

For discussion on
11 June 2018

Legislative Council Panel on Welfare Services

Planning of Social Welfare Services in New Public Rental Housing Estates and Deprived Communities

Purpose

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

Planning for welfare premises

2. Under the existing mechanism, when a development site is identified as having potential for PRH development, government departments and the Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA) will plan for and coordinate the provision of PRH flats and other community facilities (including recreational, education and welfare facilities, etc.), taking into account the views of the community during the process. Under this arrangement, the Social Welfare Department (SWD) can explore comprehensively at the early planning stage the provision of suitable welfare facilities (including family and child, elderly, youth, rehabilitation and social security services, etc.). In general, the 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 the Planning Department or the HA on site constraints, development parameters and limitations (including environmental issues such as noise and air quality) in drawing up appropriate proposed welfare facilities to meet the service demand arising from the development, and also to address the community demand at large. The HA, 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, relevant ordinances, rules and regulations (such as the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines, the Town

Planning Ordinance, the Building (Planning) Regulations and the Practice Note). The collaboration between the HA and the SWD in this regard enables the optimal use of the site to meet the society's demands for various community facilities.

3. The proposed welfare facilities preliminarily assessed as feasible will be included in the planning briefs of the PRH developments concerned. When considering the exact locations of the proposed welfare facilities within a particular development, the HA will take into account the relevant factors such as individual site conditions as well as the design and operational requirements. As a general practice, for easy accessibility, 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 kindergartens, car parks 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 accessibility and user-friendliness.

4. Apart from the provision of additional welfare facilities, the SWD will also consider reprovisioning or re-demarcating service boundaries of existing service centres, for example, Integrated Family Service Centres (IFSCs), District Elderly Community Centres, Neighbourhood Elderly Centres, Day Care Centres/Units for the Elderly, Integrated Children and Youth Services Centres, Integrated Vocational Rehabilitation Services Centres, Day Activity Centres, Social Security Field Units, etc. at or in the vicinity of the new PRH estates, with a view to meeting different welfare service needs of the community.

Support services provided during the early stage of resident intake of new PRH estates

5. The Government has always been concerned about the needs of residents of new PRH estates. The SWD will provide suitable support services to assist residents in adapting to the new living environment at the early stage of resident intake of individual newly completed PRH developments. The District Social Welfare Offices (DSWOs) of the SWD 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 government departments, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and stakeholders

concerned, they will deploy community resources to plan for appropriate support services, and identify, at an early stage, residents with service needs for referral to relevant services.

6. Also, where there are newly completed PRH estates, the IFSCs/Integrated Services Centres (ISCs) operated by the SWD or subvented NGOs located within the relevant service boundaries will collaborate with other government departments/district organisations in providing services, including the neighbourhood network building projects funded by the Community Investment and Inclusion Fund (CIIF) under the Labour and Welfare Bureau, or by the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust, to facilitate the new residents and families to integrate into the community as soon as possible.

7. As a general practice, without involving additional premises, to facilitate the provision of these outreaching services, after discussion with the SWD, the HA will provide suitable non-domestic premises not yet in use, such as Mutual Aid Committee offices, to the NGOs concerned as temporary work bases at the residents intake stage. The HA will enter into a short-term licence with the NGOs nominated by the SWD for the occupation of such temporary accommodation. The short-term licence will be for an initial term of 12 months, which is renewable thereafter on a monthly basis, and a monthly licence fee will be charged at the same level of the concessionary rent charged for the leasing of the HA's welfare premises (the current rate is \$55 per month per square metre exclusive of rates and government rent).

Support service for new PRH estates and deprived communities

8. The SWD is concerned about the needs of the residents of new PRH estates and deprived communities, and has regularly compiled territory-wide and district-based social indicators on district welfare needs, including information of different areas such as demographic characteristics and household income, etc. The 11 DSWOs of the SWD will, with reference to the social indicators, assess on an ongoing basis the needs for welfare services at district level having regard to the demographic development and changes in the locality. Through the established district welfare coordination mechanisms, district coordinating committees and district forums, DSWOs coordinate with various stakeholders, including relevant government departments, NGOs and local organisations, etc. to continue deploying community resources to plan for or arrange referral of appropriate support services to residents

with service needs. In respect of the planning of welfare premises for the newly set up or reprovisioned welfare facilities, the SWD has along adopted the principle of accessibility with a view to facilitating service users to receive services that meet their needs.

9. IFSCs and ISCs located in different districts across the territory, operated by the SWD or subvented NGOs, provide a spectrum of preventive, supportive and remedial family services to address the multifarious needs, including the provision of the needed welfare services for the newly completed PRH estates and deprived communities. IFSCs/ISCs will promote their services and identify families in need by means of pamphlets, posters, newsletters, road shows, outreaching, the Family Support Programme (FSP) and collaboration with other government departments / district organisations.

10. To identify needy families which are reluctant to seek help as early as possible, the SWD has implemented the FSP since 2007. Social workers will, through telephone calls, home visits and other outreaching services, contact families with social isolation problems and refer them to a host of support services. Furthermore, these service units recruit and train volunteers (including those with personal experience in overcoming family problems or crises) who will contact the aforementioned families and encourage them to receive appropriate services for building a community care and support network.

11. At present, there are seven Family Support Networking Teams (FSNTs) operated by NGOs under the SWD's subvention to serve three old urban districts, namely Kowloon City, Sham Shui Po and Yau Tsim Mong. FSNTs provide outreaching services for vulnerable families, including new arrivals, Comprehensive Social Security Assistance recipients and single parent families, etc., and refer needy cases to appropriate service units for timely intervention.

12. Separately, there are at present 17 Neighbourhood Level Community Development Project (NLCDP) teams operated by NGOs under the subvention of the SWD to serve deprived and transient communities where the provision of welfare services and facilities was inadequate or non-existent. The NLCDP teams address service needs of residents, and foster a spirit of mutual help and a sense of belonging to the community among the residents.

Way forward

13. The SWD will sustain its efforts in exploring with relevant departments the possibility of reserving sites or premises in new developments for welfare uses to meet the needs of the localities or the community at large for welfare services. Meanwhile, the 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. The SWD will also continue to collaborate with stakeholders in districts for developing a caring community and support network for those in need (including the underprivileged or deprived families, etc.), with a view to facilitating them to receive suitable services. Besides, in order to launch CIIF-funded projects in new PRH estates in a more proactive and timely manner, the CIIF will study how to collaborate with the SWD, so that there will be suitable CIIF-funded projects in the new PRH estates concerned, providing services and assisting residents to adapt to and get involved in the new community as soon as possible, during the resident intakes of these new estates.

Advice sought

14. Members are invited to note the above arrangements concerning the planning of social welfare services in newly completed PRH estates and deprived communities.

Social Welfare Department
Housing Department
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