

Panel on Welfare Services

**Subcommittee on Strategy and Measures to Tackle Family Violence
Issues raised by members at the meeting on 25 January 2007**

<u>Issues raised by LegCo Members</u>	<u>Administration's response</u>
<u>Policies on special housing arrangements</u>	
1. Policies on Household Splitting (HS), Compassionate Rehousing (CR) and Conditional Tenancy (CT), and the differences among these policies, for providing housing arrangements to victims of domestic violence	Please refer to the paper on “Hong Kong Housing Authority’s policies on Compassionate Rehousing, Conditional Tenancies and Household Splitting”.
2. Basis for the Social Welfare Department (SWD) to sometime assist victims of domestic violence to seek CR from the Housing Department (HD) when its recommendation for household splitting for the victims are rejected by HD	<p>Please refer to the paper on “Hong Kong Housing Authority’s policies on Compassionate Rehousing, Conditional Tenancies and Household Splitting” for a brief summary of the policies on HS and CR.</p> <p>Social workers will exercise their professional judgment in handling requests for household splitting, having regard to the merits of each individual case. If, for specific reasons such as failure to meet the Comprehensive Means Test or the Domestic Property Test, that the requests for household splitting are rejected by HD, but the applicants have genuine and imminent housing needs which cannot be dealt with by themselves, SWD may recommend eligible applicants to HD for consideration of allocation of PRH flats under CR. According to the respective policy, SWD may, on individual merits, recommend HD to waive certain conditions, e.g. income exceeding the required ceiling or not meeting the minimum</p>

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	requirement on duration of stay in Hong Kong.
<u>Household splitting</u>	
3. Of the splitting requests raised by household members with support from SWD, in 2006, the number of such requests acceded to, rejected and being considered by HD respectively, and the reasons for rejecting the requests	In 2006, HD received a total of 144 splitting applications recommended by SWD, among which 95 cases were approved and 13 cases were withdrawn by the applicants. Among the remaining 36 cases, 20 failed to pass the eligibility vetting, 11 involved applicants who had made written undertakings for not seeking splitting (e.g. in cases where flats had been allocated under the Families with Elderly Persons Priority Scheme and in cases where spouse/child(ren) of married offspring had been added to the tenancy as authorized occupants), and 5 were not accepted because of the minor nature of the disputes involved.
4. Average time required by HD to consider a request for household splitting referred to in paragraph 3 above; for those requests for household splitting requiring longer time for HD to consider, the average longer time required and the reasons for that	Upon receipt of SWD's recommendation, HD will process the tenants' splitting applications immediately. As HD would need to arrange home visits and clarify the occupancy status of individual household members, and some applicants are unable to provide timely and accurate income proof of individual members or they have specific flats requirements (e.g. some are reluctant to accept PRH flats in the New Territories), and multiple offers may be required before one is accepted for some applicants, the time required from receipt of a splitting request to allocation of a flat varies from case to case. The average time required is about 2 months.
5. Reason(s) why HD has failed to act on SWD's recommendations to approve the household splitting requests raised by victims of domestic violence, as alleged by the Hong Kong Chinese Civil Servants' Association (HKCCSA), Social	SWD has approached the Social Work Officer Grade Branch under HKCCSA for details of the cases mentioned for verification. However, the Branch has subsequently reverted to SWD in writing that they would not provide any further information. Please refer to Item 3 above regarding splitting applications recommended by SWD and processed by HD in 2006.

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	Work Officer Grade Branch, that 32 out of the 41 requests for household splitting recommended by SWD in 2006 were rejected by HD	
<u>Compassionate Rehousing</u>		
6.	Breakdown of the number of applications for CR referred by SWD or SWD-approved non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to HD in 2006 by the number of cases approved, rejected and being considered by HD, and the reasons for rejecting such applications	All CR cases have to be recommended by SWD. In 2006, SWD recommended to HD a total of 1 305 applications for CR (excluding applications for CT) and all applicants were allocated PRH flats.
7.	Breakdown of the number of applications for CT referred by SWD or SWD-approved NGOs to HD in 2006 by the number of cases approved, rejected and being considered by HD, and the reasons for rejecting such applications	All CT cases made under CR have to be recommended by SWD. In 2006, SWD recommended to HD a total of 408 applications for CT and all applicants were allocated PRH flats.
8.	Average time taken by SWD to make recommendation to HD for providing housing assistance to victims of domestic violence under the conditional tenancy and compassionate rehousing	In 2006, SWD recommended a total of 1 713 cases to HD for CR and CT. The average processing time was about 32 days during which the social workers have to make collateral contacts, conduct interviews / home visits with the relevant persons to gather information on applicants' background and financial conditions and verify the information and documents submitted before deciding on their eligibility. Of these 1 713 cases, about 80% (1 372 cases)

