

## LCQ19: Domestic violence

Following is a question by the Hon Lilian Kwok and a written reply by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Mr Chris Sun, in the Legislative Council today (October 30):

Question:

There are views pointing out that domestic violence is of grave concern in the community. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the respective numbers of requests for assistance and reported cases in relation to domestic violence received by the Government in each month of the past five years, as well as the number of persons convicted;

(2) as it is learnt that when handling domestic conflict reports, the Hong Kong Police Force (HKPF) will refer cases in need to the Social Welfare Department for follow-up actions once consent is sought from the parties concerned, and for persons who refuse to accept the referral service, HKPF will provide them with a "Family Support Service Information Card" so that they can seek assistance on their own, whether the Government has continuously followed up and provided support for those persons who refused the referral service; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(3) of the waiting time for and the average number of sessions of psychological counselling and emotional support services provided by the Government to victims in domestic violence cases;

(4) given that the Police currently classify domestic conflict reports into "Domestic Violence (Crime)", "Domestic Violence (Miscellaneous)" and "Domestic Incidents" based on their degree of seriousness, whether the Government will regularly review and update the relevant classification criteria and guidelines; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(5) of the Government's education and publicity efforts on the prevention of domestic violence in the past three years (set out by item); whether it has assessed the effectiveness of such work?

Reply:

President,

The reply to the Member's question, in consultation with Security Bureau, is as follows:

(1) In the past five years, the numbers of cases involving spouse/cohabitant battering and child protection received and handled by the Social Welfare

Department (SWD) are tabulated below:

Case type	Year				
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Number of spouse/cohabitant battering cases	2 920	2 601	2 715	2 077	1 938
Number of child protection cases	1 006	940	1 367	1 439	1 457

The SWD does not have information on the monthly number of such cases.

As at September 2024, the respective numbers of cases of domestic violence (including Domestic Violence (Crime) and Domestic Violence (Miscellaneous)) and Domestic Incidents handled by the Police are set out at Annex. As domestic violence cases involve various criminal offences and different ordinances, the Police do not maintain statistics on the relevant number of convictions.

(2) When handling domestic conflict reports, once consent is sought from the parties concerned, the Police will refer cases in need to the SWD for follow-up actions, including arranging for the persons in need for admission to refuge centres or immediate intervention by outreaching social workers, etc by the SWD. Depending on the circumstances, the Police refers the victims and/or assailants to other appropriate follow-up services, such as joining hands with the SWD to assist them in contacting relevant social welfare organisations for counseling and other supports, with a view to strengthening protection for victims and preventing recurrence of domestic violence. For persons who refuse to accept referral services, the Police provides a "Family Support Service Information Card" jointly produced with the SWD, to facilitate the persons concerned to contact service agencies direct for assistance. If a case is assessed as high-risk, the Police will take the initiative to refer the case to the SWD to ensure that the case receives timely follow-up. Upon receiving the Police's referral, the SWD will make crisis intervention and provide necessary support having regard to the circumstances and welfare needs of the case.

(3) The SWD provides a wide range of preventive, supportive and specialised services to victims of domestic violence and families in need through different service units. These services include Integrated Family Service Centres/Integrated Services Centres, Family and Child Protective Services Units, Clinical Psychology Units, Family Support Networking Teams, Refuge Centres for Women, Family Crisis Support Centre, Multi-purpose Crisis Intervention and Support Centre, Victim Support Programme for Victims of Family Violence, residential child care services and child care centres. The emergency support services provided by these service units to the victims of domestic violence cases do not require waiting. The SWD does not have the information on the average times of service for each case.

(4) The Police have clear professional guidelines for the classification and handling of cases. Irrespective of the classification of a case, police officers will handle and investigate cases with empathy, understanding, professionalism, fairness, and impartiality.

The Police attach great importance to the problem of domestic violence. Through an inter-departmental and multi-disciplinary approach, the Police handle domestic violence cases with joint efforts, with a view to achieving the dual objectives of protecting the personal safety of the victims and their families as well as bringing the offenders to justice. The Police have formulated a set of policies and procedures for effective handling of domestic violence cases, ensuring that officers respond to all reports promptly and take appropriate enforcement actions, and ensure the immediate safety of victim and his/her children to prevent further harm.

(5) The SWD has been launching the publicity campaign on "Strengthening Families and Combating Violence", which include promotion through television, radio, various public transport network, online platforms and social media, to raise public awareness on the understanding of the problems of domestic violence and the prevention of domestic violence. The SWD also organises various mass events and diversified district-based public education programmes with a view to encouraging the persons in need to seek early assistance, preventing resorting to violence against family members and promoting the message of family harmony.

In addition, the Police have also effectively utilised various channels, including seminars, workshops and online platforms to provide training to different sectors such as social welfare and education, in order to raise public awareness and prevent domestic violence cases.

The Government would regularly review the effectiveness of the work and refine the promotion strategies at appropriate time.