

LCQ17: Transitional housing projects

Following is a question by the Hon Doreen Kong and a written reply by the Secretary for Housing, Ms Winnie Ho, in the Legislative Council today (November 29):

Question:

The first newly-built transitional housing project, Nam Cheong 220, ended in November last year. Only 25.5 per cent of the tenants of the project were allocated a public rental housing (PRH) unit after the end of the project's two-year operation period, while the remaining tenants had to move again to other transitional housing or private residential units. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the total number of tenants of transitional housing projects since 2021, with a breakdown by the number of persons in the household and the household structure (e.g. whether it is a single-parent household and the age distribution of children);

(2) whether the authorities have kept track of the living situation of the tenants who had resided in the Nam Cheong 220 project as at October this year; of the measures in place to support its former tenants who still need to move more than once after moving out of that transitional housing project;

(3) whether the authorities have plans to review the following arrangements: (i) when a transitional housing project adopting the Modular Integrated Construction approach is demolished, its modules can be reused in other housing projects, and (ii) operating organizations allocate transitional housing units to Category A applicants (i.e. persons who have been waiting for traditional PRH for not less than three years) and Category B applicants (i.e. persons of other categories) in the ratio of 8:2; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(4) whether the authorities will consider consolidating transitional housing and Light Public Housing, so as to bring the rental levels of the two types of housing closer to each other and avoid duplication of resources; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Transitional housing has been well received by various sectors of the community, and benefited many families and individuals who are waiting for traditional public rental housing (PRH) and inadequately housed. The Government has identified land for providing over 21 000 transitional housing units, exceeding the original target of 20 000 units. As at end October this year, about 9 000 units have come into operation. It is expected that about 11 000 units will be completed and put into service in 2024, while the

remaining 1 000 units will be completed in the first quarter of 2025.

Our reply to the question raised by the Hon Doreen Kong is as follows:

(1) Under the Funding Scheme to Support Transitional Housing Projects by Non-government Organisations (the Funding Scheme) of the Housing Bureau (HB), a total of 53 transitional housing projects have been approved so far. Among them, 19 projects have come into operation, providing about 6 400 units. In addition, there are about 2 600 units of another 32 projects which are funded by other sources, including the Community Care Fund or other schemes, such as the Pilot Scheme to Subsidise Using Rooms in Hotels and Guesthouses as Transitional Housing. The household distribution (including the numbers of units, Category A and Category B tenants) of the operating projects are set out at Annex 1.

The units under the 19 transitional housing projects mentioned above come in different designs and sizes. The types and numbers of units provided are set out at Annex 2.

As for the household structure of the tenants of transitional housing, we do not maintain the relevant information.

(2) According to the information provided by the operating organisation of Nam Cheong 220 when the project ceased operation, 24 households were allocated traditional PRH units, 58 households were rehoused to other transitional housing projects and 12 households moved to other private residential units. We have not kept track of the latest living situation of these tenants.

According to the terms of agreement entered with the organisations under the Funding Scheme, if tenants of a transitional housing project have yet to be allocated traditional PRH when the operation period of the project ends, the operating organisation of the project should endeavour to provide assistance to them to move to other transitional housing projects, or search for appropriate accommodation in the private market as far as practicable. The organisation will also provide other referral services or assistance according to the needs of individual tenants.

(3) As the Modular Integrated Construction (MiC) approach is adopted in the newly-built transitional housing projects, the modules of the projects can be demounted and re-used. At present, there are already two successful examples of re-using MiC modules in transitional housing projects, including demounting all the MiC modules of the Nam Cheong 220 project, which were originally located in Sham Shui Po, in February this year. The modules were successfully relocated to and re-assembled as one of the buildings in the "Lok Sin Village", a transitional housing project at Wong Yue Tan, Plover Cove, Tai Po.

In addition, the demounting of all the MiC modules of the three-storey transitional housing project "LST Housing" at Sung Wong Toi Road in To Kwa Wan was completed in September this year. Subsequently, the modules were transported to the warehouse in Hung Shui Kiu for inspection and restoration.

The units were confirmed to be in good condition. It is expected that they will be re-assembled into an eight-storey building in a project at Choi Hing Road, Choi Hung in January 2024. The demounting and relocation of MiC modules that can be successfully re-used in other projects embody the flexibility and sustainability of the MiC approach.

As for the ratio between Category A and Category B tenants, according to the existing mechanism, if individual operating organisations encounter practical difficulties in recruiting tenants, they can submit the relevant data to the Task Force on Transitional Housing under the HB and apply for adjustment of the tenant ratio. As at end October 2023, approval has been given to a total of five transitional housing projects under the Funding Scheme for adjustment of the tenant ratio. The relevant details (including the project names, operating organisations, approved tenant ratios after adjustment, etc) are set out at Annex 3.

(4) As the Government has reiterated before, both the Light Public Housing (LPH) and transitional housing are measures complementary to each other. As the supply of traditional PRH will not be fully in place in the coming few years, the 50 000 housing units offered by transitional housing and LPH will provide short-term housing choices for those with imminent housing needs.

To further enhance the co-ordination of and optimise the application process for transitional housing, following the introduction of the central common application form in June 2023, "TH-E" – the Central and Unified Platform for Transitional Housing was launched by the HB in September this year to facilitate the public in making online applications for transitional housing. Since the launch of the central common application form and "TH-E" platform, as at mid-November 2023, the HB has received over 9 500 applications for transitional housing. Transitional housing projects in the urban and extended urban districts have always been highly popular, with an average occupancy rate of over 90 per cent. Some of the units have already been made available for the second intake of residents, and the unit usage rate in individual projects has reached 113 per cent. For the projects in the New Territories, the average occupancy rate is over 90 per cent as well.

With the completion of LPH in phases starting from 2024-25, LPH will cater mainly for applicants who have been waiting for traditional PRH for not less than three years (i.e. Category A tenants), with priorities for families. As for transitional housing, in addition to catering for Category A tenants, it can give full play to its role in rendering community support for more Category B tenants (i.e. other categories of applicants), such as persons/families living in subdivided units who have been waiting for traditional PRH for less than three years, so as to provide them with adequate short-term accommodation and to comprehensively cover the full spectrum of people in pressing housing needs.

Regarding the issue of rent, the rent of LPH will be linked to that of traditional PRH and set at around 90 per cent of the rent of newly completed traditional PRH in the same district. While eligible persons residing in transitional housing may continue to receive allowance under the Cash Allowance Trial Scheme, those who opt for LPH will no longer be granted the

allowance. Therefore, after deducting the amount of the said allowance, the difference in rent between transitional housing and LPH will not be substantial.

We will continue to closely monitor the occupancy of transitional housing and future LPH to ensure prudent utilisation of social resources.