

**Panel on Welfare Services**

**Re-opening of singleton hostels  
operated by the Home Affairs Department**

**Singleton Hostel Programme**

The Singleton Hostel Programme (SHP) was launched by the Home Affairs Department (HAD) to tie in with the introduction of the licensing regime under the Bedspace Apartments Ordinance (Cap.447) (the Ordinance). The objective of the SHP is to provide short-term accommodation for those bedspace lodgers affected by the implementation of the Ordinance through services provided by the non-governmental organizations.

2. When the SHP was introduced in 1991, there were some 200 bedspace apartments but there was only 34 bedspace apartments licensed under the Ordinance in 2004. As the number of lodgers affected by the Ordinance had been significantly reduced, it was decided in 2004 that the 26 small to medium-sized hostels being operated by the Agency for Volunteer Service be gradually phased out within four years starting from 2005. The phasing out programme was smoothly completed in March 2009 and all the 26 premises have been returned to their owners including the Secretary for Home Affairs Incorporated, the Hong Kong Housing Society and the Financial Secretary Incorporated.

3. At present, the SHP comprises two multi-storey purpose-built singleton hostels, namely the Sunrise House in Sham Shui Po and the High Street House in Sai Ying Pun, which are managed by the Salvation Army and the Neighbourhood Advice-Action Council respectively on a self-financing basis. They provide a total capacity of 580 bedspaces. Singletons who are under 60 years of age earning a monthly salary of not more than \$9,900 and currently living in an apartment area of which is less than 5.5m<sup>2</sup> for more than six months are eligible for applying for a place in the hostels under the SHP. Compassionate cases referred by the Social Welfare Department or other non-governmental organizations are also accepted when there are vacancies in the hostels.

4. The SHP is not and has never intended to be a housing or welfare scheme for street sleepers. For street sleepers with genuine and pressing housing and welfare need in general but are unable to solve the problems themselves, the Social Welfare Department and the Housing Department will provide assistance under their respective policies.

### **Temporary Cold Shelters**

5. HAD operates a temporary cold shelter (TCS) service to provide temporary shelter to people in need of refuge during cold spells in winter. Currently, there are nine TCSs which will be opened at 5:30 pm in the evening until the next morning when the Hong Kong Observatory issues the cold weather warning. Another eight TCSs will be opened upon request from the public.

6. The TCSs are mainly located in community halls/community centres (CHs/CCs) which are generally accessible to shelter seekers comprising both local residents and street sleepers. At present, most districts have one TCS in place. The operation of the TCSs is regularly under review having regard to the local demand and the optimal use of resources.

7. As to the concern about the location of a few TCSs, for example, TCSs in Wong Tai Sin District and Tsuen Wan District, we are prepared to deliberate with the Social Welfare Department, which oversees the services for street sleepers, with a view to catering for the need of street sleepers in these two districts. Members would appreciate that most CHs/CCs in these two districts are very popular and they are heavily patronized by the local community in organizing community activities in the evening. Hence, in determining the location of TCSs, we need to strike a balance between the needs of the local community and the need to provide temporary shelters in a particular CH/CC. Shelter seekers include both local residents and street sleepers and they are invariably scattered in individual districts.

8. In relation to the suggestion of turning the TCS in Kwun Tong from one which will be opened on request to a regular TCS, we have reviewed the usage of that TCS. Although the usage rate of the TCS is not high, we are prepared to turn it into a regular TCS starting from this winter.

9. Finally, we wish to reiterate that we attach great importance to the cleanliness of TCSs. We will ensure that TCSs are well maintained and are in good and hygienic conditions.

Home Affairs Department

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