

## Legislative Council Panel on Housing

### Progress of Schemes for Fostering Harmonious Families in Public Housing

#### Purpose

This paper briefs Members on the progress of various enhanced housing arrangements for fostering harmonious families in public rental housing (PRH) and our further enhancement measures to be implemented.

#### Background

2. The Chief Executive highlighted in his 2006-07 Policy Address the importance of close and harmonious relationships among family members. In support of the Government's policy of fostering harmonious families, we advised Members at the meeting of the Legislative Council Panel on Housing on 4 June 2007 of the various enhanced housing arrangements endorsed by the Subsidised Housing Committee of the Housing Authority (HA). These arrangements aim at reinforcing a family-based support network in PRH. Two of these arrangements are targeted at Waiting List applicants while the remaining three are for sitting PRH tenants:

#### **Housing Arrangements for Waiting List Applicants**

- (a) Families with Elderly Persons Priority Scheme (FEP); and
- (b) Special Scheme for Families with Elderly Persons (NFEP).

#### **Housing Arrangements for Sitting PRH Tenants**

- (a) Harmonious Families Addition Scheme;
- (b) Harmonious Families Amalgamation Scheme; and
- (c) Harmonious Families Transfer Scheme (HFT).

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Details of these housing arrangements are at the **Annex**. Since the full implementation of these arrangements in October 2007, 5 900 households with elderly family member(s) have benefited. Among them, 3 547 are from Waiting List of PRH, 2 039 from families for addition, 170 through HFT and 144 for amalgamation of tenancies.

3. The Subsidised Housing Committee of the HA has recently reviewed the effectiveness of these enhanced arrangements after one year of implementation. The Committee proposed to further enhance and simplify the present arrangements and to make the application procedures more user-friendly.

## **Housing Arrangements for Waiting List Applicants**

### **Harmonious Families Priority Scheme**

4. One of the common features of the existing FEP and NFEP is the requirement of a minimum waiting time of 18 months. Another element is the pledged maximum waiting time advancement of three years to FEP applicants and two years to NFEP applicants, which was set respectively in the 1980s and 1990s when the average waiting time was very long. At present, the average waiting time is 1.9 years. Given the shortened waiting time for Waiting List applicants achieved in recent years, the maximum waiting time advancement has become impractical, if not irrelevant. It should also be noted that the NFEP has all along been attracting very few applications as the present scheme is only applicable to households of a nuclear family plus at least two related elderly members opting for non-Urban Waiting List Districts (“Districts”).

5. Having considered the operation of the current FEP and NFEP, we recommend to replace the existing two separate schemes by a single unified priority scheme viz. “Harmonious Families Priority Scheme” under the umbrella of harmonious families measures. Under this new harmonious scheme for Waiting List applicants, a credit waiting time of six months will be awarded to replace the unnecessary minimum waiting time requirement and the obsolete maximum waiting time advancement. The proposed arrangements are set out below –

- (a) for household who hopes to have mutual support through living under one roof, the applicants may apply for one PRH flat in any District of their choice. The household composition will be at least one non-elderly member and one elderly member; and
- (b) for household with a younger family who hopes to take care of the elderly member through living closer to each other, the applicants may opt for two non-Urban PRH flats of the same District of their choice. Subject to resources available, two flats of the same District Council’s district will be offered. The household composition will be relaxed from nuclear family with at least two related elderly members to nuclear family with at least one elderly member. This would enable nuclear families with at least one elderly member to have a wider choice on whether to live under one roof or live nearby in two PRH flats.

6. Existing applications will be processed under both the new arrangements and the old arrangements to ensure that applicants will not be worse off in terms of waiting time. Under the enhanced arrangements, depending on their choice of District and the number of flats preferred in the light of their family circumstances, the households concerned could accordingly make their own decisions.

## **Housing Arrangements for Sitting PRH Tenants**

### **(a) *Harmonious Families Addition Scheme***

7. The existing addition policy allows an adult offspring (and their family members) to be added to the tenancies of elderly tenants, subject to the “one-line continuation of family” rule, and the signing of an undertaking to the effect that they will live in harmony with their elderly parents and assume filial responsibility. As at September 2008, 2 039 elderly tenants have added their adult offsprings to their tenancies (2 725 members added), enabling them to receive care from their children. The addition also helps alleviate the problem of under-occupation. The scheme will continue to be implemented as it has been well-received amongst public housing tenants.

### **(b) *Harmonious Families Amalgamation Scheme***

8. The existing scheme allows the amalgamation of tenancies of younger families with their elderly parents or dependent relatives in PRH, subject to the “one-line continuation of family” rule. The amalgamated household will be offered a flat (including new flats) of suitable size in any District they prefer subject to availability of resources. As at September 2008, 144 tenancies have acquired amalgamated tenancies to form 72 households. Amalgamation not only alleviates the problem of under-occupation, but also helps recover more small flats for re-allocation to the Waiting List applicants. The scheme, which has been serving its intended purpose, will continue to be implemented.

### **(c) *Harmonious Families Transfer Scheme***

9. The HFT allows younger generations and elderly parents to transfer to the same estate or in a nearby estate. Tenants who want to apply to move to a more popular District should meet the eligibility criteria of having 10 years’ residence in PRH estates, or five years’ residence and with child(ren) below six years old or expected child(ren) with 16 weeks of gestation or more. As at September 2008, the Housing Department has made transfer arrangements for 170 households under this scheme.

