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LABOUR AND WELFARE BUREAU
GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT

Central Government Offices
Tim Mei Avenue
Tamar, Hong Kong

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6 July 2017

Clerk to Panel on Welfare Services
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central Hong Kong
Mr Colin CHUI

Dear Mr CHUI,

**Legislative Council Panel on Welfare Services
Follow-up to meeting on 27 May 2017**

At the meeting of the Legislative Council (LegCo) Panel on Welfare Services on 27 May 2017, the Government was requested to provide further information relating to the services provided for singletons. Having consulted the Social Welfare Department (SWD), the Housing Department (HD) and the Home Affairs Department (HAD), I am authorised to reply as follows.

Integrated Family Services Centre (IFSCs)

The SWD does not collate the number of singletons using the services of the IFSCs.

The Quota and Points System (QPS) of the Housing Authority (HA)

It is the objective of the Government and HA to provide public rental housing (PRH) to low-income families who cannot afford private rental accommodation. Owing to limited PRH resources, HA accords

priority to general applicants (i.e. family and elderly one-person applicants) in PRH allocation, with a target of providing the first flat offer at around three years on average.¹ On the other hand, HA introduced the QPS in September 2005 to rationalise and re-prioritise PRH allocation to non-elderly one-person applicants.

The number of PRH units that can be allocated to QPS applicants is subject to an annual quota, which is determined by a specific percentage of the total number of flats to be allocated to PRH applicants (including general applicants and non-elderly one-person applicants under QPS) in a year. In its review on QPS in 2014, HA endorsed that starting from 2015/16, the annual allocation quota under QPS would be increased from 8% to 10% of the total number of flats to be allocated to PRH applicants, subject to a cap which would be increased from 2 000 to 2 200 units. Nevertheless, the exact number of units allocated to non-elderly one-person applicants under QPS each year depends on the actual circumstances (such as the time of completion of new PRH units and the time of intake of individual units). The number of actual allocation is based on the number of applicants who have accepted the housing offers and completed flat intake by the end of March every year. Cases in which applicants are still considering the offers or have accepted the offers but not yet completed the intake formalities will be reflected in the following year.

Details on the number of QPS applications that were allocated with PRH, as well as the number and usage rate of the annual allocation quota under QPS in the past five years (i.e. 2012/13 to 2016/17) are set out at Annex.

PRH applicants living in Shenzhen who cannot provide proof of residential address in Hong Kong

To ensure the rational allocation of limited PRH resources, HA has formulated the eligibility criteria for PRH, including the requirement that the applicant and all family members included in the application form must be residing in Hong Kong at the time of application and are still

¹ Waiting time refers to the time taken between registration for PRH and first flat offer, excluding any frozen period during the application period (e.g. when the applicant has not yet fulfilled the residence requirement; the applicant has requested to put his/her application on hold pending arrival of family members for family reunion; the applicant is imprisoned, etc.). The average waiting time for general applicants refers to the average of the waiting time of those general applicants who were housed to PRH in the past 12 months.

residing in Hong Kong at the time of flat allocation; and that at least half of the family members included in the application form must have lived in Hong Kong for seven years at the time of flat allocation.

As at end-March 2017, there were about 147 300 general applications for PRH and about 128 600 non-elderly one-person applications under QPS. The average waiting time for general applicants was 4.6 years. Among them, the average waiting time for elderly one-person applicants was 2.6 years. This reflects that even though the Government has been sparing no efforts in developing land for public and private housing in order to increase the housing supply in recent years, the demand for PRH remains high.

Given limited PRH resources and the continuously pressing need for PRH, we need to accord priority to applicants who are residing in Hong Kong, wish to live in PRH and fulfill the current eligibility criteria for PRH (including the requirement that they must be residing in Hong Kong). Hence, we have no intention to relax the eligibility criteria for PRH application. For those who choose to return to and settle in Hong Kong and have housing needs, they can apply for PRH according to the established procedures. For individuals who have imminent and long-term housing needs on medical or social grounds but have no other feasible means to solve their housing problems, they may approach SWD for relevant welfare or assistance. SWD will assess each case and recommend eligible cases to HD for early allocation of PRH through “Compassionate Rehousing”.

Financial assistance to singleton hostel applicants who have financial difficulties

Applicants of singleton hostels or emergency shelters who have financial difficulties and could not afford the relevant expenditures (e.g. deposit) may seek assistance from the IFSCs or the Integrated Services Centres. Social workers will assess their individual circumstances and make referral for application for appropriate financial assistance (e.g. Comprehensive Social Security Assistance and charitable trust funds).

