

# Report of The Working Group on Housing for The Elderly

June 1989

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## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

### Background

1.1 The government policy objective in respect of the provision of services for old people stems from the 1979 White Paper "Social Welfare Into The 1980's." It is subsequently defined in the 1982 Programme Plan on Services for the Elderly which states that :

"The broad objective is to promote the well being of the elderly (people who have passed their 60 th birthday) in all aspects of their living, by providing services that will enable them to remain members of the community for as long as possible; and, to the extent necessary, to provide residential care suited to the varying needs of the elderly."

1.2 This objective is derived from the belief that :

- (a) An elderly person feels best in his own home and in the company of family members;
- (b) Family members can provide the best care for elderly people;
- (c) Elderly persons without family ties or support prefer to remain in familiar neighbourhood surroundings; and
- (d) An elderly person should therefore be assisted to grow old in his own community, and services should be provided in and by the community to facilitate him to be cared for and to be integrated within that community, in non-institutional care, as far as possible and for as long as possible. This includes providing opportunities for the elderly to be useful in the community and to lead a dignified life as part of the community, and not in isolation as a class apart.

1.3 In order to realise this policy objective, the following issues need to be addressed :

- (a) Availability of financial means to enable the elderly person or to his family to be maintained within the community;
- (b) Appropriate accommodation for elderly people, in the family setting where possible;
- (c) Community support services to encourage the family unit to extend care to their senior members and to meet the needs of old people, particularly those with no family members to assist them.

1.4 The provision of cash benefits, welfare facilities, health services and other amenities are determined by Government. However, there is an overriding need to establish closer links between the Government policy statement on services for elderly persons and the Housing Authority policy statement, in order to facilitate a more integrated approach.

1.5 On the assumption that an elderly person is best cared for by his own family, families should be encouraged to keep and take care of their senior members. In this context, there is a need to review existing housing allocation policy.

1.6 In order to provide adequate support to enable old people to be cared for within the family, the standard of provision of welfare facilities in public housing estates also needs to be reviewed.

1.7 Where care within the community is not appropriate, for whatever reason, suitable institutional care should be made available in public housing estates. In this regard, the availability of a continuum of residential services in public housing estates also requires review.

1.8 In order to fulfil the policy statement objective, the population profiles of public housing estates need to be continually monitored to ensure that the policy of care for elderly people within the community is maintained.

### **Appointment**

1.9 In November 1988, on the advice of the then Management Committee of the Housing Authority, the Chairman of the Housing Authority proposed and the Secretary for Health and Welfare agreed that a Working Group on Housing for the Elderly should be set up to determine how the government policy statement on services for elderly persons and the housing policy statement could best be aligned to ensure a more integrated approach in achieving their respective objectives.

### **Terms of Reference**

1.10 The terms of reference proposed for the Working Group on Housing for the Elderly are as follows : -

- (a) To examine the relationship between government's stated policy objective for the provision of services to elderly people and the public housing allocation policy with particular reference to the demographic profile of public housing estates;
- (b) To examine the extent to which the welfare components could be revised and improved in the context of the demand, supply and planning standards of public housing for elderly people; and
- (c) To submit a report of the deliberations of the Working Group to the Housing Authority Management and Operations Committee and the Secretary for Health and Welfare.

1.11 At its first meeting, the Working Group agreed that the proposed terms of reference be adopted without amendment.

### **Membership**

1.12 The following were appointed members of the Working Group:

Mrs Elizabeth WONG	(Co-Chairman)	Director of Social Welfare
Mr FUNG Tung	(Co-Chairman)	Deputy Director of Housing
Dr Nelson CHOW	(Member)	Hong Kong University
Ms Virginia CHAN	(Member)	Assistant Director, Hong Kong Council of Social Service
Mr Alfred CHUI	(Member)	Assistant Director of Social Welfare
Mr C Y LO	(Member)	Assistant Director of Housing
Mrs Ann Kingston	(Secretary)	SAO/Social Welfare Department

