



Against Child Abuse
防止虐待兒童會

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Five wishes for the 2026 Policy Address

Against Child Abuse (ACA) was established in 1979. It has strived to eliminate all forms of child abuse in Hong Kong. Our mission is to promote a caring and non-violent environment for the optimal growth and development of our children through delivering quality services in the areas of prevention, training, crisis intervention, treatment and advocacy.

ACA welcomes the Government's continuing efforts to strengthen child protection policies and to advance legal and institutional reforms in agendas such as child safety, child and family support, sexual offences, and others. However, the risks facing children today extend far beyond the traditional views on family violence or physical abuse. Prolonged and repeated sexual abuse, child neglect, institutional risks, sexual grooming, online child sexual exploitation and abuse, and corporal punishment must take priority amongst child protection agendas. To uphold a truly child-centred policy agenda, the Government must pursue reforms across legislation, institutions, education, regulation, and support services in a coordinated and sustained manner.

ACA recommends that the 2026 Policy Address place child protection at the forefront. By integrating legal updates, professional support, community education, and systemic prevention, Hong Kong can reduce the occurrence, recurrence, and escalation of child maltreatment, while safeguarding every child's right to safety, dignity, and healthy development.

Child sexual abuse and the introduction of a Persistent Child Sexual Abuse Offence (PCSA)

Child sexual abuse remains one of the most serious and under-reported forms of maltreatment in Hong Kong. Many cases involve repeated abuse over extended periods, yet victims often disclose only years later due to fear, shame, manipulation, or the psychological impact of trauma. This pattern of delayed disclosure and prolonged victimisation poses significant challenges for investigation and prosecution under the existing legal framework.

To address these realities, a discrete offence is needed to address child sexual abuse situations where disclosure is often delayed and abusive acts are committed repeatedly over a prolonged period. The need for a Persistent Child Sexual Abuse Offence (PCSA) has been discussed for over two decades¹. The Department of Justice has previously produced a paper examining its pros and cons².

While justice for defendants must be upheld in relation to the Indictment Rules, justice must also be served for child victims. Legislative provisions must address the inherent

¹ Association Concerning Sexual Violence Against Women, "Establishing a New Offence against Persistent Child Sexual Abuse," June 2026, <https://rainlily.org.hk/publication/2026/06/pcsa>.

² Department of Justice, Legal Policy Division, "Information Paper on the Proposed Creation of the Offence of 'Persistent Sexual Abuse of a Child'," November 2000.





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features of the offence that often result in absence of witnesses or physical evidence, repetitive victimisation, delayed disclosure, and the impact of trauma on memory, which often leads to “latent ambiguity” in the indictment. While the broader legislative revamp should not be further delayed, the introduction of a PCSA offence should remain a priority in the child protection agenda.

Causing or Allowing the Death or Serious Harm of a Child or Vulnerable Adult Offence

A relevant legislation addressing child neglect is the offence of “Causing or Allowing the death or Serious Harm of a Child or Vulnerable Adult”, which was first deliberated in 2006 by the Law Reform Commission of Hong Kong. Fifteen years later, a final report was issued in 2021. Any person owing a duty of care to a child under 16, and who fails to take steps to protect the child from serious harm or death, would bear criminal liability. This law offers incentives for early prevention and intervention before tragedy happens, rather than mere punishment³. It is hoped that the Government accepts this law for prompt legislative enactment.

The adoption of Organizational Child Protection/ Safeguarding Policies

There were many cases where children were abused by the people that they should be able to trust and in places that they should feel safe⁴. Chapter 13 in the Protecting Children from Maltreatment – Procedural Guide for Multi-disciplinary Co-operation (Revised 2026)⁵ is about handling child maltreatment allegations against organizations’ staff, carers and volunteers. The formulation of relevant Organizational Child Protection/ Safeguarding Policies should be emphasized no less.

Organizational Child Protection/ Safeguarding Policy should be proactively promoted with the Government taking the lead, supporting child-related organizations establishing policy appropriate to their own setting (e.g. In schools, institutions, out-of-home care services, community centers, churches, sports associations, tutorial centers, etc.). This should not be a monstrous task and is achievable.

