

**立法會**  
**Legislative Council**

LC Paper No. CB(2)940/16-17(02)

Ref : CB2/HS/2/16

**Subcommittee on Rights of Ethnic Minorities**

**Information note prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat  
for the meeting on 13 March 2017**

**Housing problem of ethnic minorities**

The Race Discrimination Ordinance ("RDO") (Cap. 602) which was enacted in 2008 protects people against discrimination, harassment and vilification on the ground of their race<sup>1</sup>. Under RDO, it is unlawful to discriminate, harass or vilify a person on the ground of his/her race. RDO offers protection in, among others, disposal or management of premises. According to the Equal Opportunities Commission ("EOC"), racial discrimination may arise in circumstances such as the following:

- (a) when a landlord refuses to rent his/her property or an estate agent refuses to provide service to a prospective tenant because he/she comes from a certain race;
- (b) when a landlord refuses to rent his/her property to or an estate agent refuses to serve a prospective tenant because of the race of the tenant's near relative;
- (c) when a landlord requires a prospective tenant to submit his/her tax return or a letter of guarantee from the tenant's employer, which are not normally required, because of his/her race;
- (d) when a landlord evicts a tenant on the ground of race<sup>2</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> Under RDO, race in relation to a person means the race, colour, descent, national or ethnic origin of the person.

<sup>2</sup> According to EOC, there are the following exceptions:

- (a) When a landlord is living on the rented premises and if the landlord does not use an estate agent or advertise for the purpose, he/she may decide to whom he/she would rent the premises.
- (b) When a landlord or his/her near relative is living in the rented premises and shares accommodations with others living on the premises who are not part of the landlord or near relative's household and the premises constitute "small premises", a landlord may decide to whom to rent the premises.

2. After the enactment of RDO, the Administration has introduced the Administrative Guidelines on Promotion of Racial Equality ("the Guidelines") to provide guidance to relevant bureaux, departments and public authorities to promote racial equality and ensure equal access to public services in key areas concerned<sup>3</sup> including public housing services. Under the Guidelines, relevant bureaux, departments and public authorities have drawn up checklists of measures that would assist in promoting racial equality and equal access to key public services. The checklist of measures drawn up by the Housing Department to enhance ethnic minorities' ("EMs") access to public housing services is attached in **Appendix I** for members' reference.

3. As for accommodation in the private sector, members may wish to note that the Report on the Study on Discrimination against Ethnic Minorities in the Provision of Goods, Services and Facilities, and Disposal and Management of Premises ("the Report") released by EOC on 21 September 2016<sup>4</sup> mentions that it is not uncommon for EMs to encounter discrimination in disposal and management of premises. Relevant findings of the Report are in **Appendix II**.

4. The Subcommittee will discuss the housing problem of ethnic minorities (including difficulties in gaining access to public housing services and in renting private premises) at the next meeting on 13 March 2017.

Council Business Division 2  
Legislative Council Secretariat  
9 March 2017

---

<sup>3</sup> The Guidelines cover the key public services, namely, medical, education, vocational training, employment and major community services. The Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau is responsible for coordinating and maintaining an overview on the implementation of the Guidelines in the Administration as a whole.

<sup>4</sup> The full Report is available at:  
[http://www.eoc.org.hk/EOC/Upload/UserFiles/File/ResearchReport/201609/EM-GSF\\_Report\(Eng\)V8\\_2\\_final.pdf](http://www.eoc.org.hk/EOC/Upload/UserFiles/File/ResearchReport/201609/EM-GSF_Report(Eng)V8_2_final.pdf)

**Existing and planned measures  
on the promotion of equality for ethnic minorities**

**Public Housing**

To promote racial harmony and help ethnic minorities integrate into the community, the Housing Department has put in place various measures to enhance their access to public housing services.

**A. Application for Public Rental Housing (PRH)**

Services Concerned • To provide services to PRH applicants from their application up to the allocation of PRH units to them or termination of the application for other reasons.

Existing Measures • Information Brief on the support service centres for ethnic minority have been sent to the ethnic minorities (EM) PRH applicants for their reference since 2009. Updated versions were sent in end of 2011, 2013 and 2015 respectively. The Information Brief is also distributed at the Housing Authority Customer Service Centre (HACSC) to those EM applicants who visit the centre.

• Posters for publicity of the free telephone interpretation service of the 7 EM languages offered by the Centre for Harmony and Enhancement of Ethnic Minority Residents (CHEER) are displayed in HACSC and Housing Information Centre (HIC) to make EM applicants aware of the service.

• We have listed out, in six EM languages, key information pertaining to PRH application, as well as the telephone interpretation service hotline numbers of the six EM languages offered by CHEER on the website of the Housing Authority (HA)/ Housing Department (HD). The hard copies of the said information are available for free pick up at the HACSC in Lok Fu.

