

Efficiency Office's response to Office of The Ombudsman's direct investigation report

Regarding a report released by the Ombudsman today (March 7) on its direct investigation into the effectiveness of 1823 in handling complaints and enquiries, the Efficiency Office (Eff0) is pleased to note that the Ombudsman recognises the excellent efficiency of 1823 in handling public enquiries. 1823 achieved first-call resolution at 99 per cent for telephone enquiries, which is in line with its aim of providing a one-stop enquiry service. The Ombudsman also affirms 1823's positive attitude during the epidemic in actively taking measures to improve its services and providing advice to departments to handle enquiries more effectively. A spokesperson for the Eff0 said that 1823's service level had been affected by the epidemic and the need to support extra anti-epidemic related hotlines. As society moved towards a full resumption to normalcy, 1823's services had generally returned to normal in 2023, with 90 per cent of the calls handled.

The Eff0 has committed to continuously improving the performance of 1823 over the years. 1823 has already implemented or will implement seven recommendations mentioned in the report. The Eff0 accepted the remaining recommendations and would actively follow up on them. In summary, the main improvement measures of 1823 in different areas include:

- For handling of complaints (including requests for government service), in accordance with the Ombudsman's recommendation, the Eff0 would systematically sort out unresolved cross-departmental complaints involving district issues and submit a report to the Task Force on District Governance (TFDG), chaired by the Deputy Chief Secretary for Administration, for deliberation with relevant departments, and providing guidance. In addition, the Eff0 will develop a mechanism and formulate associated guidelines for submission of cases to the District Officer or the TFDG in a systematic, appropriate and timely manner, as well as regularise the escalation mechanism.
- For enhancing operational efficiency, 1823 has launched a series of projects since 2023 that use new technologies to enhance operational efficiency. Among them, 1823 had completed the telephony system upgrade project at the end of 2023. 1823 is also expanding its artificial intelligence (AI) chatbot for enquiry service in answering frequently asked questions under its service scope; and conducting a project to pilot the use of generative AI technology to assist colleagues in drafting responses to written enquiries from citizens. In addition, 1823 will apply AI speech-to-text technology to transcribe citizens' voicemail messages into text so as to enhance the handling efficiency;

and provide self-service to citizens for receiving the requested information by short message service (SMS).

- For strengthening of collaboration and communication between departments and 1823, 1823 will continue to provide advice to participating departments on their information dissemination and strengthen collaboration and communication with departments in accordance with the Ombudsman's recommendations. 1823 will also discuss and formulate backup plans and contingency measures with relevant departments for addressing unexpected and emergency situations.
- For better use of data for analysis, 1823 will continue to follow the existing arrangement to provide case data to departments and submit various case statistics and analysis reports to participating departments so that they can combine with their own operational data as well as enquiry and complaint data collected from other channels for comprehensive analysis. In order to make better use of the data collected from daily operations, 1823 will further consolidate the case data collected for comprehensive analysis by policy bureaux/departments to further improve government services.