

Gran reports pair for leaving tots home alone

Two young parents have been arrested for child abuse after they left their two babies home alone.

This followed a report by the grandmother, Tsang, 59. At about 6.30am, Tsang called the police and told officers she suspected her son and daughter-in-law left her two grandsons home after the couple had an argument.

Police arrived at the flat in Aberdeen and found the boys, 20 months and eight months, on their own. The two boys were unharmed and sent to Queen Mary Hospital for checks.

The children's father, Lai, 26, and mother, Lau, 20, were later arrested for child abuse. A Western district crime investigation team is following up on the incident.

Jessica Ho Oi-chiu, director of Against Child Abuse, said the young couple had no awareness of danger and that targeted services for high-risk parents can help prevent such incidents.

"They may have to leave home when they are angry but they still have to make sure someone is taking care of their children," Ho said, adding that support from both the family and professionals is important to new parents.

Currently, those in need can seek help from the Integrated Family Service Centres of the Social Welfare Department.

"The IFSCs do everything and that means they have missed out on a lot of things," Ho said.

The Department of Health runs a Comprehensive Child Development Service to identify high-risk cases but Ho said that does not come with a home-visit service and relies on the mother to bring her child to the Maternal and Child Health Centres.

A program by Against Child Abuse offers support to pregnant women and families with newborns in Tuen Mun, Tin Shui Wai and Yuen Long, under which social workers visit the families regularly for a year to assess their needs and the parents also get to learn about some positive parenting skills, Ho said.

She called on the government to consider rolling out similar programs for all newborns in Hong Kong.