

LCQ5: One-stop age-friendly residences

Following is a question by the Hon Andrew Lam and a reply by the Secretary for Housing, Ms Winnie Ho, in the Legislative Council today (November 15):

Question:

The Hong Kong Housing Society (HKHS) launched the Senior Citizen Residences Scheme (the Scheme) in 1999, pioneering a "lease-for-life" model with the provision of one-stop age-friendly residences with housing, recreation, and medical care services all under one roof for elderly people. The third project under the Scheme was launched on March 14 this year to provide 312 flats, and it has been reported that the HKHS received 500 applications for the project on the same day. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it knows the details of the three projects which are now being planned under the Scheme (i.e. the Pak Wo Road project in Fanling, the Kwun Tong Garden Estate redevelopment project and the Ming Wah Dai Ha redevelopment project), including the launch dates, the numbers of flats to be provided, and the entry contributions; and

(2) whether it will, by drawing reference from the experience of the HKHS as a "housing laboratory" and of the Scheme, consider incorporating the provision of one-stop age-friendly residences into the elderly housing policy; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Hong Kong Housing Society (HKHS) embarked on the Senior Citizen Residences (SEN) Scheme in 1999, aiming to provide residence integrating housing, recreation and healthcare services under one roof for the middle-class elderly aged 60 or above. The two pilot projects, namely Jolly Place in Tseung Kwan O and Cheerful Court in Ngau Tau Kok, were completed in 2003 and 2004 respectively, with an occupancy rate of about 95 per cent in 2022-23. The third project in Hung Hom, Blissful Place, has also been commissioned for resident intake in mid-2023. The units are disposed of under a "long lease" arrangement. Upon paying an entry contribution, the elderly tenants do not have to pay monthly rent, but only monthly service fees for property management and basic services. Besides, tenants may subscribe to user-pay services according to their needs and preferences. The SEN Scheme adopts a single-queue allocation arrangement, which is applicable to the three abovementioned completed projects, as well as future projects under the Scheme, hence applicants are not required to submit duplicate applications. Applications are accepted throughout the year without deadline. As at end October 2023, there are about 400 applicants on the waiting list.

My reply to the question raised by the Hon Andrew Lam is as follows:

SEN is the HKHS's key development strategy in the area of elderly housing. The HKHS is currently constructing or planning three other SEN projects, among which the project at Pak Wo Road in Fanling is estimated to be completed in 2024, providing about 260 flats. Redevelopment projects at Kwun Tong Garden Estate Phase II and Ming Wah Dai Ha in Shau Kei Wan, estimated to be completed in 2033 and 2035 respectively, will also include SEN projects, providing about 200 and 600 flats respectively. These projects are targeted at the elderly of the middle class. The HKHS will propose the levels of entry contribution of these three projects when they are launched, which will be submitted for approval of the Secretary for Housing. In future, the HKHS will continue to explore the inclusion of SEN projects in new development or redevelopment projects, with a view to creating an integrated and diversified community to meet the needs of people of different ages and strata.

The vision of the Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA) is to provide affordable rental housing to low-income families with housing needs. The HA has been providing public rental housing (PRH) flats to low-income elderly to address their housing needs, and create a liveable living environment. Since the HA's approach focuses more on encouraging inter-generational harmony and aging in place, there are no individual developments set aside just for the elderly. Instead, we address the elderly's needs by implementing various measures in terms of housing arrangements, building design, overall estate facilities, as well as social network.

In terms of housing arrangements, the HA has been implementing a series of housing schemes to prioritise addressing the housing needs of the elderly. For PRH, elderly applicants may apply as singletons through the Single Elderly Persons Priority Scheme, and their applications will generally be processed earlier than applications by ordinary families. Furthermore, the HA has also implemented a series of Harmonious Family Schemes, thereby strengthening inter-generational support.

In terms of building design, the HA has widely applied the main elements of Universal Design concept to the inside flats and common areas of PRH estates, so as to address the needs of elderly residents. Furthermore, the HA undertakes free adaptation/home modification works in the PRH unit upon elderly tenant's applications.

The HA will, where practicable, reserve about 5 per cent of the total domestic gross floor area for welfare uses in public housing developments to be completed in 2026-27 or later, so as to address elderly residents' daily needs. The HA also adopts the concept of "Community Play" and integrates children's playground with recreational facilities for the elderly as far as practicable, so as to promote inter-generational harmony and the elderly's sense of belonging to the community.

In terms of social network, the HA co-operates with other Government

departments and Non-Governmental Organisations to provide elderly PRH tenants with support services.

Other than rental housing, the HA also helps low- to middle-income elderly achieve home ownership. We implement Priority Scheme for Families with Elderly Members under subsidised sale flats sale exercises, setting aside certain quota among the flats for applicants with elderly family members to select flats with priority.

While meeting the housing needs of different categories of low-to middle-income families, the HA will continue its endeavour to provide public housing for the elderly. Meanwhile, the HKHS will continue to launch SEN projects for the middle-class elderly. The HA and the HKHS adopts different approaches by providing different designs and services, so as to address the needs of different elderly families. By complimenting each other, the two enrich the variety of public housing in Hong Kong. The HKHS has all along been Hong Kong's "housing laboratory" and a valued partner of the HA. In the future, the two will continue to learn from each other, creating a living environment with greater "well-being" for the elderly together.