Prohibition of Corporal Punishment

Over the years, physical abuse has been the predominant form of child maltreatment, accounting for approximately 45% of all cases⁶. Corporal punishment remains prevalent in Hong Kong, occurring in families and, regrettably, continuing in schools,

³ Law Reform Commission of Hong Kong, *Report on Causing or Allowing the Death or Serious Harm of a Child or Vulnerable Adult* (September 2021).

⁴ “Hongkonger gets 52 months in jail for molesting two boys while working as private tutor,” *South China Morning Post*, 28 May 2020, <https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/law-and-crime/article/3086577/hongkonger-gets-52-months-jail-molesting-two-boys>

⁵ Social Welfare Department, *Protecting Children from Maltreatment - Procedural Guide for Multi-disciplinary Co-operation* (Revised 2026), https://www.swd.gov.hk/storage/asset/section/652/en/Procedural_Guide_Core_Procedures_Eng_2026.pdf

⁶ Statistics on Child Abuse Cases captured by the Child Protection Registry of the Social Welfare Department. http://www.swd.gov.hk/vs/index_e.html





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tutorial centres, and other settings.

Often perceived as a disciplinary method, corporal punishment has been proven ineffective by extensive research. The World Health Organization (2025)⁷ highlights that it fails to foster internal discipline or yield any positive outcomes. Instead, it harms children's physical and mental health, brain development, and cognitive and socio-emotional growth, while also damaging parent-child relationships. Children raised in environments marked by frequent scolding and beating are prone to emotional distress, behavioural problems, aggression, antisocial behaviour, learning difficulties, and are more likely to replicate patterns of violence in adulthood. In severe cases, such punishment can escalate into serious injury or even death.

Community views on a total ban on corporal punishment have shifted considerably over the years⁸. Currently, 70 jurisdictions have enacted legislation to prohibit corporal punishment in all settings⁹, including the home. To lead societal change, the Government must send a clear message through legislation that violence is unacceptable and corporal punishment will not be tolerated at all levels.

Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (OCSEA)

Legislation on sexual offences must keep pace with the times. Online child sexual exploitation and abuse (OCSEA) presents pressing challenges in child protection today. In reality, harmful sexual activities online are extensive and varied. These include sending or viewing sexual images, seeing and hearing sexual communications; sexual grooming of children; the production of child sexual abuse material (CSAM) such as generative images or materials created using extended reality; the searching for or viewing of CSAM on the Dark Web or through Tor; the sharing or storage of CSAM, for example, in cloud files; the livestreaming of child sexual exploitation and abuse; and the coerced production of self-generated sexual material by children.

To effectively combat diverse online crimes, a proactive and comprehensive approach is required—one that brings stakeholders together on a common platform with the authority to assess the gravity of the problem, formulate child-focused policies, and establish robust legislation, procedures, and mechanisms for impactful outcomes. The Commission on Children, established in 2018, would serve as an appropriate platform for this purpose.

Government regulation of internet service providers and social media companies is also essential to child protection. The authority must mandate timely detection, reporting, and removal of child sexual abuse material, alongside responsible industry practices

⁷ World Health Organization, *Corporal punishment of children: the public health impact* (Geneva: World Health Organization; 2025), <https://doi.org/10.2471/B09424>.

⁸ Against Child Abuse, *Survey Report on the Experience of Corporal Punishment in Children and Parents*, (April 2019), <http://www.aca.org.hk/top-a-survey-en.htm>

⁹ Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, "Countdown to Universal Prohibition of Corporal Punishment," accessed 12 August 2026, <https://endcorporalpunishment.org/countdown/>





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like safety-by-design and innovative technological solutions, to prevent and address online child sexual exploitation and abuse.

To better protect young people, sex education must be significantly reinforced and fully integrated into the school curriculum. ACA recommends a dedicated subject should be introduced to deliver comprehensive sexual education, tailored to learners' developmental stages, so that they acquire not only knowledge but also positive attitudes and practical skills.

Conclusion

Against Child Abuse calls on the Government to elevate child protection as a key priority in the 2026 Policy Address, responding to the multifaceted risks children face today through clearer legislation, stronger institutions, and more comprehensive social support. Every child has the right to grow up in an environment that is safe, respectful, free from violence, and protective of their dignity. The Government has the responsibility to ensure, through forward-looking legislation, education, and support, that this right is not merely aspirational, but a reality enjoyed by every child in Hong Kong.

Against Child Abuse
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