

LCQ9: Disciplined services quarters

Following is a question by the Hon Mrs Regina Ip and a written reply by the Secretary for Security, Mr John Lee, in the Legislative Council today (March 24):

Question:

Some disciplined services staff have relayed to me that as there is a surplus of units of departmental quarters of certain grades (e.g. quarters for officer rank staff) but an acute shortage of units of quarters of some other grades (e.g. quarters for married rank and file staff), there is a mismatch between the supply of and demand for such quarters. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) in respect of the quarters of each disciplined services department, of (i) the number of units available for allocation, (ii) the number of applicants for such units, (iii) the number of applicants allocated such units, and (iv) the vacancy rate of such units, in each of the past three years, with a tabulated breakdown by (a) grade of the quarters and (b) district in which the quarters were located;

(2) of the current waiting time for each grade of quarters under each disciplined services department; whether the Government has (i) set a target waiting time and (ii) put in place new measures to shorten the waiting time; and

(3) whether it will put in place new measures to mitigate the mismatch between the supply of and demand for such quarters?

Reply:

President,

Civil service housing benefits are provided to eligible serving civil servants according to their terms of appointment, as well as the terms and conditions of relevant housing schemes. It is the Government's established policy to provide departmental quarters (DQs) to married disciplined services staff, subject to the availability of resources. In response to the Hon Mrs Regina Ip's question, after consulting the Civil Service Bureau (CSB), the Government Property Agency (GPA) and the disciplined services departments (DSDs), we provide a consolidated reply below:

(1) (i) and (ii) The number of units available for allocation as well as the number of eligible staff of each DSD (with a breakdown by grade of the quarters and district) are tabulated at Annexes 1 to 6.

Regarding the number of applicants mentioned in the question, the DSDs have only maintained the number of applications. Given that each staff member

could submit applications for DQs more than once in a year, number of eligible staff could more accurately reflect the demand for DQs of each department. Furthermore, according to the Civil Service Regulations and Accommodation Regulations, staff of a specific rank could apply for DQs higher or lower than those of their respective salary grading (i.e. each staff member is eligible for DQs of more than one grade). Hence, the DSDs have not maintained breakdown statistics of the number of applicants for each DQ grade.

(iii) The numbers of disciplined services staff allocated with DQs for the first time of each DSD in the past three years are tabulated as follows. The DSDs have not maintained breakdown statistics by grade or district.

Department	Number of disciplined services staff allocated with DQs for the first time (Note 1) (Officer)		
	2019	2020	2021 (as at March 1)
Correctional Services Department (CSD)	31	19	16
Customs and Excise Department (C&ED)	30	35	6
Fire Services Department (FSD)	40	37	0
Government Flying Service (GFS)	6	5	0
Hong Kong Police Force (HKPF)	44	32	0
Immigration Department (ImmD)	64	58	0
Total	215	186	22

Department	Number of disciplined services staff allocated with DQs for the first time (Note 1) (Rank and File)		
	2019	2020	2021 (as at March 1)
CSD	198	146	58
C&ED	204	127	13
FSD	305	61	0
GFS	N/A (Note 2)		
HKPF	582	534	0
ImmD	293	114	0
Total	1 582	982	71

(iv) The vacancy rate of DQs of each DSD is tabulated at Annex 7. The DSDs have not maintained breakdown statistics by district.

(2) As at March 1, 2021, the average waiting time of each DSD is tabulated as follows:

Department	Year		
	Overall	Officer/Inspector	Rank and File
CSD	2.4	3.3	2.2
C&ED	3.7	0.7	4.0
FSD	3.3	1.7	5.5
GFS	1.7	1.7	N/A2
HKPF	4.9	2.0	5.0
ImmD	4.0	2.6	4.6

As elaborated above, staff member of a specific rank is eligible for DQs of more than one grade. Hence, the DSDs have not maintained the waiting time for each grade of DQs.

(i) The Government has not stipulated the target waiting time for DQs of each DSD. The waiting time for DQs is affected by a number of factors, including the department's recruitment plans, the retirement situation of staff, marriage rate, the number of eligible staff, their housing preferences and whether they would claim the other housing benefit schemes, etc.

(ii) The Security Bureau (SB) has been working with the DSD management as well as bureaux and departments concerned to examine ways to increase the supply of DQ flats. For example, submitting applications to the Town Planning Board to relax the building height restrictions of DQ sites.

As announced in the 2014 Policy Address, the Government will expedite eight DQ projects for the DSDs (Note 3). Currently, the construction work of four projects have been completed and most of the residents have moved in. The remaining four projects are expected to be completed between 2021 and 2022. Besides these eight projects, the DSDs are also taking forward other DQ development projects proactively.

(3) Currently, the Government has established mechanisms to handle surplus DQ units. If there are surplus units under individual departments, the Government will consider alternative uses for the units internally. The GPA will also provide assistance and put the properties up for lease in the market when appropriate, to achieve better use of resources. In order to meet the demand for DQ units, especially those for Rank and File, the SB will work with bureaux and departments concerned proactively, to expedite the construction progress of projects, and examine various methods such as relaxing site restrictions, so as to increase the supply of DQ units.

Note 1: Excluding re-allocation due to various reasons such as moving flats or promotion.

Note 2: All GFS staff members are regarded as "officers" for the purpose of quarters allocation.

Note 3: The eight projects include Blissful Villa of the ImmD, Yau Yue Wan Customs Staff Quarters, Kwun Tong Disciplined Services Quarters, and Tin Wan Correctional Services Department Staff Quarters, which have been completed; as well as Fan Garden of the HKPF, Pak Shing Kok Married Quarters of the FSD, Tsz Wan Shan Staff Quarters of the C&ED and Tseung Kwan O Area 123 Departmental Quarters of the C&ED, which are under construction.