### **Appreciation**

1.13 The Working Group wishes to record its appreciation for the co-operation of those who attended meetings to give expert advice and guidance on particular subjects : -

Mr Simon CHENG	Hong Kong Council of Social Service
Mr H L CHEUNG	Social Welfare Department
Mr X M KO	Social Welfare Department
Mr Anthony LAM	Housing Department
Mr Godfrey MAK	Housing Department
Ms Susanna SO	Housing Department
Mr Martin WHITE	Health & Welfare Branch
Mr Thomas WONG	Health & Welfare Branch

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **THE ROLE OF THE WORKING GROUP AND ITS SCOPE OF WORK**

#### **The Role of the WGHE**

2.1 Members considered the role of the Working Group and agreed that it should examine the adequacy of existing accommodation and support services and their location and accessibility within districts, with the aim of helping the elderly to maintain a dignified, independent existence within the community for as long as possible. It was agreed that the problem of supply and demand in the public housing sector, which accommodated 43% of the population, should be the main target of the Working Group's deliberations. The Working Group agreed to produce a report for submission to the Housing Authority and the Secretary for Health & Welfare, with a view to future implementation wherever possible and as soon as possible. The working Group might wish to reconvene at a later date to monitor progress made, and make further recommendations where appropriate.

#### **The Scope of Work of the WGHE**

2.2 The Working Group agreed that the scope of work should encompass the following tasks : -

- (a) Reviewing all housing schemes for the elderly to ascertain whether they remained appropriate in the light of changing expectations, and ascertaining to what extent they continued to achieve the original target objectives;
- (b) Defining and projecting likely demands for public housing relevant to each category of need to ensure adequate planning and provision and a smooth progression between categories;
- (c) Surveying demographic structures of existing housing estates. The question of meeting and balancing the needs of different target groups in the context of the diverse demographic profiles of different housing estates needed to be addressed as the elderly population of some older estates was as high as 30%.
- (d) Identifying ways of improving and strengthening sheltered housing facilities and relevant welfare support services;

(e) Concluding whether new policy objectives and statements were necessary to achieve target demands for integrated public housing; and

(f) Reviewing the housing needs of the elderly in private accommodation.

2.3 The Working Group noted that the list of work objectives was not exhaustive, and members were encouraged to contribute discussion papers on related topics. In all, 16 papers, as listed in Annex A, were discussed by the Working Group during 6 meetings. Meetings were held on : -

5	January	1989
21	February	1989
28	March	1989
25	April	1989
31	May	1989
4	July	1989

### **CHAPTER 3 ACCOMMODATION & RESIDENTIAL CARE**

3.1 The Working Group noted that the provision of residential services for the elderly is provided by Government and the Housing Authority as follows : -

(a) Elderly Housing Schemes in public housing

(b) Sheltered housing

(c) Hostels for the elderly

(d) Homes for the aged cum care and attention units.

#### **Elderly Housing Schemes in Public Housing**

3.2 The Working Group noted that public housing is provided for the elderly on a priority basis through one of five avenues as set out below :

##### *Elderly Persons Priority Scheme*

3.3 Elderly couples or two (or more) unrelated elderly persons who agree to live together may apply for rehousing under this scheme at the age of 58 or above. Applicants who are prepared to accept housing offers in Extended Urban or NT estates, can normally be rehoused within two years of registration, subject to fulfillment of the prevailing Waiting List eligibility criteria.

3.4 Since the implementation of the scheme in August 1979, 13,166 persons have been rehoused. Of the remaining 4,072 applicants on the current Waiting List as at 31 December 1988, 700 have waited for over two years because of their insistence on rehousing to districts of their choice, mostly in the Central Kowloon estates where vacancies are in great demand.

3.5 Most of the elderly have met or known each other before moving in and, according to a survey conducted by Housing Department in August 1987, the majority found this mode of housing to be acceptable and agreeable, although occasional disputes among sharers arose over the question of settling electricity and water bills and cleaning common areas. The Working Group was informed that counselling services were available and that transfer options were provided for elderly persons who experienced irreconcilable difficulties in living together. The Housing Department Survey had indicated that 84% of unrelated persons in shared accommodation were able to live harmoniously. The majority of unsuccessful tenants were mainly males, had prior histories of conflict and personality

dysfunction, and would be unlikely to find domestic compatibility with others.

