

Hong Kong Family Welfare Society

Evaluation Study on the Application of CPI Model in
Co-parenting and Parenting Coordination Services
「CPI模式在共享親職及親職協調服務中的應用」
評估研究

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Executive Summary

This report details an evaluation of the effectiveness of the Hong Kong Family Welfare Society's (HKFWS) co-parenting and parenting coordination services, which are largely informed by the Cooperative Parenting Institute's (CPI) model. The evaluation followed a mixed-methods approach that integrated a quantitative study as well as a qualitative study.

The Quantitative Study

As part of a pretest–post-test design involving non-equivalent groups to examine the effectiveness of the HKFWS's co-parenting and parenting coordination services, questionnaires were collected at intake (i.e. pretest), after co-parenting education (i.e. interim), and a year after pretest (i.e. post-test). In all, 87 parents—35 in the control group and 52 in the experimental group—completed pretest questionnaires, 64 completed interim questionnaires, and 73 completed post-test questionnaires, for pretest–post-test return rates of 60.0% for the control group and 100.0% for the experimental one. In parallel, 31 children were recruited at pretest, 29 of whom completed post-test questionnaires, for a return rate of 93.5%. Last, 205 social workers or related professionals completed questionnaires addressing professional training during six training sessions held between July 2017 and May 2018.

Results of the quantitative study revealed that the CPI-informed co-parenting education, as part of the HKFWS's co-parenting services, exerted only a short-term effect on parents' motivation and commitment to engaging in post-divorce co-parenting and their awareness of rising social expectations for post-divorce co-parenting. Among other results, intensive CPI-based services reduced inter-parental conflict and inter-parental communication, facilitated the significant emotional detachment of parents from former spouses as part of a non-antagonistic parallel pattern of co-parenting. The intervention successfully moved the parents from conflicting co-parenting to parallel co-parenting, which is widely recognized as a beneficial and feasible co-parenting pattern for post-divorce families with high-conflict parents. Consequently, their children experienced significant relief from being triangulated in inter-parental conflicts, improved intimacy with non-resident parents, and enhanced wellbeing.

The Qualitative Study

The participants for the qualitative study consisted of 21 parents and five children from 15 families, three social workers from agencies other than the HKFWS, and a peer counsellor. Consistent with findings from the quantitative study, qualitative results revealed that the HKFWS's co-parenting and parenting coordination services reduced inter-parental conflict and

allowed parents to engage in more civilised communication with the other parties. The services also helped parents to resolve challenging disputes regarding arrangements to coordinate their children's activities and visits with non-resident parents, reduced the triangulation of children in inter-parental conflicts, strengthened parent-child bonding, and improved children's wellbeing.

As revealed during interviews, participants appreciated the HKFWS's cultivation of and commitment to observing a child-focused relational perspective, as well as platforms for communication developed for the workable negotiation of child-related arrangement. The intensive CPI-informed services enhanced the parents' awareness of interaction dynamics that could overcome negative circularity, and the facilitation of perspective taking and mutual understanding fostered their mutual trust. The services that supported parents' rehearsal of civilized responses in possible conflicts with the other parties, attentive coaching, and engagement in follow-up reviews also equipped parents with concrete skills and strong sources of support. The CPI's guide for parents and children's books served as easily accessible resources to parents. Moreover, participating social workers and peer counsellor considered the services to be outstanding given the sustained, thoughtful efforts of social workers in engaging and helping both parents, maintaining good inter-agency collaboration, and nurturing social worker-peer counsellor coordination.

However, some parents reported that their counselling needs went unmet and that the services were fragmented due to rigid service boundaries in the absence of designated key workers. The co-parenting course was beneficial in equipping the parents with a child-focused perspective but insufficient to support them to implement child-focused co-parenting. At the same time, although the fathers' group provided non-resident fathers with sound emotional support, unresolved hurt and anger that circulated in their self-initiated social media group posed the risk of gender-based antagonism against resident mothers. Despite their appreciation of the child-focused perspective, some parents failed to recognise that some of their actions contradicted that perspective, including their conflation of maintenance and access, and their continued focus on parent's rights instead of children's. Last, the significant influence of lawyers, friends, extended family and social ideologies may divert the parents away from a child-focused perspective, fuelling their disputes.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In sum, providing bundled intensive interventions based on CPI model successfully facilitated parents experiencing severe conflict to practise child-focused co-parenting in a

parallel parenting pattern, even if the counselling needs of some parents remained unmet and some parents still adopt a mind-set prioritising the rights of parents. In response, the following measures are recommended:

- Positioning co-parenting as lifelong education;
- Employing differentiated service packages for parents in diverse situations;
- Advocating the legislation of the Children Proceedings (Parental Responsibility) Bill and the implementation of a more vigorous system to enforce child support in Hong Kong;
- Challenging the fixed differentiation of gender roles and the gendered division of labour
- Adopting a therapeutic, integrative case management service model for parents experiencing severe parental conflict;
- Training support for co-parenting practitioners; and
- Developing appropriate screening instruments and assessment tools to enable timely assessment for the earliest and most appropriate intervention with families.