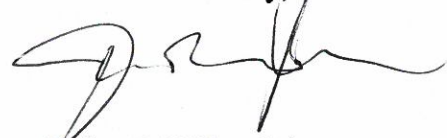
Review on the policy of singleton hostels

The Singleton Hostel Programme (the Programme) under HAD is a designated project to tie in with the introduction of the licensing

regime under the Bedspace Apartments Ordinance (the Ordinance) implemented in 1994. The objective of the Programme is to provide short-term accommodation for those bedspace lodgers affected by the implementation of the Ordinance, so that they can arrange for long-term accommodation during the transitional period. Since 1995 until now, the number of licensed bedspace apartments has significantly decreased from 152 to 10. This shows that the historical task of the Programme has already been completed.

As for the urban hostels for single persons and emergency shelters subvented by SWD and operated by non-governmental organisations (NGOs), the purpose is to address the emergency and short-term accommodation needs of people on the verge of homelessness and street sleepers as a transit to long-term accommodation arrangement. At present, there are 222 subvented places provided by NGOs. Together with the 408 places operated on a self-financing basis, there are a total of 630 such places. In 2016-17, the utilisation rate of subvented places was 80%, and SWD provided 20 additional places in that year. SWD will continue to closely monitor the supply and demand, so as to conduct service planning and provide more places as necessary.

Yours sincerely,



(Miss LI Wan-in)

for Secretary for Labour and Welfare

c.c.

Director of Social Welfare (Attn : Ms Micy LUI)
Director of Housing (Attn: Mr Alfred LEE)
Director of Home Affairs (Attn: Miss Vega WONG)

Annex

The number and usage rate of the allocation quota under QPS

Financial year	The number of QPS applications that were allocated with PRH (a)	Allocation quota under QPS (b)	Usage rate of the allocation quota under QPS (a) / (b)
2012/13	1 690	1 690	100%
2013/14	1 920	1 920	100%
2014/15	1 266	1 360	93% ¹
2015/16	1 623	2 200	74% ²
2016/17	2 145	2 200	98% ³

¹ The actual allocation to QPS non-elderly one-person applicants in 2014/15 (1 266 units) was less than the original estimation (1 360 units). The main reason was that the intake procedures for the remaining 94 new PRH units under advance allocation and provisionally accepted by applicants were delayed, hence could not be counted towards the actual allocation that year. According to the established practice of counting the number of actual allocation, these 94 cases could only be reflected in the allocation figures of the following year (i.e. 2015/16).

² Starting from 2015/16, the annual allocation quota under QPS has been increased from 8% to 10% of the total number of flats to be allocated to PRH applicants, subject to a cap which has been increased from 2 000 to 2 200 units.

The estimated number of units to be allocated to PRH applicants in 2015/16 was 24 750 units. Since 10% of this estimate (i.e. 2 475 units) exceeded the cap of 2 200 units, the allocation quota under QPS that year was set at 2 200 units.

The actual allocation to QPS applicants in 2015/16 (1 623 units) was less than the original estimation (2 200 units). The main reasons were that: (a) the completion date of 513 flats under advance allocation and provisionally accepted by applicants was delayed, hence these cases could not be counted towards the actual allocation that year; (b) some applicants who had accepted the provisional offer rejected the offer when the flats were ready for intake and we could not allocate these flats to other applicants in time for flat intake before year end; (c) some housing offers were not yet accepted by applicants before year end; and (d) some housing offers were accepted by applicants upon reaching the age of 60, hence were counted towards the category of elderly one-person applicants.

³ The estimated number of units to be allocated to PRH applicants in 2016/17 was 23 870 units. Since 10% of this estimate (i.e. 2 387 units) exceeded the cap of 2 200 units, the allocation quota under QPS that year was set at 2 200 units.

The actual allocation to QPS non-elderly one-person applicants in 2016/17 (2 145 units) was less than the original estimation (2 200 units). The main reason was that applicants of the remaining 55 cases were either still considering the offers or had accepted the offers but not yet completed the intake formalities. According to the established practice of counting the number of actual allocation, if these 55 offers are eventually accepted by the applicants and with the intake formalities completed, such number will be reflected in the allocation figures of the following year (i.e. 2017/18).