• A video promoting harmonious community relationship among different racial groups; the provision of various PRH service and assistance channels available for the EM is being broadcast in the Waiting Hall of Applications

Sub-section, HACSC.

- Two EM Hall Attendants have been employed to offer reception/simple interpretation service in HACSC to PRH applicants including the EMs.
- A picture showing flags of different countries is available in HACSC for the EM PRH applicants to indicate their nationality to facilitate the arrangement of appropriate interpretation for them.
- With the coordination of the Race Relations Unit under Home Affairs Department, a set of PC software with an associated webcam provided by CHEER has been installed in HACSC for interpretation service through staff of CHEER to facilitate communication between our staff and the EM PRH applicants when necessary.
- Every time when we notify PRH applicants regarding the progress or details of their applications, or invite them for detailed vetting or flat selection, if we consider that the applicants are likely to be EM, we will attach an information note setting out the support service centres which can offer language support service.
- When an EM applicant contacts CHEER to request for interpretation service for attending the detailed vetting interview or flat selection exercise, CHEER will notify us and we will arrange on-site interpretation or to set up webcam to enable CHEER to provide interpretation service during detailed vetting interview. In case the applicant has not made prior request but wishes to have such service at the time of interview, we will contact CHEER to see if interpretation service can be instantly arranged through webcam.
- To facilitate the EM applicants in understanding the process of flat selection in EFAS, Information Brief in 6 EM languages are provided in communication with them when they turn up for flat selection.
- For major housing exercise, such as EFAS, application forms, application guide and relevant documents, will be sent to Support Services Centres, including CHEER in advance to facilitate their provision of services to the EM

group.

Assessment of Future Work and the Effectiveness of the Measures

- Relevant information will be regularly updated and the video will be broadcast continuously to upkeep the knowledge of EM PRH applicants.
- Feedback on effectiveness of the interpretation services provided to the EM will be regularly reviewed to seek for continuous improvement.
- Feedback from frontline staff on experience gained in their daily contacts with EM applicants will be collected through regular meetings to review the effectiveness of our existing measures and to seek for enhancements.
- We will keep close contacts with service support centres to obtain feedback from EM applicants and make improvements.

Additional Measure Taken/to be Taken

- At the interview with EM applicants, HD will take the initiative to ask them whether interpretation service is required. HD will then make the appropriate arrangement.
- To collaborate with CHEER in providing instant interpretation service through 3-way telephone conference, we will arrange to order two digital lines with speaker function for installation at two locations, one at Interview Room and one at Enquiry Counter in the Waiting Hall of Applications Sub-section, HACSC. However, the provision of instant telephone interpretation service depends on the availability of interpreters on that language on duty.

Enquiries

- The HA's Hotline : 2712 2712

## **B. Estate Management**

Services Concerned

- At the interview with EM applicants, HD will take the initiative to ask them whether interpretation service is required. HD will then make the appropriate arrangement.

Existing Measures

- Pamphlets in English and seven EM languages (i.e. Bahasa Indonesia, Hindi, Nepali, Punjabi, Tagalog, Thai and Urdu) were sent in late 2015 to the identified EM

households in public housing estates to inform them of the support services provided by non-profit-making organisations with funding from government.

- A video is run on our Housing Channel to promote harmonious integration between local and EM residents. All frontline housing staff are instructed to facilitate both smooth handling and better communication with EM households.
- Message to promote harmonious integration between the EM and local residents, and the support services available are conveyed to tenants in both English and Chinese through the Estate Newsletters.
- To enhance mutual understanding and promote the harmonious relationship between EM and local residents through partnering functions on community building jointly organised by Estate Management Advisory Committees and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs).
- When conveying important messages to EM tenants, the use of photograph, maps, drawings, figures, etc., can facilitate them to understand the messages. Therefore, we will insert pictures, as appropriate, in the letter or notice when disseminating essential information (such as health and safety) to enhance the EM's easy understanding.
- To enhance better communication with EM households, a telephone interpretation service is provided by CHEER of the Hong Kong Christian Service in Tuen Mun North District Tenancy Management Office and Tin Yuet Estate Office by using Web cameras linked with CHEER, to facilitate a three-way video conference among staff, EM residents and interpreter without any language barriers.
- To encourage the EM to make full use of the translation and interpretation services provided by the Support Services Centres operated by non-profit-making organisations.
- Taking into account the cultures, needs, sensitivities and concerns of different racial groups, our services would be

Assessment of  
Future Work and  
the Effectiveness  
of the Measures

reviewed from time to time and improvements would be made where applicable. Relevant policy briefs in more language versions would be produced as and when necessary.