3.6 The Working Group observed that this type of housing was most suited to members of the older generation who had come from mainland China, and who were accustomed to a lower standard of housing provision. The improved lifestyle and rising expectations of local people were reflected in the increased waiting list for singleton flats. To overcome this trend, they noted that the Housing Department had given the surviving tenants of shared accommodation the option of inviting an elderly friend or relative of modest means, even if that person was not on the Housing Department's waiting list, to be a joint-tenant, or of taking over the sole tenancy of flats on an increased rental basis. A single elderly person left alone in a flat could also be transferred to a single persons flat; Housing Authority sheltered housing; hostel, or a care unit run by voluntary agencies. This arrangement was welcomed by elderly tenants and had been working well. Since 1985, 331 elderly persons had been added to tenancies under this scheme. The Working Group welcomed the flexibility of this arrangement and noted that potential problems which could arise from the addition of a stranger to a shared tenancy, were substantially minimized.

3.7 For the foreseeable future, it was accepted that this scheme would continue to be the main avenue of housing single elderly persons, because it made good and economic use of existing accommodation. Large numbers of small family flats existed in old estates such as Choi Hung and Oi Man Estates and these could in future be earmarked for the Elderly Persons Priority Scheme as existing tenants moved out or transferred to large family flats. The Working Group agreed that this scheme was the most flexible and economic. It fostered mutual care and support and enabled the elderly to lead independent lives within the community.

#### *Families with Elderly Parents Priority Scheme*

3.8 Under this scheme which commenced in October 1982, families awaiting rehousing together with their elderly parents have their housing allocation advanced by one year, subject to fulfillment of the prevailing eligibility criteria. The family must be a nuclear unit with at least one elderly parent/grand parent who has attained the age of 60 or over and who, at the time of investigation, is living with or dependent on the applicant's family. As at 31 December 1988, 3,946 families had benefitted by the scheme.

3.9 The Working Group agreed that care could best be provided by the family within an extended family setting, and that every encouragement should be given to families to care for their elderly relatives. Further enhancement of this scheme was recommended. However, it was noted that the waiting list in areas such as Tuen Mun was only 3 years. In order to maintain some degree of parity within districts, it was proposed that the maximum incentive be increased to 2 years advancement on the waiting list, subject to the applicant having been registered on the waiting list for not less than 2 years. The Working Group proposed that the Elderly Persons Priority Scheme should not be restricted only to elderly parents but should be extended to include other dependent elderly relatives.

3.10 The Working Group observed that sociologists favoured the provision of independent "granny flats" or bed-sit units in close proximity to relatives' accommodation. This tended to produce optional results in terms of family care and interaction. Married children who might not be prepared to accommodate elderly relatives because of family conflict, would nevertheless be likely to regularly visit and oversee the needs of elderly relatives living nearby. They noted that in Wang Tau Hom Estate, (Harmony Block Design), each floor of 16 flats had been provided with a one-bedroom flat to provide flexibility in housing elderly persons within easy reach of relatives. However, members recognised the demand/supply limitations.

#### *Single Persons Waiting List*

3.11 A Single Persons Waiting List was opened in January 1985 for single persons who had attained the age of 21 or over. As at 31 January 1989 there were 20,383 applicants on the list, of whom 4,625 were elderly persons. Due to the limited supply of single person flats, priority in allocation had been given to residents involved in the trawling of Temporary Housing Areas or in flats involved in redevelopment programmes. After meeting the rehousing demand from these categories, any surplus units were offered to elderly persons on the Waiting List. However, a small number of single person units were set aside for elderly persons who had been on the Waiting List for at least two years. In 1987/88, 125 elderly persons on the Waiting List were rehoused accordingly. In future, between one and two hundred flats per year would be reserved for this purpose, subject to availability of housing resources. As there was still a

