

## **Legislative Council Panel on Housing**

### **Overcrowding Relief in Public Rental Housing Estates**

#### **PURPOSE**

This paper reports on the measures to relieve overcrowding in public rental housing (PRH) estates.

#### **BACKGROUND**

2. Currently, PRH households with living density of less than 5.5 square metres (sq.m.) per person Internal Floor Area (IFA) are considered to be “overcrowded” households. To improve the living conditions of these overcrowded households, it has been the practice of the Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA) to launch one to two Territory-wide Overcrowding Relief Transfer (TWOR) exercise(s) every year to enable overcrowded households to apply for transfer to larger flats. Also, the transfer arrangement was enhanced in 2005 when the Living Space Improvement Transfer Scheme (LSITS) was introduced, allowing PRH households living in flats with an average IFA of less than 7 sq.m. per person also a chance to apply for transfer to larger flats. At present, LSITS exercises are launched once a year to facilitate PRH households to improve their living environment.

#### **IMPLEMENTATION**

3. When launching a TWOR exercise, we will first compile a list of flats available for selection based on suitable resources available at that time. In addition to posting notices in conspicuous locations in PRH estates to invite applications, estate offices will also distribute relevant notices individually to every eligible overcrowded household. Eligible households which have applied for the exercise will be invited to choose flats on the list which match with their family sizes in the eligible districts according to the established order of priority<sup>Note</sup>. However, whether an applicant will be able to choose a flat depends on many factors, such as the selection priority of the applicant, whether their desired flats have been chosen by applicants with higher priority, and their own choice. As in any other flat selection scheme, we cannot guarantee that every applicant is able to select a flat. Applicants who do not choose a flat in a particular exercise will have their applications cancelled. If they still meet the eligibility criteria when the next TWOR exercise is launched, they can make a fresh application.

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<sup>Note</sup> Priority of flat selection is set in the order of:

1. household living density;
2. household size;
3. length of residence; and
4. to be randomly prioritized by computer if the above fails to determine the priority.

4. Likewise, when launching a LSITS exercise, suitable resources available at the time will be pooled together to form a list of flats available for selection. Eligible households will be invited to apply and they can select flats in accordance with the established order of priority as mentioned in paragraph 3 above.

5. For overcrowded households with justified social or medical grounds as recommended by relevant authorities such as the Social Welfare Department or the Hospital Authority, we will arrange transfers for them without the need to wait for the launch of TWOR or LSITS exercises whenever suitable resources are available.

## **LATEST POSITION**

6. When the TWOR was first launched in 2001, the number of overcrowded households was about 18 000, i.e. about 3.1% of all PRH households at the time. So far, we have launched 26 TWOR exercises. The number of overcrowded households has been reduced to about 3 000 as at the end of 2012/13, i.e. about 0.45% of all PRH households. This is below the HA's current target of 0.55%. As regards the number of households living in flats with IFA of less than 7 sq.m. per person, the number was about 40 000 before the launch of LSITS in 2006. This has dropped to about 24 000 as at the end of 2012/13.

7. As at the end of December 2012, the average actual living space per person in IFA for all PRH households was 12.9 sq.m..

## **WAY FORWARD**

8. The TWOR and LSITS exercises have provided PRH households with opportunities to improve their living environment. We will continue to launch these exercises so that tenants can be transferred to larger flats when resources are available. We are aware of suggestions for the HA to review the threshold of overcrowded households. However, in view of the increasing number of applications on the PRH Waiting List, the projected flat production in the coming years and our target of maintaining the Average Waiting Time for general applicants at around three years, we need to rationalize the allocation of PRH resources among the various rehousing categories. We will maintain the current thresholds for TWOR and LSITS exercises for the time being.

**Transport and Housing Bureau**  
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