

Housing Department's response to Ombudsman's direct investigation report

Regarding a report released by the Office of The Ombudsman (Ombudsman) today (July 13) on its direct investigation into arrangements for Housing for Senior Citizens (HSC) and converted one-person (C1P) units by the Housing Department (HD), the HD thanked the Ombudsman for their views.

"Regarding the direct investigation report initiated by the Ombudsman, we will carefully examine and study the recommendations therein and consider areas of improvement in the existing measures to ensure more effective deployment of relevant public rental housing (PRH) resources," a spokesman for the HD said.

With an aim to speed up the intake of PRH applicants, the HD will closely monitor the overall supply and demand of PRH and continue to make the best efforts in accelerating the allocation process as well as the turnover of PRH units. The regularly launched "Express Flat Allocation Scheme" (EFAS) offers another avenue to PRH applicants to expedite allocation. Citing the recent EFAS held in 2022 as an example, 390 HSC Type 2 and Type 3 design units had been successfully let. We have also taken the initiative to cooperate with social welfare organisations recently in arranging "guided tours" to HSC Type 2 and Type 3 design units for the public and receive positive feedback from the visitors. In the future, we will continue to collaborate with more social welfare organisations in arranging visits to HSC units to strengthen PRH applicants' understanding of these units and facilities and thereby enhancing the occupancy rate.

"At the same time, we will continue to adopt measures in encouraging transfer. Since December 2020, the 'Full Rent Exemption Scheme for Elderly Households' has benefited all elderly households aged 70 or above residing in the HSC Type 1 and C1P units. They can apply transfer to suitably-sized PRH units to enjoy full rent exemption for life. In addition, we have also formed 'visiting teams' since June 2022 to visit all tenants living in HSC Type 1 and C1P units and introduce various voluntary transfer options. In the future, we will continue to connect and collaborate with social welfare organisations in actively persuading and encouraging them to apply transfer," the spokesman for the HD said.