shortfall in the supply of small flats to meet the needs of the "compulsory rehousing categories", able-bodied applicants on the Waiting List would have to wait for some years before their applications could be considered. There were approximately 4,000 purpose-built one-person flats in new estates and the future production would be in the region of 1,200 flats per annum increasing to about 2,000 per annum between 1991/2 and 1994/5. These flats would provide housing for elderly persons who preferred to live singly or who could not live in harmony with others. While solving problems associated with shared living, greater support was required for this category of elderly, to alleviate loneliness and an associated decline in mental health.

3.12 Originally, it had been planned to meet the target demand for singleton accommodation by 1991. Due to the unexpected repair and maintenance problems which had arisen in many housing estates, the Housing Department felt that it would be more realistic to aim for a target date in the mid-1990's.

3.13 It was noted that the Housing Authority could not afford to commit itself to increasing the construction of new, purpose-built, one and two person flats above 7% of the development programme. Existing small family flats in urban areas would become obsolescent when families left or transferred to more spacious flats, unless allocated to one or two person households or elderly co-tenants. To increase the supply of small flats in new developments above the 7% ceiling would reduce capacity and flexibility, create instant obsolescence in terms of territory-wide housing requirements, and increase costs to an unaffordable level. On the basis of existing tenants and projected population distribution, the number of small housing units in each new development should be closer to 30%. However, it was more economical to build family accommodation with a common bathroom, kitchen, living room, etc., than to build single person units. The Housing Department had made a conscious decision to use smaller domestic units, wherever available, to accommodate singletons, and at least 40% of all existing accommodation was suitable for allocation to elderly persons, in terms of floor space, if 2 or 3 single elderly persons agreed to share accommodation units. Older estates such as Ma Tau Wai and Choi Hung were suitable for elderly intake because better facilities for the elderly had already been established by existing tenants' associations. Elderly people were frequently offered accommodation in older housing estates when existing tenants moved to new flats because the old flats had to be reallocated. It was more appropriate to utilize existing small flats as "purpose-built" accommodation for singletons and elderly couples than to embark on a construction programme to build obsolete housing.

3.14 It would be counter-productive to restrict allocation to persons over 60 years or to award the elderly additional points on the waiting list. Small units were primarily aimed at meeting the housing needs of single people in the compulsory housing categories and/or able-bodied elderly persons who could not live with others. Only surplus units could be allocated to other elderly, able-bodied persons. The Working Group noted that single elderly persons living alone would be at risk. The single persons waiting list tended to have applicants remain on the list for a long time and in terms of economics, flexibility and social support, was least attractive.

3.15 It was emphasised that, while single persons over 21 years were eligible to register for such flats, the likelihood of allocation was extremely remote. Such persons were possibly motivated to accrue points on the waiting list which could be utilized if their single status changed.

### *Compassionate Rehousing*

3.16 This category was aimed at elderly persons with housing needs who were faced with social or medical problems and who could satisfy the compassionate rehousing criteria. Accommodation was provided on a priority basis at the recommendation of the Social Welfare Department, usually within one year of application. The Working Group noted that the provisional quota for 1988 was 1,100. However, the ceiling on compassionate rehousing was not immutable and could be adjusted to cope with needy cases.

### *Compulsory Rehousing*

3.17 Under the compulsory rehousing categories, e.g. emergency and development clearances, elderly single persons aged 50 or above were offered permanent public housing. The Working Group noted that both compulsory and compassionate categories were given priority in sheltered housing.

## **Sheltered Housing for the Elderly**

3.18 Prior to 1985, Sheltered Housing for the Elderly was provided by the Social Welfare Department and Helping Hand. SWD had purchased a total of 103 flats in private tenement buildings, providing homes for 595 elderly people in Sha Tin and Wanchai. Helping Hand provided a total of 723 housing places in temporary housing areas and public housing estates.

