

Ombudsman commends public organisations and public officers for exemplary service and puts forward three strategic focuses to enhance public administration (with photos)

The following is issued on behalf of the Office of The Ombudsman:

At the 27th Presentation Ceremony of The Ombudsman's Awards today (October 31), The Ombudsman, Mr Jack Chan, presented the Grand Award to the Hong Kong Fire Services Department (FSD), an Award for Public Organisation to both the Social Welfare Department (SWD) and the Water Supplies Department (WSD), the Award on Mediation to the Housing Department (HD), the Customer Services Award to the Immigration Department (ImmD), and the Information Technology Application and Creativity Award to the Hospital Authority (HA). Individual Awards were also given to 79 public officers.

Mr Chan commended the award-winning organisations and public officers for their proactive use of mediation, their endeavours in achieving synergy through interdepartmental collaboration, and their positive attitude in complaint handling. During the ceremony, Mr Chan also discussed the three strategic focuses put forward since he assumed office: The Office of The Ombudsman will go full steam ahead with the use of mediation to resolve complaints from the public, promote interdepartmental collaboration, and instil a positive complaint culture in society. Mr Chan said, "With concerted efforts, we will definitely meet the objectives of improving people's livelihood, fostering harmonious development in our society and raising the quality standards of public administration."

This year's recipient of the Grand Award, the FSD, has committed to providing effective fire and ambulance services for years. In 2023-24, 94 per cent of fire and ambulance calls were handled within the targeted response time, which is a standard higher than the performance pledge. The FSD's dedication and professionalism in protecting public life and property are essential for ensuring the normal operation of society. The Department has also been proactive in promoting fire safety and public education on first aid.

â€‹The SWD has been positive and practical in handling complaints. In response to the Office's inquiries and investigations, the SWD has been active and efficient in providing comprehensive and useful information. In the Office's direct investigation operation regarding the Pilot Scheme on Community Care Service Voucher for the Elderly, the SWD fully co-operated and was willing to accept and implement all of the Office's recommendations.

The WSD has maintained its performance pledge to adopt a customer-

oriented approach in providing services. The Department's complaint handling shows its conscious efforts to provide clear, prompt and detailed replies. WSD staff explain complicated technical issues to the public in plain language and are forthcoming in providing details to the Office to account for incidents. The WSD's positive attitude has enabled the Office to process complaints efficiently.

The HD received the Award on Mediation this year. The HD has actively used mediation as a mode of complaint handling. On many occasions, HD staff have suggested using mediation to quickly resolve fundamental problems leading to complaints and have made practical recommendations to address complainants' discontent.

The Office has introduced two new awards this year: the Customer Services Award and the Information Technology Application and Creativity Award.

The ImmD is the first winning department of the Customer Services Award. Throughout the years, the ImmD has worked hard to provide services that best suit public needs, such as introducing the e-Channel Service and conducting the Territory-wide Identity Card Replacement Exercise. The procedures for applying for services and collecting documents are simple, flexible and efficient.

The HA is the first recipient of the Information Technology Application and Creativity Award. The HA spares no effort in exploring innovation methods and technology to enhance service quality and improve patients' experiences. Such efforts of the HA can be seen in the launch and ongoing improvement of the "HA Go" app, and the extended coverage of the Medication Delivery Service to all specialist clinics to provide more efficient and convenient services to the public.

At the presentation ceremony, Mr Chan also commended recipients of the Individual Awards and recognised their contributions. He said, "Government departments and public organisations rely on their committed and diligent staff to provide quality public service. This year, 79 public officers received the Individual Awards, which is a record high. I am very pleased to see that more officers are being commended for their professional and excellent services. They have earned recognition and commendation from the general public, their respective departments or organisations, as well as my Office."

A full list of the recipients of the Individual Awards this year and the experiences and thoughts from some of them about receiving these awards can be found in Appendices 1 and 2 respectively.

The Ombudsman's Awards Scheme was introduced in 1997. In 1999, the Scheme was extended to honour individual public officers. In 2018, an additional Award on Mediation for a public organisation was introduced. In 2024, two new awards, namely the Customer Services Award and the Information Technology Application and Creativity Award, were added.