- After completion of the partnering functions, the organiser has to submit a final report in two months for the assessment of the overall response and feedback of the participants with a view to enhancing the effectiveness of holding similar activities in future.
- We will communicate with the support services centres concerned from time to time to collect EM's opinions on estate management in order to improve the quality of our services.
- To conduct a random questionnaire survey on estate management service each year among our tenants to collect feedbacks, including those from EM. Review of our services will be conducted to meet their needs.
- The housing policies uploaded onto the HA/HD Website are generally bilingual, i.e. Chinese and English. Information in other languages, including several minority languages like Thai, Indonesian, etc., have been provided for a number of selected policies related to Estate Management, such as addition, deletion, Marking Scheme for Estate Management Enforcement in Public Housing Estates and Rent Assistance Scheme.
- To provide updated information in respect of telephone, address and scope of service by the support service centres run by the seven non-profit-making organisations with funding from government, we have conducted promotional programmes including sending pamphlets to identified EM households and issuing Estate Newsletters in 2015 to promote racial equality.

Additional  
Measures Taken /  
to be Taken

Enquiries

- The HA's Hotline : 2712 2712

## **C. Training of Staff**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| Services Concerned                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To enhance staff's awareness of racial sensitivity and understanding of the Racial Discrimination Ordinance (RDO).</li></ul>   |
| Existing Measures                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Training has been provided to enhance staff's understanding of the RDO and related guidelines, and to promote their racial sensitivity so as to facilitate provision of services to the EM.</li><li>• Training materials and the relevant guidelines have been uploaded to Departmental intranet for staff's reference.</li><li>• Staff training focusing on the coordination and cooperation with CHEER has been arranged to equip staff with knowledge on the service areas which CHEER can provide for the EM.</li><li>• Experience sharing sessions have been arranged with CHEER for staff to enhance their awareness and sensitivity on racial equality.</li></ul> |
| Assessment of Future Work               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Refresher training will be arranged periodically.</li><li>• This Department will continue to work with the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau, the Civil Service Training and Development Institute, EOC, or those NGOs providing services to EM in arranging suitable training on the RDO and related issues.</li></ul>   |
| Additional Measures Taken / to be Taken | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Feedback and suggestions from departmental subject officers, training bodies and staff attending the training would be collected for enriching the content of the training programmes.</li></ul>   |
| Enquiries                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The HA's Hotline : 2712 2712</li></ul>   |

**Housing Department  
August 2016**



---

**Key Findings – One-to-one In-depth Interviews with Ethnic Minorities**

*(Target: ethnic minorities who experienced discrimination)*

**Experiences of Discrimination**

3. Key points mentioned by the 15 respondents relating to their experiences of discrimination were summarized below.

**Accommodation**

4. Typical cases encountered by ethnic minorities that warranted a racial discrimination included:

- Property agencies just asked ethnic minorities to leave, saying that property owners did not want to lease their flats to ethnic minorities.
- Property owners agreed renting the properties to them over the phone, but refused to do so once they noticed that the parties were ethnic minorities.

5. Regarding the services provided by property agencies, ethnic minorities considered that they would solely serve the landlords rather than helping them to find suitable accommodation. Even if property agencies collected their requirements, only a few of them would respond and source the flats for them eventually.

6. Some respondents claimed that finding flats in some districts were more difficult than others, such as Hung Hom, Mong Kok and Sham Shui Po.

### 3 SURVEY FINDINGS – IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

3.1 Findings of the in-depth interviews are discussed according to different categories in the provision of goods, services and facilities, and disposal and management of premises. Within each category, views of ethnic minorities with regard to perceived discrimination and the difficulties they have encountered are presented.

#### ***Accommodation***

3.2 Seeking for premises was one of the major difficulties faced by ethnic minorities. As claimed by some ethnic minorities, many landlords did not want to rent properties to them. Some incidents that warranted a racial discrimination as encountered by the ethnic minorities included:

- The landlord agreed renting the properties to them over the phone, but refused to do so once he noticed that they are ethnic minorities.
- Property agency just asked the ethnic minorities to leave their office saying that the landlords do not want to rent their properties to ethnic minorities.

3.3 When being asked the reasons why the landlords did not want to rent the properties to them, ethnic minorities suggested that they were being looked down as low social class and the landlords might be afraid that they would not pay the rent in time.

3.4 Regarding the services provided by property agencies, ethnic minorities considered that they would only serve the landlords rather than helping them to find suitable accommodation. Even if they collected their requirements, only few of the agents would respond and source the flats to them eventually.

3.5 Moreover, property agencies in different districts would treat ethnic minorities differently. As suggested by ethnic minorities, agencies in Jordan, Tsimshatsui and Yuen Long were more willing to serve them probably because the rent in these districts is lower and considered to be more affordable for ethnic minorities.