3.19 In 1985, the Housing Authority agreed to assume greater responsibility for the housing care of the able-bodied elderly to enable Social Welfare Department and the voluntary agencies to concentrate scarce resources on the care of less mobile or infirm elderly persons. The Housing Authority had subsequently undertaken the provision and management of sheltered housing for the elderly, with warden service, in new public housing estates of more than 3,000 flats. This type of housing was intended to supersede hostel accommodation for the elderly. The first Sheltered Housing project was opened in November 1987 in Heng On Estate (Ma On Shan), providing accommodation for 145 elderly persons. Fourteen additional sheltered housing schemes would be provided in the next 5 years, based on new standard planning ratios of 145 person units in new housing estates of more than 3,000 flats.

3.20 In Sheltered Housing, a standard domestic flat is divided into self-contained bedrooms allowing maximum privacy on the one hand, and mutual caring on the other. To promote social interaction among the elderly, common-room facilities are also provided. Elderly Persons accommodated in Sheltered Housing must be self-reliant and independent, but an alarm system and Warden Service were also available to help the elderly in emergencies. The provision of separate metered gas and electricity supply helped reduce conflict in community living. This type of housing is costly and gives rise to the problem of necessitating prompt placement in homes for the aged when senility or infirmity occur.

3.21 Members noted that persons applying for sheltered housing would be counselled by Housing staff at the initial interview stage about the type of accommodation most suited to their needs and interests.

3.22 The Working Group observed that sheltered housing was a much needed type of housing for the elderly, and recommended that each estate should have a sheltered housing unit appropriate to the level of demand, with care and attention, home for the aged, and other support services being a flexible part of the integrated whole. In addition, it was proposed that the standards of provision be reviewed from time to time with regard to the district demographic profile of elderly residents.

### **Hostels for the Elderly**

3.23 This residential service was provided by voluntary agencies for elderly persons, who, for various social reasons, were in need of such a service. Hostel tenants were required to be physically and mentally healthy, fully capable of taking care of personal hygiene, and able to manage shopping, laundry, cooking and other daily chores.

3.24 Hostels in public housing estates were divided into self-care sections and meals sections. Under the self-care section, four elderly persons shared a self-contained flat with bathroom and kitchen. The meals section provided a centralized meals service as well as laundry, cleaning, medical escort service, limited assistance with personal care, general supervision of health care, and organization of recreational and social programmes. Supervisory staff were on duty on a 24 hour basis.

3.25 New estates with a minimum of 3,000 flats were provided with one hostel serving between 150-170 elderly people. There were 37 hostels in operation, housing about 6,000 elderly persons. An additional 8 hostels would come on-stream by 1988/89 and provide about 1,300 places.

3.26 Members noted that this type of communal accommodation was considered to be obsolete in terms of social quality and had been largely superseded by the Sheltered Housing Programme. The existing programme of providing hostels in new estates would be discontinued after 1988/1989.

3.27 The Working Group proposed that some of the existing hostels eventually be converted to Care and Attention Homes for the Aged, and that hostel occupants be rehoused in sheltered housing schemes within their own districts whenever possible. It was recommended that the remaining hostels be retained for certain categories of tenant who

were uniquely suited to this type of residential service.

### **Homes for the Aged Cum Care and Attention Units**

3.28 This type of residential institution would combine the services of a Home for the Aged and a Care and Attention Unit.

3.29 The Home Section would provide services such as meals, heavy laundry, daily cleaning, medical consultation escorts, limited assistance in personal care and social and recreational programmes.

3.30 The Care and Attention Section would provide general care for old people whose requirement for nursing care did not exceed 2.5 hours per week.

3.31 Each Home cum Care & Attention Unit would provide a total of 150 places; 100 in the Home Section and 50 in the Care & Attention Section. Provision was planned on the basis of one institution for each estate or group of estates of 6,000 flats or a total population of 25,000.

3.32 The first 6 Home cum Care & Attention Units in public housing were all scheduled to come on stream in 1989, followed by 9 additional homes by 1994. These were to be run by voluntary agencies under the auspices of the SWD.

