five years**

3. The number of Domestic Conflict Reports (DCRs) between 2013 and 2017 are listed in the following table.

	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>
Domestic Violence (Crime)	1 870	1 669	1 464	1 509	1 394
Domestic Violence (Miscellaneous)	676	623	548	495	449
Domestic Incidents (DI)	12 097	11 510	11 733	11 306	10 642
Domestic Conflict Report (DCR)	14 643	13 802	13 745	13 310	12 485

[Domestic Conflict Report (DCR) = Domestic Violence (Crime) + Domestic Violence (Miscellaneous) + Domestic Incidents (DI)]

4. The number of referrals by the Police to the Social Welfare Department (SWD) for follow-up (including referrals of domestic violence cases and domestic incidents) between 2013 and 2017.

	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>
No. of referrals	7 474	7 326	6 511	6 733	6 404

**(d) The operational procedures and guidelines for frontline police officers handling conflict reports and functions of the Enhanced Central Domestic Violence Database**

5. To professionally handle and investigate domestic violence cases remains one of the Commissioner's Operational Priorities 2018. Police officers handle and investigate the cases with empathy, professionalism, fairness and impartiality. The Force has formulated a set of policies and procedures for handling cases of domestic violence to reduce the risk of domestic violence and strengthen the protection of victims.

6. Upon receipt of a DCR, an officer of the rank of Sergeant or above will attend the scene to ensure that the DCR is properly handled. All Police Districts have “Designated Domestic Violence Units” for investigating serious domestic violence cases. The “high-risk” non-crime domestic violence cases identified are handled by crime investigation units. Through the “Enhanced Central Domestic Violence Database” which contains information on previous domestic violence/ domestic incidents, and the use of “Emergency Referral Questionnaire” and “Action Checklist” designed by the Force for handling these cases, frontline officers will identify risk factors and conduct risk assessment. Based on the assessment result, the Force will take appropriate action to minimise the risk, including, where appropriate, detaining the offender, and arranging accommodation, counselling and other assistance for the victims and their families in conjunction with the SWD or other agencies.

7. Irrespective of the case category, the Force will provide a “Family Support Service Information Card” to facilitate the subject to contact the service agencies at any time for enquiries. In addition, if the subject needs the SWD’s assistance and gives consent for referral by the Force, the case will be referred to the SWD for follow-up. If the subject refuses the referral service, the Force will consider each case on its own merit, taking into account such factors as the seriousness of injuries suffered by the victim/ children, alleged offender’s propensity to violence, etc. For cases considered by the Force to be of high risk, the Force will also take the initiative to refer them to the SWD for follow-up.

8. “Enhanced Central Domestic Violence Database” is used to look up all involved persons so as to obtain background information on families and persons involved in order to assist frontline officers in assessing the crisis.

**(e) The number of application for Care or Protection Orders made by SWD and the Police under the Protection of Children and Juveniles Ordinance (Cap. 213) in the past five years**

**The response of the Social Welfare Department**

9. SWD does not collate the relevant statistics.

**The response of the Hong Kong Police Force**

10. The Force does not maintain the relevant information requested in the question.

**(f) The latest situation of unnecessary hospitalization of children in Paediatrics Units of the Hospital Authority**

11. As of December 2017, Hospital Authority (HA) had identified 26 children overstaying in hospitals without medical needs. The table below shows the reasons for children overstaying in hospitals and the number of children involved in each category –

<b>Reason</b>	<b>Number of overstaying children (as of December 2017)</b>
Awaiting placement	14
Awaiting Multi-disciplinary Case Conference on Protection of Child with Suspected Abuse or social plan assessment	7
Awaiting home visit or foster home service	1
Awaiting accommodation for children and parents	2
Others	2
Total:	26

12. The “Length of Stay” of children in public hospitals due to each of the above reason is tabulated below –

<b>Reason</b>	<b>Survey of December 2017</b>	
	<b>Range* (Day)</b>	<b>Average* (Day)</b>
Awaiting placement	1 - 144	41.1
Awaiting Multi-disciplinary Case Conference on Protection of Child with Suspected Abuse or social plan assessment	9 - 64	32.6
Awaiting home visit or foster home service	-	-
Awaiting accommodation for children and parents	47 - 80	63.5
Others	16 - 91	53.5

\* “Length of Stay” is calculated by the difference between “Actual Discharge Day” and “Medically fit for discharge day”.