行政撮要

是次研究採用量性研究和質性研究互相混合補充的方法，以評估香港家庭福利會「CPI 模式共親職及親職協調服務」的成效。

量性研究 採用準實驗研究設計，以了解服務對參與家長及其子女的影響。我們邀請服務使用者在進入服務時、完成共親職課程及一年後填寫基線、中期及後測問卷。共有 87 名家長參與了是次的研究，當中 35 名家長為對照組，52 名家長為實驗組。在基線階段完成了 118 份有效問卷；64 位家長完成中期調查，73 位完成 98 份後測問卷。對照組有效問卷的前測後測回應率為 60.0%而實驗組則為 100%。此外，31 名子女參與是次研究，其中 29 位完成後測問卷，回應率為 93.5%。在 2017 年 7 月至 2018 年 5 月間舉辦的六次培訓課程中，有 205 名社會工作者或相關專業人員在參與培訓課程前及完成課程後完成專業培訓問卷。

量性研究顯示 CPI 共親職課程短期內有效提高離異家長共享親職的動機及他們對社會期望離異父母共親職的認知，但效果並不持久。進深的 CPI 共親職服務配套介入有效減少離異父母間情感羈絆，並幫助父母透過減少溝通和衝突，建立和平非敵對的平行型共親職模式，也減少把兒童捲入父母之間的衝突矛盾，及改善非同住父母與子女的親密感，幫助父母從衝突的共親職模式過度到平行式的共親職模式，對兒童的福祉產生積極影響。

質性研究共有來自 15 個家庭的 21 名父母和 5 名兒童，及來自其他機構的 3 名社會工作者和 1 名同伴輔導員參加。質性結果與量性研究結果一致：離異父母間衝突減少，並能夠以較和平禮貌的方式溝通。進深的 CPI 服務配套介入幫助他們排解與子女相關的糾紛，減少兒童在父母衝突中成為夾心人的情況，並促進非同住父母與子女的親密感，兒童福祉得到提升。透過質性研究亦揭示服務有其特出之處，包括：培養兒童為本的視角及實踐、為離異父母建立溝通平台以助有效的商討、增強他/她們對彼此關係互動的覺醒，知道如何處理自己的行為反應，以打破惡性循環的相處模式。並進一步引導父母作出換位思考及相互理解，這有助逐步重建彼此的互信。除了信念和互動覺察外，服務亦幫助離異父母掌握溝通技巧，並通過貼身教導、事後分析、預演衝突事件的處理為他/她們提供了強而有力的支持。此外，工作人員積極邀請父母雙方

一同參與服務，並為父親及母親各自提供個別的親職協調員，並透過與其他同時服務有關家庭的專業人員衷誠合作為父母及孩子提供整全的支援介入，在服務過程中使用「兒童為本共享親職手冊」及有關離婚適應的兒童繪本都有助服務取得成效。

但服務也有不足之處：有家長認為服務不能滿足他們的輔導需求，而服務間界線嚴謹造成服務分割，部份父母也沒有指定的個案管理人員的支援。共親職教育有助父母明白衝突對孩子的傷害，卻不足以支援父母在共親職實踐中落實以孩為本的理念，有關爸爸組的發現也須要留心，組內同路人的互相支援是受訪父親們最重要、最寶貴的支援，組員並自行組織了網上社交群組以促進組外的交流，在沒有專業同工參與和指引的情況下，爸爸們對孩子母親的憤怒和怨恨在群組內流傳並發酵，容易強化對母親們的敵對態度。此外，研究亦發現在現行的法例框架下，受訪父母仍然將探視與贍養費混為一談，兩者之間要作出等價交易，亦有不少非同住的父親將共親職理解為父母應平均分配孩子的時間，同樣是側重父母的權利，以至要平權分配孩子時間的觀念，這些觀念妨礙了兒童為本角度的實踐。而擴展家庭成員、朋友、律師、以至社會意識形態的影響都可能助長父母的分歧和衝突，阻礙兒童為本角度的實踐。

討論及建議

綜上所述，儘管一些父母的輔導需求未得到滿足，而現存的法律框架亦障礙著兒童為本角度的實踐，但研究結果然顯示以兒童為本為主軸，提供一系列密集的共親職和親職協調服務可有效幫助高衝突父母共享親職。因此，我們有以下建議：

- 共親職概念作為生命教育的恆常概念及內容;
- 為不同情況的父母提供更貼身的共親職教育配套支援;
- 落實「兒童法律程序(父母責任)」法案的立法工作及建立更有效的贍養費管理系統;
- 挑戰僵化的離異父母性別角色分工;
- 以治療導向及整全個案管理模式服務高衝突離異家庭的父母;
- 為共親職服務同工提供所需的訓練; 及
- 研發適合的評估工具以便盡早為家庭提供適切的服務配套。