3.33 The committee noted that Homes for the Aged were institutional services provided either in purpose-built premises or through the meals service section of an institution for the elderly in public housing; i.e. Sheltered Housing and Hostels for the Elderly. The planning ratio was 10 places per thousand elderly aged 60 years and above. Care and Attention Homes provided a greater degree of personal care and limited nursing care and the planning ratio was previously 5 places per thousand elderly aged sixty years and above; this had recently been revised to 8 places per thousand on the advice of the Central Committee on Services for the Elderly. Because of the acute shortage of infirmary beds, infirmary units of 20 beds were provided in selected care and attention homes on a temporary basis. The Central Committee had noted that many places in care and attention homes were taken up by persons whose medical condition was more suited to an infirmary, thereby aggravating the shortfall in demand for C&A places. It had proposed that a central waiting list be set up for transfer of such elderly persons from C&A Homes to Infirmarys, as and when accommodation became available.

3.34 The Working Group welcomed the setting up of homes which provided a continuum of residential services in one welfare facility; this would help to avoid the social dislocation and uprooting of elderly persons from a familiar environment when their physical condition deteriorated and a greater degree of nursing care was required. It was proposed that some level of infirmary beds be provided in such institutions in the future, as this was in line with the concept of providing multi-faceted, life-cycle-related public housing and residential services. It also encouraged social involvement and support from the more able-bodied members of such institutions.

3.35 The 'working Group noted the shortfall of Care and Attention places, and recommended that underutilized welfare accommodation in PHE's might be modified to accommodate more Homes cum Care and Attention Units. They suggested that shop units, primary schools, kindergarten premises and restaurants could be adapted to meet the special needs of the elderly in older estates with high concentrations of elderly persons.

### **New Avenues to Public Housing**

3.36 In addition to reviewing existing avenues to public housing, and recommending enhancement and improvement where appropriate, the Working Group proposed that various new schemes be introduced.

#### *New Application Scheme for Families with Elderly Persons*

3.37 Without enhancing the waiting list period, it was proposed that young families should be allowed to apply with their elderly parents or dependent elderly relatives for two separate flats in the same building in New Towns. This would also encourage the continued care of the elderly by the family, although the waiting period would obviously be longer.



3.38 It was proposed that a better mix of 1 person and 2 person flats be provided in standard blocks to facilitate the implementation of the "New Application Scheme". In addition, more spacious flats comparable to Harmony Block designs should be constructed, with priority given to families with elderly persons. This would encourage retention of the elderly by easing congested living standards and provide greater individual privacy.

#### *Enhancement Schemes for Existing Tenants*

3.39 The Working Group also proposed an enhancement scheme for existing tenants to encourage flat-sharing with elderly relatives :

##### *(a) Additions Policy*

3.40 Young families in New Towns to be encouraged to add elderly parents from public housing estates or private tenancies to their household and apply for transfer to larger flats in the New Towns, if warranted. This could be extended to transfer of close elderly relatives as it would release small units for reallocation and reduce demand for institutional care. It would also be possible to allow elderly parents or relatives in New Towns to add children or relatives in old urban estates to their tenancies and apply for transfer to larger flats in New Towns. However, it was noted that it would not be possible for transfer purposes, at this stage, to allow elderly parents in New Towns to add on relatives or children from private tenancies unless such relatives were on the waiting list and eligible for allocation of a flat.

##### *(b) External Transfer*

3.41 Elderly family members to be allowed to transfer to estates in New Towns where their children or close relatives are living, and permit them to occupy a separate flat if required and subject to appropriate accommodation being available. This scheme could be extended to include close relatives, and vice versa, allow close relatives or children of elderly persons to apply for transfer from urban areas or other New Towns and to occupy separate flats where appropriate and available. It was noted that at this stage, it would not be feasible to allow any transfers from New Towns to Urban areas.