## **(g) The views and concerns raised by the deputations and members**

### **The response of the Education Bureau**

#### ‘One school one social worker’ for primary schools

13. The Education Bureau (EDB) has been gauging feedback from schools through school visits and other established channels for service improvement. The feedback thus gauged reflects that the vast majority of schools could make good use of the funding to increase manpower, arranging one or more school-based student guidance personnel. 90% of the public sector schools in the territory have employed registered social workers as student guidance personnel. Nevertheless, the Government is actively considering how to implement the ‘one school one social worker’ policy in primary schools with a view to enhancing student guidance service in primary schools.

#### Psychological Service

14. According to the existing mechanism, the social worker responsible for the child abuse case, clinical psychologist, child psychiatrist or teachers will attend the multi-disciplinary case conference to formulate the support and welfare plan of the child concerned, his/her siblings and care-takers. Counselling service or treatment for the child concerned and his/her family members by the clinical psychologist or child psychiatrist will be arranged in accordance with their needs. If the child continues to attend school, the school will offer a safe and caring learning environment and will keep keen observation on the child’s performance and learning progress. The school will also provide the child with continuous and appropriate support. If necessary, the school may seek advice from the school-based educational psychologist.

#### Enhancement of teaching manpower

15. The Government is committed to enhancing the quality of education in Hong Kong. Over the years, EDB has improved the provision of teaching staff resources on a need basis and implemented a number of measures to enhance the status and professional standards of teachers. Starting from the 2017/18 school year, the teacher-to-class (T/C) ratio for public sector schools (including special schools) is increased by 0.1 across-the-board to stabilise schools’ teaching manpower to take forward various education initiatives and enhance the quality of education for the benefit of our students.

16. Starting from the 2017/18 school year, EDB will, by phases in three years, provide each public sector ordinary primary and secondary school

with an additional graduate teaching post to facilitate school's assignment of a designated teacher to take up the role of Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) to support integrated education (IE). SENCO is required to lead the student support team and assist the school principal and the vice-principal(s) in planning, coordinating and implementing the Whole School Approach to IE in order to further cultivate an inclusive school culture and enhance the effectiveness of the support given to students with special educational needs

17. It is noteworthy that teaching staff resources currently provided to public sector schools are not limited to regular teacher establishment calculated according to T/C ratio but also include additional regular teaching posts provided under various initiatives and cash grants featured by their deployment flexibility for meeting specific policy objectives. Schools can utilise the grants to hire additional teaching staff and/or procure services according to their own needs. Taking into account the genuine needs and prioritisation of resource deployment, the Government would consider allocating additional resources where necessary with the aim of attaining quality education.

#### Reporting mechanism of absentees for kindergartens

18. Concerning the reporting mechanism of absentees in kindergartens (KG), EDB is considering towards the direction of reporting to EDB students' absence for 7 consecutive days and exploring the implementation details. Nonetheless, EDB also stresses that the key to early identification and intervention is the ability and alertness of school staff in identifying the symptoms of child abuse. Irrespective of the requirements of any reporting mechanism, staff of school should always pay attention to conditions of students and make referral as early as possible should there be any suspected cases of child abuse. Referral should not be limited by the number of days for reporting absentees, nor solely rely on the reporting mechanism of absentees.

#### Enhanced teacher training on handling of child abuse cases

19. EDB is actively collaborating with the Social Welfare Department (SWD) and the Hong Kong Police Force (Police) in strengthening the training for school personnel. The first round of briefing sessions were organized in late January and early February 2018 for KGs and primary schools on identifying and handling suspected child abuse cases. Educational psychologists and representatives of relevant departments have introduced how to identify and refer suspected child abuse cases, enhance the ability and alertness of school staff in identifying the symptoms of child abuse, and increase their understanding of the procedures on handling child abuse cases, with a view to identifying and intervening in child abuse cases at an early stage. The feedback from participants was positive and the next round of briefing sessions will be

held in the next quarter tentatively so as to allow more school staff to attend.

### Homework pressure on students

20. Throughout the years, EDB has emphasised that it is the quality rather than the quantity of homework that matters. Homework load is not the only or major factor in determining the amount of time spent by students on homework. The factors behind whether a student would feel that there is pressure from homework are multifaceted and complicated. Given the diverse learning needs and abilities of students, setting a daily / weekend / long holiday maximum amount of homework load on an across-the-board basis is not beneficial as it can neither cater for the needs of less able students nor develop the potential of gifted students. Such an arrangement is also disrespectful to the professionalism of the school management and teachers.

