

Legislative Council Panel on Housing

Public Rental Housing for One-person Applicants

PURPOSE

This paper briefs Members on the allocation of public rental housing (PRH) flats to one-person applicants.

BACKGROUND

2. The objective of the Government's subsidized housing policy is to offer PRH to those who cannot afford private rental accommodation, with a target of an average waiting time (AWT)¹ of 3 years for general Waiting List (WL) applicants. For elderly one-person applicants, the target is 2 years. Under the current arrangement, elderly one-person applicants can apply for PRH under the Single Elderly Persons Priority Scheme, whereas non-elderly one-person applicants are subject to the Quota and Points System (QPS).

3. Eligible elderly or non-elderly one-person applicants with pressing housing needs may apply for Compassionate Rehousing (CR) on the recommendation of the Social Welfare Department. They may also join the Express Flat Allocation Scheme (EFAS), or consider applying for PRH with their family members as family applicants. Separately, non-elderly one-person applicants may consider joining the tenancies of elderly PRH tenants under the Harmonious Families Addition Scheme.

ELDERLY ONE-PERSON APPLICANTS

4. The Housing Authority (HA) has accorded priority for PRH for elderly applicants. Elderly one-person applicants can apply for PRH under the Single Elderly Persons Priority Scheme for earlier rehousing. On the choice of WL Districts, elderly households (including elderly one-person applicants) are allowed to indicate a preference for any one of the four WL Districts, including the Urban District, in their PRH applications². The HA provides a one-stop

¹ In accordance with the established methodology, AWT refers to the average time taken between registration on the Waiting List and the first flat offer for those rehoused in the past 12 months, excluding any frozen period during application, for example, when the applicant has not yet fulfilled the residence requirement, the applicant is imprisoned, or the applicant has requested to put his/her application on hold pending arrival of family members for family reunion.

² Other applicants are only allowed to choose Extended Urban, New Territories or Islands District.

service at the HA Customer Service Centre for elderly applicants to help them fill in the application forms and conduct checks on the application forms and supporting documents on the spot. This simplifies the application process for elderly applicants.

5. In 2010/11, about 2 900 elderly one-person WL applicants were rehoused to PRH, with an AWT of 1.1 years. Another 270 elderly one-person applicants were rehoused to PRH through CR. As at end-March 2011, there were about 6 100 elderly one-person applicants, representing about 4% of the applications on the WL.

NON-ELDERLY ONE-PERSON APPLICANTS

6. Non-elderly one-person applicants are subject to the QPS, which was introduced in September 2005 to rationalise and re-prioritise the allocation of PRH to non-elderly one-person applicants. It was introduced to address the problem brought about by a dramatic upsurge in the number of non-elderly individuals applying for PRH on their own. In July 2007, the Subsidised Housing Committee (SHC) of the HA reviewed the operation of the QPS. It agreed that the QPS had had a positive impact on the rational allocation of PRH units in favour of more needy applicants and that the QPS should continue. The 3-year AWT target for general WL applicants is not applicable to non-elderly one person applicants under the QPS.

7. The relative priorities for PRH allocation to applicants under the QPS are determined by the points the applicants receive. Points are assigned to the applicants on the basis of their age at the time of submitting the PRH applications, the waiting time and whether they are PRH tenants. In general, the older the applicant and the longer the applicant has waited, the higher the number of points. The higher the number of points accumulated, the earlier an applicant will be offered a PRH flat. The points required for rehousing of QPS applicants in different WL Districts are announced monthly through the HA website and in newspapers for applicants' reference. The points required for rehousing will change from time to time and vary across Districts, depending on the distribution of points of applicants as well as the overall demand and supply of PRH flats in individual Districts.

8. The annual allocation quota for non-elderly one-person applicants through the QPS is set at 8% of the number of flats to be allocated to WL applicants, subject to a ceiling of 2 000 units. The quota for 2011/12 is 1 850. The main features of the QPS are at **Annex**.

9. As at end-March 2011, there were about 152 400 applications on the WL. Among the WL applicants, 63 400 (42%) were non-elderly one-person applicants under the QPS. In 2010/11, a total of 1 746 non-elderly one-person applicants were rehoused through the QPS. Another 660 non-elderly one-person applicants under the QPS were rehoused through the EFAS. Together, non-elderly one-person applicants rehoused through QPS and EFAS accounted for about 15% of the actual allocations to WL applicants in 2010/11. Separately, 537 non-elderly one-person applicants were rehoused through CR in the same year.

10. In 2010/11, some 2 100 non-elderly one-person applications were cancelled³, and another 3 500 non-elderly one-person applications switched to other application categories. According to our administrative record, in the past few years, every year over 5 000 non-elderly one-person applications dropped out of the queue, either as cancellation cases or switching to other application categories. On average, after the 4th year of registration onto the WL, around 20% of the non-elderly one-person applications would be cancelled and around 31% would switch to other application categories.

11. According to our administrative record (as at end-March 2011), of the 63 400 QPS applicants, 29 100 (46%) are below 30 years old. Around 24% of non-elderly one-person applicants under the QPS aged below 30 are PRH residents, as compared to 16% for those aged 30 or above.

12. According to Survey on WL Applicants in 2010, among those non-elderly one-person applicants aged below 30, 90% are living with their family, 81% of them apply for PRH because they want to live on their own, and 34% of them were students at the time of registration. The survey also shows that on the whole, 23% of the non-elderly one-person applicants (31% for those aged below 30) already have an income level exceeding the WL income limits. Such cases with income exceeding the WL income limits would likely be captured as cancelled cases when they undergo eligibility vetting prior to allocation when their turn is due.

³ Cancelled cases include those who are found to have income and/or asset over the respective limits in detailed vetting, those who unreasonably refused all the three flat offers, and those who withdrew their applications, etc.

WAY FORWARD

13. The HA's objective is to provide PRH for those who cannot afford private rental accommodation. Given the limited public housing resources, there is a need to give due consideration to and balance the needs of different groups of applicants. It remains our overarching objective to ensure that the limited public housing resources are allocated rationally to those with most pressing housing needs. We will continue to monitor the allocation of public housing resources to various types of applicants.

Housing Department
June 2011

Key Features of the Quota and Points System (QPS)

Points System

- Points are assigned to applicants based on three determining factors, namely, age of the applicants at the time of submitting their public rental housing (PRH) applications, whether the applicants are PRH tenants, and the waiting time of the applicants. Details are -
 - (a) zero point will be given to applicants aged 18. Three points will be given to those aged 19; six points to those aged 20 and so forth;
 - (b) for applicants living in PRH (including those living in rental housing operated by the Housing Society), 30 points will be deducted; and
 - (b) one additional point will be received when the concerned applicant has waited on the WL for one more month.
- The relative priority of the applicants on the WL will be determined according to the points he/she has received. The higher the number of points accumulated, the earlier will the applicant be offered a flat.
- The QPS applies to all those non-elderly one-person applicants who have not passed the “Comprehensive Means Test” (CMT) on or before 29 September 2005 and all the new applications received thereafter.

Note: QPS applicants switching to family applicants comprising two or more persons can carry half of their waiting time accumulated, subject to a maximum of 1.5 years.

Annual Allocation Quota

Over the 10-year period from 1995/96 to 2004/05, the average percentage of flats allocated to non-elderly one-person applicants on the WL is about 8% of the total number of flats allocated to WL applicants. In 2005, the Subsidized Housing Committee of the Housing Authority decided to set the annual allocation quota for non-elderly one-person WL applicants at 8% of the number of flats to be allocated to WL applicants subject to a ceiling of 2 000 units.