

Panel on Welfare Services

**Subcommittee on Strategy and Measures to
Tackle Domestic Violence and Sexual Violence**

**Summary of views and concerns on the housing assistance to victims
of domestic violence and sexual violence raised by deputations
at the meeting on 9 March 2015**

- (a) there was a lack of transparency in the processing of Compassionate Rehousing ("CR") and other housing assistance applications from victims of domestic violence and sexual violence by the Social Welfare Department ("SWD") and the Housing Department ("HD"). The criteria adopted for assessing the applications were inconsistent among various District Social Welfare Offices of SWD. The unduly long time taken for processing housing assistance applications had caused stress to individuals or families in crisis and resulted in an extended stay of those who were seeking temporary accommodation at refuge centres, which had already been fully utilised. It was suggested that an independent appeal mechanism should be set up to hear and determine appeals against decisions on housing assistance applications;
- (b) to ensure proper handling of housing assistance applications made by victims of domestic violence and sexual violence, adequate training on the relevant policies and procedures should be provided for both SWD and HD staff concerned. Dedicated and comprehensive training should also be provided for these front-line officers to enhance their sensitivity and skills in handling such applications, in particular cases involving new arrivals, ethnic minorities, sexual minorities (including transgender persons) and foreign domestic helpers;
- (c) given that HD would generally favour the grant of the public housing tenancy to the party having the custody of children (battered wives in most cases) in considering CR and Conditional Tenancy ("CT") cases, and the party who had not been given the custody of any child would be required to leave the public rental housing ("PRH") flat, HD should consider allocating another PRH flat to the successful applicants so as to prevent them from being harassed by their spouses whose housing assistance requests were rejected;

- (d) in view of the recent surges in private housing rentals, the rent allowance under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance ("CSSA") Scheme could not fully meet the actual rental expenses. The Administration should review the maximum rates of the rent allowance so as to alleviate the financial hardship faced by those victims of domestic violence and sexual violence who were on CSSA but were ineligible for PRH. More resources should be provided to address the long-term housing needs of victims of domestic violence and sexual violence; and
- (e) the Administration should step up publicity on the housing assistance available for victims of domestic violence with imminent housing needs, particularly new arrivals, ethnic minorities and sexual minorities.

Council Business Division 2
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