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<p>arrangement respectively, as well as the average time taken by HD to consider such applications.</p>	<p>completed the processing procedures within 60 days (i.e. from the date of initial application on which the applicant first makes his/her enquiries or application for CR/CT or the date of receipt of referral, whichever is earlier, to the date of recommendation sent by SWD to HD) and about 89% (1 523 cases) completed within 90 days.</p> <p>Upon receipt of SWD's recommendation, HD normally takes about 4 weeks to complete the flat allocation for CT and CR cases. For victims of domestic violence with imminent needs, HD pledges to allocate PRH flats to the applicants within about 10 working days.</p>
<u>Refuge Centres</u>	
<p>9. Demand of each of the existing four refuge centres for women in 2006, such as the number of requests for immediate admission which could and could not be allowed and the average waiting time for admission</p>	<p>In 2006, there were a total of 874 cases of admission into the four refuge centres for women.</p> <p>According to the existing mechanism, if a refuge centre cannot admit an applicant for certain reasons, e.g. applicants not suitable to stay in the refuge centre because it is located in the same district as their residence, there is no vacancy available, etc., the social worker of the refuge centre will refer the case to another refuge centre for admission or will discuss with the caseworker concerned to make alternative arrangement e.g. temporary stay at the Family Crisis Support Centre, to stay with relative or friend, etc. so that the victim of domestic violence can stay in a safe environment. The refuge centres do not keep statistics on the alternative arrangements made after referrals.</p> <p>As the refuge centres seek to provide immediate accommodation for women facing domestic violence, there is no waiting list.</p>

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10. Average occupancy rate and period of stay of residents of each of four refuge centres for women in 2006	<p>In 2006, the average utilization rate of PLK Wai On Home was 92.7%, PLK Sunrise Court was 83.5%, Harmony House was 97.9% and Serene Court was 82.8%.</p> <p>Among those admitted into the four refuge centres in 2006, 25% of the cases stayed within 1 week, 19% from 1 week to 2 weeks, 24% from 2 weeks to less than 1 month, 16% from 1 month to less than 2 months, 8 % from 2 months to less than 3 months and 8% more than 3 months.</p>
11. Breakdown by types and numbers of immediate housing arrangements provided to victims of domestic violence in 2006, due to lack of vacant space in the four refuge centres for women, and the duration of each type of such housing arrangements	<p>If the refuge centre cannot accept the case due to lack of vacant space, the caseworker will make alternative arrangements for the applicant e.g. temporary stay at the Family Crisis Support Centre, to stay with relative or friend, or provision of financial assistance to rent a temporary accommodation etc. so that the applicant can stay in a safe place. SWD does not have the breakdown of such accommodation arrangement.</p>
12. Breakdown by types and numbers of housing arrangements provided to victims of domestic violence asked to leave the refuge centres whilst waiting for allocation of PRH flats under the CR or CT arrangements in 2006, and the average duration of each type of such housing arrangements; for those victims who were not provided with any housing	<p>SWD do not have the statistics requested by Members. Whenever a victim is admitted into the refuge centre, the caseworker concerned will conduct assessment and assist the victim to formulate a suitable discharge plan.</p> <p>According to the information provided by users of refuge centres <u>upon discharge</u>, 35% reunited with their husbands or cohabitants; and 65% left their matrimonial homes (including 21% proceeded to divorce and moved to rented accommodation, 4% moved to public housing units, 7% lived with the maiden family, 9% lived with friends and relatives, 7% returned home after their husbands or cohabitants left home, the remaining 17% either returned to the</p>

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<p>arrangements by SWD or SWD-approved NGOs, the reasons for that and the whereabouts of this group of people</p>	<p>Mainland, moved to hostel or moved to another refuge centre).</p> <p>Among the above persons who left their matrimonial homes, some have the means to arrange accommodation themselves, and not all of them require and are eligible to apply for housing assistance. For those with housing needs but cannot meet the needs by themselves, some moved directly to PRH flats upon discharge from refuge centres and the others would temporarily stay with their friends and relatives, or rent a place to stay while waiting for the processing of CR or CT application. SWD do not have statistics in this respect.</p>
<p>13. Whether the Administration would consider setting up a hostel to provide interim housing before the victims of domestic violence are allocated a PRH flat.</p>	<p>The establishment of the refuge centres for women is to meet the immediate and temporary housing need of victims of domestic violence. In general, the caseworkers concerned will discuss with the victims to work out a discharge plan taking into consideration their own wish and safety, e.g. applying for CR/CT, moving to a rented unit, staying with their maiden family, relatives or friends, etc. Depending on the needs of individual cases, the caseworkers concerned may extend their duration of stay in refuge centres to a maximum of three months. Noting that there may be cases requiring a longer period to settle their accommodation, SWD will discuss with the operators of the refuge centres to further extend the duration of stay for such cases.</p> <p>SWD will monitor closely the demand for service of refuge centres and consider increasing the capacity of refuge centres to address the need.</p>

Social Welfare Department
Housing Department
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