

WOMEN'S COMMISSION

Police's Response to Women's Commission Report on "Women's Safety in Hong Kong : Eliminating Domestic Violence"

INTRODUCTION

This paper sets out the Police's response to the Women's Commission Report on "Women's Safety in Hong Kong : Eliminating Domestic Violence" published in January 2006.

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATION FOR THE POLICE

2. WOC recommended the Police to 'strengthen the existing investigation process through using a re-designed aide-memoir card/a checklist'. The recommendation is in line with the Force's ongoing initiatives to strive for improvements in our overall Police response to domestic violence reports so as to provide the best services to victims and their children.

FORCE POLICY AND IMPROVEMENT MEASURES

3. The Force takes a serious view on domestic violence. In dealing with the complexity and diversity of domestic violence, the Force recognised the importance of a multi-disciplinary and cross-sectoral approach and will continue to actively participate in anti-domestic violence educational and publicity campaign.

4. In pursuance of the Commissioner's Operational Targets 2006 for which the Force is committed to promptly and professionally respond to all reports of domestic violence, a series of improvement measures will be

implemented. In devising the new initiatives, careful considerations have been given to the Tin Shui Wai Death Inquest Recommendations. They could be broadly categorized into four areas namely :

Enhanced Investigation Capabilities

5. To improve Police response to domestic violence reports, an Emergency Referral Questionnaire and an Action Checklist will be introduced.

6. 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 SWD response team.

7. 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

8. 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 CDVD. Besides allowing easy retrieval and reference of the information, this will enhance monitoring by supervisory officers.

Enhanced Supervision

9. 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.

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

Enhanced Training

11. 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 revised regularly.

12. The attendance of an officer of the rank of Sergeant or above to the scene of a domestic violence report will take effect this month. Other measures in the package will be ready by August this year.

GENDER SENSITIVITY

13. Since domestic violence is predominantly a gender based crime, the importance of gender sensitivity is emphasised in our handling of victims. As such, in 2002, the Gender Research Centre, HK Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies, CUHK was commissioned to run an Introductory Gender-related Training Workshop for our police officers. In parallel, related training on the implications of 'Equal Opportunities' which includes anti-sex discrimination has also been included in our Basic Training for Probationary Inspectors and Recruit Police Constables.