21. Schools should formulate an appropriate school-based homework policy in response to the learner diversity among students. Schools should coordinate the efforts of different subject teachers to review regularly the frequency, quantity, type and quality of homework; provide feedback on learning and teaching by utilising homework data effectively and take into due consideration parents' views, to ensure that all homework and assessments are appropriately set to meet the abilities and interests of students, as well as to promote students' self-directed learning and inquisitiveness.

22. Meaningful homework can foster students' interest in learning. Teachers should design interesting and different types of homework to cater for students' learning diversity. Excessive homework, mechanical copying, and drilling should be avoided. For Primary 1 students in particular, schools should flexibly arrange and appropriately adjust the frequency of dictation as well as the amount and scope of assessment to ensure that these are not excessive. For the Primary 1 students who are admitted for the first few months, there should not be an over-emphasis on pen-and-paper assessment or accuracy in dictation.

23. Under the principles of school-based management, transparency and effective communication, schools and parents could have more communication on homework matters through regular channels to ensure that an appropriate school-based policy is formulated and implemented. Parents could also voice out their opinions and make suggestions on their children's homework matters to schools direct with a view to further enhancing the school-based homework policy.

24. EDB will continually acquire an understanding of schools' homework policies and urge schools to formulate an appropriate homework policy through different means. Professional advice and support on school

practices are also provided to facilitate schools' self-improvement and sustainable development. If complaints from parents about the homework arrangements or excessive drilling practices of individual schools are received, EDB will take follow-up actions accordingly.

25. As for KGs, the new KG Education Curriculum Guide, rolled out in February 2017, has explicitly stated that homework assigned for children should not be excessive, too frequent and too difficult. For example, the KGs should not require children in nursery class (K1) to hold a pencil and write, and should not require lower and upper KG classes (K2 and K3) children to do mechanical copying and calculation drills. The refined Performance Indicators under the Quality Assurance Framework have also included the relevant indicators. During Quality Review, inspectors from EDB would make judgement based on the overall school performance of all the domains including implementation of the school curriculum. If inappropriate homework arrangement is observed, we would request the KG to improve and cease such malpractice immediately.

### Sex education

26. Sex education is a part of values education. It is neither an independent subject nor limited narrowly to "sex" related education. Learning elements related to sex education, such as personal development, hygiene, puberty, making friends, dating, marriage, protecting the body and gender equality are included in the Key Learning Areas, subjects and the curricula of moral and civic education of primary and secondary schools, and will be updated in a timely manner. At present, the school curricula of primary and secondary schools cover topics related to understanding the body and protecting oneself, for example, "To Protect Our Body, Including Private Parts" and "Be Alert, Protect Ourselves", etc. The expected learning outcomes of moral and civic education curriculum also include "Learning to Protect Oneself and Strictly Resist Offensive Language and Behaviour". EDB also encourages schools to further enhance sex education through organising assemblies, class-teacher periods, talks and other learning experience activities, and to arrange sex-related preventive and developmental guidance activities to teach students how to protect their bodies, say no when they feel offended and seek help when necessary, from family members, counsellors or relevant organisations.

27. To support schools in implementing sex education, EDB has been producing web-based learning and teaching resources on various subjects. For example, EDB has commissioned the Family Planning Association of Hong Kong to produce sex education animation resources and lesson plans, covering topics such as gender equality, prevention of sexual abuse and sexual harassment among peers. EDB has also commissioned/invited tertiary



institutions, relevant government departments and organisations/bodies to co-organise related courses/seminars/workshops, etc. on themes such as “How to Promote Sex Education Effectively in Primary/Secondary Schools” and “Gender Equality Education and Prevention of Sexual Harassment and Dating Violence”, etc. EDB expects that sex education in schools will foster in students positive values and attitudes towards sex-related issues, enhance students’ self-protection awareness, encourage students to build healthy interpersonal relationships, and make sound judgement and responsible choices based on rational and objective analyses.

#### Short-term placement for the abused children

28. EDB will closely liaise with SWD regarding the school placement for abused children. The school placement service will be provided to the students as soon as possible in accordance with SWD’s referral for change of school and professional advice (including the suitable time for resumption of schooling for the students), the learning needs of the students and the guardians’ preference as well as the vacancy situation of the relevant schools.

#### Parent education

29. The Government attaches great importance to parent education. To further enhance parent education, EDB will launch a new parent education mobile website shortly. The website enables parents with children from kindergarten to primary and secondary school levels to access easily useful information on supporting the physical and mental development of students, which includes parenting skills and emotion management of parents. The Government has also set up a task force on Home-school Co-operation and Parent Education under the Education Commission to review the existing approach in promoting parent education and home-school co-operation, and formulate the direction and strategy for further promoting parent education and home-school co-operation with the objective of assisting parents to help their children grow up happily and healthily.

