

## LCQ15: Handling domestic violence problem

Following is a question by the Hon Elizabeth Quat and a written reply by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong, in the Legislative Council today (December 11):

Question:

It is learnt that domestic violence is a social issue of global concern. The victims usually suffer psychological abuse, bodily injuries or even sexual violence, and most of the batterers are their family members. The information of the Social Welfare Department (SWD) shows that there were 2 937 newly reported spouse/cohabitant battering cases in 2018, and among the victims concerned, 2 387 were female (i.e. 81.3 per cent). Regarding the handling of domestic violence problem, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) Of the following details of each of the refuge centres for women and the Family Crisis Support Centre currently subvented by SWD and operated by non-governmental organizations: the name of the centre, the district in which the centre is located, and the number of accommodation places available (with a breakdown of the number of accommodation places by (i) gender of the service targets, (ii) whether or not they are members of the ethnic minorities and (iii) whether or not they are new arrivals);

(2) Given that the maximum period of stay, in respect of the temporary accommodation service currently provided by the refuge centres for women, is usually two weeks, and that period may be extended to three months when necessary, of the considerations and criteria based on which the authorities set such limits on the period of stay;

(3) Of the details of (a) the Batterer Intervention Programme and (b) the Anti-Violence Programme implemented by the authorities, including (i) the numbers of participants, (ii) the gender of the participants and (iii) the effectiveness of the programmes respectively, in each of the past three years;

(4) Of the number of participants of the Support Programme for Enhancing Peaceable Relationship since it was launched in October last year, as well as the age/gender profile of the participants; and

(5) Whether the authorities have provided housing assistance under the Compassionate Rehousing Scheme to victims of domestic violence or persons whose families are in crisis; if so, of the application procedure, and the number of persons receiving such assistance in the past three years?

Reply:

President,

My reply to the Member's question is as follows:

(1) At present, there are five Refuge Centres for Women (Refuge Centres) across the territory, including Harmony House, Wai On Home for Women, Serene Court, Sunrise Court and Dawn Court, providing a total of 268 accommodation places. Besides, there are one Family Crisis Support Centre (FCSC) and one Multi-purpose Crisis Intervention and Support Centre (CEASE Crisis Centre) providing 50 and 80 temporary or short-term accommodation places respectively. Given the nature of their respective services, the address of FCSC in Kwun Tong is made public whereas the addresses of the Refuge Centres and CEASE Crisis Centre are kept confidential.

While Refuge Centres provide places for women only, FCSC and CEASE Crisis Centre provide places for both genders without quota limit for each gender. Besides, there is no quota limit for ethnic minorities or new arrivals to Hong Kong in the above centres and hence no breakdown was available according to each category of service users.

(2) Refuge Centres provide temporary accommodation and support services for victims of domestic violence or family crisis and their children during the crisis period. In general, the accommodation is provided for abused women for two weeks and the maximum period of stay can be extended to three months where necessary. For cases that require further extension of stay, social workers may give due consideration according to the actual needs of the abused women such as their safety upon discharge, availability of appropriate accommodation, financial condition, emotional support and child care arrangement, etc.

(3) On the basis of casework service, the Social Welfare Department (SWD) provides the Batterer Intervention Programme (BIP) for persons who have used violence towards their spouses/heterosexual co-habitants. The target participants of this 13-session counselling programme are batterers who wish to maintain and improve their intimate partner relationships. The programme aims to help the perpetrators understand intimate partners' violence and its impact, learn about non-violent approaches of conflict resolution and improve relationship with their partners. According to the evaluation study of the pilot project of BIP from April 2006 to March 2008 and the experience of frontline social workers, the combination of casework and group counselling service and the provision of sole casework service were both effective in changing perpetrators' violent behaviour. As for enhancing perpetrators' relationship with their partners, participants of BIP demonstrated more significant positive changes than people who only received casework counselling. The positive changes also helped them continue to get along with their partners in non-violent ways. In the past three years, there were a total of 152 batterers participating in the programme. Details are as follows:

Participants	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Male	24	7	41
Female	19	44	17

Total	43	51	58
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The Anti-Violence Programme (AVP) is a psycho-educational programme approved by the Director of Social Welfare. The court, in granting a non-molestation order under the Domestic and Cohabitation Relationships Violence Ordinance (Cap 189), may require the respondent to attend AVP. It aims to reduce the risk of reoccurrence of violence and to change the violent attitude and behaviour of the participants, so as to enhance the protection of the victims of domestic violence. AVP provides service for those, including persons acting in a violent or molesting manner towards their spouses/former spouses/cohabitants/former cohabitants, children or other family members, who were covered under the aforementioned Ordinance. The programme consists of 12 to 14 sessions conducted in the form of individual or group counselling. The number of participants in the programme depends on the number of referrals by the Court. In the past three years, there were a total of two male batterers referred by the Court to participate in the programme.

(4) Since October 2018, SWD has subvented three non-governmental organisations to operate the Support Programme for Enhancing Peaceable Relationship (SPeaR) at five service clusters in Hong Kong. SPeaR aims at providing an early and flexible intervention for batterers/potential batterers to prevent and stop intimate partner violence (IPV) as well as improve the quality of their intimate relationships. It also provides support service for children who have witnessed or been exposed to IPV and victims of IPV, with a view to protecting them from harm.

Up to September 2019, a total of 438 participants had participated in the Programme in the form of individual/group/family educational activities, of whom 151 were male and 91 were female who were batterers/potential batterers, 8 were male and 41 were female victims and 147 were children aged 18 or below who had witnessed or been exposed to IPV.

(5) Compassionate Rehousing (CR) is a form of special housing assistance, which aims at providing housing assistance for individuals and families (including victims of domestic violence or family crisis) who have genuine and imminent long-term housing needs but, owing to their social and/or medical needs arising from specific circumstances or experience, have no other feasible means to solve their housing problems. CR has to be assessed comprehensively by professional social workers or approved persons. SWD is responsible for recommending cases to the Housing Department (HD). On receipt of CR recommendations, HD will arrange detailed eligibility vetting in respect of the clients and allocation of public rental housing (PRH) units for eligible cases.

SWD does not have the statistics on the number of victims of domestic violence or family crisis having been allocated PRH through CR.