

# New police command to help victims of sexual crime, family violence

It will be staffed by officers with expertise in such cases, good victim management skills

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The police will set up a new command, which aims to provide victims of sexual crime and family violence with more support, by next year.

The Sexual Crime and Family Violence Command will be staffed by police officers who have specialised expertise in handling sexual crime and family violence cases and who possess good victim management skills.

Announcing this yesterday, Law and Home Affairs Minister K. Shanmugam said: "All of you know that (the Government) takes a very strong and firm stance on dealing with sexual offences. Over the years... we've strengthened our legislative levers. The police have also been active in reviewing their processes. The police are also taking

very active steps to increase public awareness about sexual assault and what victims can do."

Mr Shanmugam was speaking at the inaugural Sexual Assault Awareness Seminar held at the Police Cantonment Complex. It was attended by police officers and representatives from the Ministry of Social and Family Development and other organisations.

Between 2017 and 2020, there were about 9,200 reports of sexual assault, including rape, sexual assault by penetration, outrage of modesty and sexual offences involving children and vulnerable victims, said the police. Of these, 869 were allegedly committed by family members or relatives.

Last year, there were 1,480 cases of outrage of modesty, which accounted for 42.3 per cent of all sexual crime cases reported. This was an increase of about 12 per cent from the 1,321 cases in 2020.

Child sexual abuse cases jumped



Lead social worker Kristine Lam of Care Corner Project Start, which provides support to victims of violence, said the victims suffer different types of trauma, such as nightmares, anxiety and fear of going out.

70 per cent from the 261 cases investigated in 2020 to 443 cases last year – an 11-year high.

Yesterday, Mr Shanmugam outlined how the police will be enhancing training for officers so they can better respond to sexual crime cases. This will include seminars where officers will learn about the best practices to manage sexual crimes.

Currently, sexual assault cases are investigated by specialist units in the Singapore Police Force, with the Serious Sexual Crimes Branch leading investigations into rape and aggravated cases of sexual assault by penetration.

The police will also be launching a one-stop webpage later this year, providing more resources to the public on the investigation processes for sexual crime cases and victim care measures available.

Another area of focus will be the importance of DNA collection in the context of sexual crimes. Citing an example, Mr Shanmugam noted how the police were able to crack a rape case that was unsolved for more than a decade, using DNA evidence.

In addition to these measures, the police will be working more closely with community partners to better support sexual assault victims.

Care Corner Project Start (CCPS) is one community partner that provides support to victims of violence. Ms Kristine Lam, lead social worker at CCPS, said victims suffer different types of trauma, such as nightmares, anxiety and fear of going out.

Earlier this month, a new charity, SG Her Empowerment, was set up to tackle online and sexual harms against women. Led by vet-



Veteran lawyer Stefanie Yuen Thio helms SG Her Empowerment, set up to tackle online and sexual harms against women. It will work closely with the Law Society to provide pro bono legal advice to victims. ST PHOTOS: KUA CHEE SIONG

eran lawyer Stefanie Yuen Thio, the charity will work closely with the Law Society to provide pro bono legal advice to victims.

Mr Shanmugam said: "I am glad to see a new community-led charity working to empower women and girls and continuing the dialogues started in the Conversations on Women's Development and recent White Paper on Singapore Women's Development."

Last week, Parliament endorsed the White Paper, which provides a 10-year road map to ensuring all women in Singapore have greater access to opportunities.

The White Paper also covers plans to support victims of violence, so more victims can report abuse and seek immediate help.

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TOUGH STANCE ON SEX CRIMES

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