### **The response of the Labour and Welfare Bureau/Social Welfare Department**

#### Review of “Procedural Guide for Handling Child Abuse Cases”

30. To safeguard the best interests of children and to protect those children suspected or found to be abused, SWD, in collaboration with Labour and Welfare Bureau, Education Bureau (EDB), Department of Health (DH), Hong Kong Police Force (HKPF), Hospital Authority (HA), Hong Kong

Council of Social Service, relevant non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and professionals, has drawn up and issued the “Procedural Guide for Handling Child Abuse Cases (Revised 2015)” (the Procedural Guide) for reference by different professionals, including personnel engaged in social services, health services, education services and law enforcement, and those who are in close contact with children in carrying out the necessary immediate assessments, investigation, multi-disciplinary case conferences and follow up welfare plans when encountering suspected cases of child abuse. To further enhance the procedures for handling child abuse cases, the SWD has formed a Task Group which consists of representatives from different government bureaux/departments, HA and NGOs to review the Procedural Guide in whole.

31. In early 2017, the Task Group collected views on the definition of child abuse and the handling approach through consultation with different stakeholders. SWD will take into consideration the views collected during the current review of the Procedural Guide, which is estimated to be completed in late 2019.

#### Early Identification and Support to Children affected by Domestic Violence

32. The relevant Government bureaux and departments have launched various initiatives to prevent child abuse and are dedicated to provide services to abused children and their families. There are 65 Integrated Family Service Centres (IFSCs) and two Integrated Services Centres (ISCs) in the territory operated by SWD or NGOs providing a spectrum of preventive, supportive and remedial services to enhance parenting capacity and assist those parents who have care and child discipline problems.

33. Early identification and intervention could effectively prevent family problems from deteriorating. The IFSCs operated by SWD or NGOs, ISCs, Family and Child Protective Services Units and Psychiatric Medical Social Services Units of SWD have jointly implemented the Family Support Programme to try to contact those families in need which are reluctant to actively seek help. Through telephone calls, home visits and other outreaching services, social workers contact the families with members at the risk of domestic violence or mental illness etc., and those with problems of social isolation, and refer them to a host of support services. The service units will also recruit and train volunteers, including those with personal experience in overcoming family problems or crises, so that they can contact these families and encourage them to receive appropriate support services with a view to preventing the problems from deteriorating.

### Training for Frontline Professionals

34. The SWD regularly organises different training programmes for frontline professionals to enhance their knowledge of handling domestic violence, including child abuse and intimate partner violence, and to strengthen their capabilities in risk assessment, violence prevention and post-trauma counselling. To raise the awareness of teachers of secondary and primary schools as well as kindergartens, EDB organises talks or seminars annually in collaboration with SWD, to advise them on early identification, intervention and support for child of suspected abuse. Moreover, the SWD also deploys staff to provide training on child protection for frontline service personnel organised by EDB, HKPF, HA, DH and other NGOs. In January and February 2018, in collaboration with HKPF and EDB, a series of trainings on early identification and handling for suspected child abuse cases were provided for the teachers in kindergartens and primary schools. Social workers and Clinical Psychologist of SWD have been invited to give presentations in these training programmes.

### **The response of the Hong Kong Police Force**

35. The Force treats all reports of Domestic Violence and Child Abuse seriously, with sensitivity and professionalism in pursuit of the dual aims of preventing further harm to victims and their family and prosecuting the offender where appropriate. In line with the multi-agency and cross-sectoral approach, the Force works closely with other government departments and NGOs to protect the best interests and rights of the victims and the family.

### **The response of the Hospital Authority**

36. The Paediatric departments in HA Hospitals have designated medical coordinators who manage and take care of cases of abused children. For suspected abused child who requires admission for observation or treatment, the child concerned may be admitted directly to the Paediatric wards without the referral from the Accident and Emergency department. The medical coordinator will work closely with medical social worker, nurses, clinical psychologists, psychiatrists and other relevant parties with professional knowledge in child protection to formulate a welfare plan through Multi-disciplinary Case Conference (MDCC) with an aim to provide support and understand the child's physical, emotional and developmental needs.

**Education Bureau  
Labour and Welfare Bureau  
Social and Welfare Department  
Hong Kong Police Force  
Hospital Authority  
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