10. In the course of implementation of the scheme, we have received comments indicating that tenants with shorter length of residence also want to join the scheme so as to move closer to their elderly parents in a more popular District. In the light of the experience since the launch of the scheme, the HA decided to introduce the following measures to enhance the HFT -

- (a) to lower the threshold for transfer to a more popular District to live near their elderly parent(s)/offspring from 10-year PRH residence to seven years;
- (b) to allow applying families with child(ren) aged below six or expected child(ren) of 16 weeks of gestation or above with five-year PRH residence to apply for transfer to a more popular District; and
- (c) same as the first HFT exercise, to continue to set aside a yearly quota of 1 000 flats for the running of the HFT. The application period will be extended to two months. This would allow sufficient time for sitting tenants to consider and submit applications.

### **Implementation Schedule**

11. The various enhanced measures will be implemented in early January 2009. To allow more time for sitting tenants to consider whether to submit applications for transfer under the HFT, we will advance the time for accepting applications under Phase Two of the Scheme to December 2008.

### **Publicity**

12. We expect that these enhanced schemes will be welcomed by public housing applicants and tenants. The HA will publicise these schemes through estate newsletters, leaflets, posters, the Housing TV Channel and the media.

**Transport and Housing Bureau  
October 2008**

**Five Existing Enhanced Housing Arrangements for Fostering Harmonious Families**

	Nature/Background	Eligibility Criteria
<i>Waiting List Applicants</i>		
Families with Elderly Persons Priority Scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Launched in 1982</li> <li>• Application for a flat in any Waiting List District (“District”), including the Urban District</li> <li>• Flat allocation advanced by three years at most</li> <li>• Enhancement in 2007 to relax the minimum waiting time on the Waiting List from two years to 18 months</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family with at least two members, one of them being an elderly relative</li> </ul>

	<b>Nature/Background</b>	<b>Eligibility Criteria</b>
Special Scheme for Families with Elderly Persons (NFEP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Launched in 1990</li> <li>• Application for two separate flats in any non-Urban District</li> <li>• Flat allocation advanced by two years at most</li> <li>• Enhancement in 2007 to relax the minimum waiting time on Waiting List from two years to 18 months</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nuclear family plus at least two elderly parents/dependent relatives</li> </ul>
<b><i>For Sitting PRH Tenants</i></b>		
Policy for Harmonious Families Addition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhancement in 2007 to allow an adult offspring (and his/her family) to be added to households with elderly tenants (i.e. tenant or spouse aged 60 or above)</li> <li>• Subject to fulfilment of other eligibility criteria, families with resultant living density below 5.5m<sup>2</sup> per person may apply for larger flat through Territory-wide Overcrowding Relief transfer exercises</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Person seeking for addition should be a Hong Kong resident</li> <li>• Subject to stipulated eligibility criteria, the following eight categories of persons may be added - <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. tenant's spouse;</li> <li>2. newborn babies or children under the age of 18;</li> <li>3. the spouse and children of one of tenant's married offspring;</li> <li>4. parents;</li> </ol> </li> </ul>

	<b>Nature/Background</b>	<b>Eligibility Criteria</b>
		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. grandparents;</li> <li>6. dependent relatives;</li> <li>7. elderly relatives of tenants living in 'Converted One Person' (C1P) flats and under Automatic Offer (AO) Scheme; and</li> <li>8. one adult offspring (and their family members) of elderly tenant</li> </ol> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>One-line continuation rule:</i> elderly tenant can only live together with the family of one married adult offspring</li> <li>• The offspring added to the tenancy is required to sign an undertaking to the effect that he/she will take care of his/her elderly parents</li> </ul>
Policy for Harmonious Families Amalgamation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amalgamation of tenancies of elderly and younger sitting tenants</li> <li>• One PRH unit of suitable size will be offered</li> <li>• Subject to availability of resources, the amalgamated household can move to any</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All PRH tenants</li> <li>• One-line continuation rule</li> <li>• The elderly tenants should be parents or dependent relatives of the younger tenants</li> </ul>

	<b>Nature/Background</b>	<b>Eligibility Criteria</b>
	District and be offered new flats	
Harmonious Families Transfer Scheme (HFT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Launched in October 2007</li> <li>• Transfer of PRH tenants to the same or nearby estates of their offspring/parents</li> <li>• Under the present arrangement, there will not be any residence length requirement for tenants who want to transfer from one District Council (DC) geographic district to another within the same Waiting List District or to a less popular Waiting List District.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PRH families with their elderly parent(s)/parent(s)-in-law or son/daughter/daughter-in-law/ son-in-law living in PRH estates in different DC geographic districts</li> <li>• The elderly parent(s)/parent(s)-in-law must be the member(s) of an all elderly PRH household</li> <li>• For transfer to a more popular District, applicants have to fulfil the 10-year residence criterion</li> <li>• Five extra years of residence will be awarded to applicants with child(ren) below a certain age (now pitched at six) or expected child(ren) (now pitched at 16 weeks gestation)</li> </ul>