

For discussion on
10 April 2017

Legislative Council Panel on Welfare Services

Estate-based Social Welfare Services Planning

Purpose

This paper briefs the Panel on the planning for social welfare services for newly completed public rental housing (PRH) estates.

Background

2. With the completion of new PRH flats, in particular those in the larger-scale or more remotely located PRH estates, there have been concerns as to whether adequate and timely support services are available to cater for the possible adaptation issues faced by individuals and families who are moving into these new PRH estates, and to establish a community in which residents will feel cared about and have easy access to assistance.

Planning for welfare premises in new PRH developments

3. Under the existing mechanism, when a development area or site is identified as having potential for PRH development, the Planning Department (PlanD) or the Housing Department (HD) will discuss with the relevant departments (including the Social Welfare Department (SWD)), and consult the District Council on the planning for the provision of community facilities (including recreational, education, welfare facilities, etc.) in the non-rental housing premises of the PRH development concerned. Under this arrangement, SWD can explore the provision of suitable welfare facilities in a comprehensive manner at an early stage. In general, SWD will take into account the needs of the local community, the overall demand

for welfare services, the floor area requirements of different welfare facilities, the location and accessibility of the site as well as the advice from PlanD or HD on site constraints, development parameters and limitations (including such environmental issues as noise and air quality) in drawing up an appropriate mix of proposed welfare facilities to meet the service demand arising from the PRH development and also to address the community demand at large. HD, when considering whether the proposed welfare facilities could be incorporated into a new PRH development, will take into consideration such factors as individual site constraints, feasibility and suitability of the required facilities, demands for various community facilities, funding arrangements for the facilities, as well as relevant ordinances, rules and regulations (such as the Town Planning Ordinance, the Building (Planning) Regulations and the Practice Notes). The collaboration between HD and SWD in this regard enables the optimal use of the site to meet the society's demands for PRH and various community facilities.

4. The proposed welfare facilities preliminarily assessed as feasible will be included in the planning briefs of the PRH developments concerned. When considering the exact location of the proposed welfare facilities within a particular development, HD will take into account such relevant factors as the individual site conditions as well as the design and operational requirements. As a general practice, for easy accessibility, the welfare facilities will be provided either on the ground or lower floor(s) or the podium of the domestic blocks, or co-located with other facilities (such as kindergarten, car park and retail facilities) in an ancillary facilities block in order to enhance the social integration of these facilities. In some PRH developments where a relatively large number of welfare facilities are involved, some or all of the proposed welfare facilities will be grouped in a dedicated welfare block to enhance their accessibility and user-friendliness.

5. In addition, when the intake for a new PRH estate has been completed for some time, if there are appropriate vacant non-domestic premises (including those previously used as kindergartens or car parks) and domestic units on lower floors, HD and SWD will explore the feasibility of converting them into welfare uses. This is subject to a number of factors,

including the residents' support of the proposed uses or change of uses of the premises concerned, compatibility of the proposed welfare uses with other uses in the same estate as well as other technical considerations, such as the requirements under relevant ordinances and regulations, barrier free access requirement and additional requirement for fire service installations. Examples of converting vacant non-domestic premises and domestic units in PRH estates include conversion of car parks into elderly centres, early education and training centres, social service centres and children and youth centres, as well as conversion of domestic units into hostels for the elderly and small group homes.

Planning for social welfare services for newly completed PRH developments

6. Apart from the premises planning as referred to above, SWD will provide suitable support services, without involving additional premises, to assist residents in adapting to the new living environment at the early stage of intake of individual newly completed PRH developments. To this end, the District Social Welfare Offices of SWD will assess on an ongoing basis the needs for welfare services at district level having regard to the population growth and demographic changes in their respective districts. Through collaboration with the government departments, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and stakeholders concerned, they will deploy community resources to plan for appropriate support services and identify early residents with service needs for referral to the relevant services.

7. The Integrated Family Service Centres and the Integrated Services Centres (the two services are referred to as "Service Centres" hereinafter) operated by SWD or subsidised NGOs are located in different districts across the territory to provide a spectrum of preventive, supportive and remedial family services to address the multifarious needs of individuals or families within their specific service boundaries. Where there are newly completed PRH estates within their service boundaries and as the residents move in, the Service Centres will initiate service promotion activities in those estates and invite district stakeholders to discuss and formulate service

plans, with a view to facilitating the new residents and families to integrate into the community and encouraging the families in need to seek help at an early stage.

8. Besides, the Service Centres will promote the services and identify the families in need by means of pamphlets, posters, newsletters, road shows, outreaching, the Family Support Programme¹ and collaboration with other government departments / district organisations. The collaboration units include the neighbourhood network building projects funded by the Community Investment and Inclusion Fund under the Labour and Welfare Bureau and the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust.

9. The Service Centres will also maintain close contact with the Estate Offices concerned to brief the staff on the types of services available and the means of case referral, and keep in view the formation of the Estate Management Committees to establish partnerships and referral networks with them.

Way forward

10. SWD will sustain its efforts in exploring with relevant departments the possibility of reserving sites or premises in new PRH developments for welfare uses to meet the needs of the localities or the community at large for welfare services. Meanwhile, SWD will also continue with its service planning for newly completed PRH estates for the provision of appropriate and comprehensive social welfare services so that residents moving into these estates can adapt to and enjoy the new living environment as soon as possible.

¹ To identify early the families in need of but reluctant to seek help, SWD has since 2007 implemented the Family Support Programme in a total of 86 service units including Service Centres, Family and Child Protective Services Units, and Psychiatric Medical Social Service Units of SWD. Apart from deploying social workers to contact the families facing problems of social isolation through telephone calls, home visits and other outreaching services and to refer them to a host of support services, the service units will also recruit and train volunteers, including those with personal experience in overcoming family problems or crises, to contact the aforementioned families and encourage them to receive appropriate services. This would allow the establishment of a network of community care and assistance.

Advice sought

11. Members are invited to note the above arrangements concerning the planning for social welfare services for newly completed PRH estates.

Social Welfare Department

Housing Department

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