3.42 It was noted that the "Additions" and "External Transfer" schemes would introduce greater flexibility to the existing policy, promote the care of the elderly by the family, and

encourage both the elderly and their families to move out of poor accommodation in congested urban areas. However, the practical limitations of the scheme were also recognized. Some elderly people would prefer to remain in familiar surroundings in the urban area. Many families would also be reluctant to give up flats in urban locations to move to remote new town areas with the consequent disruption to children's schooling and the additional travelling implications for workers.

3.43 Noting the implications for land-use, the Working Group concluded that the elderly should be encouraged to come to terms with relocating to New Towns, as it was socially desirable but totally unfeasible to rehouse everyone in-situ. It was inescapable that a significant proportion of elderly people would have to be relocated from the urban areas.

## **Conclusion**

3.44 At present, 43% of the population were accommodated in public housing. It was a fact of life that they would eventually become old, although not all would need care and attention services. Emphasis should continue to be placed on maintenance within the extended family system as the most desirable option, both from a social and economic view point. There would, however, be a requirement for diverse types of accommodation, according to individual needs. The policy should not be to segregate the elderly, or move them out of their own locality, but, wherever possible, to reaccommodate them within a familiar, flexible housing module, if and when required.

3.45 The WGHE recommended that in future, Public Housing Estates should be built or redesigned to provide a comprehensive system of demographically-related accommodation. Modular units including sheltered housing, homes for the aged cum care and attention/infirmary units, and home help services, should be capable of expansion or flexible

deployment according to the changing demographic profile of the area. This would meet the needs of tenants appropriate to the different stages of ageing and ensure a smooth progression within the community from one category to another, thereby avoiding social dislocation. Those who did not require reaccommodation within that module, might however require varying degrees of estate-based support services. Welfare components should therefore be incorporated into public housing estates to correspond with the changing social needs of persons who would age in public housing.

## CHAPTER 4

### A DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE ELDERLY AND EXISTING AND PLANNED SUPPORT SERVICES IN PUBLIC HOUSING ESTATES AND BY DISTRICT

#### A Demographic Profile of the Elderly in Public Housing Estates and by Electoral District

4.1 In March 1989, it was estimated that persons aged 60 and over comprised 12.57% of the total population. The highest concentrations of elderly people were in Kwun Tong; Eastern; and Sham Shui Po. The most densely populated areas within the 19 electoral districts were Kwun Tong, Eastern and Shatin.

4.2 In 1994, the highest concentrations of elderly persons will be in Kwun Tong, Eastern, and Wong Tai Sin. The most densely populated areas will be Eastern, Kwun Tong, and Shatin. In 1994, elderly persons will comprise 14.13% of the total population.

4.3 A survey of a cross-section of 6 (old, new and middle-aged) public housing estates revealed that the percentage of elderly tenants was lower than the territory-wide figure at intake but increased sharply 10 to 15 years after operation. Flats surveyed were found to have been let twice and the tenant turnover was mainly due to internal transfers for overcrowding relief. There was quite a number of families leaving public housing and they took the elderly with them. Although the number of deaths and departures is decreasing, there is still an overall increase in elderly population. This shows that elderly people tend to remain in older housing estates and that more and more elderly people move in. It therefore appears that the concentration of elderly is mainly due to natural ageing and housing management policies such as addition and inheritance policies. The elderly population of these estates was also increased by the elderly persons priority scheme introduced in 1984. There was also a higher initial intake of elderly persons to new estates and the Housing Development Programme had since been revised to provide accommodation for the elderly in specially designed housing blocks.

4.4 The six estates included in the survey were designed for family occupation only and were not fully representative of the general PHE demographic profile. They were selected on the basis that they represented a fair cross-section of all estates built before 1980. In the past, the PHE family profile on first intake comprised a married couple and two children in the 8 to 12 age group. After 10 to 15 years the estate population aged slightly; after 20 years the number of elderly tenants increased sharply. This was due to natural process, transfer of younger families to newer estates and higher secondary intake of elderly singletons and couples. In the urban areas, the average family profile on first intake has not changed much and comprises a married couple and two children of 9 to 10 years. In the New Towns, family profiles are younger, averaging a couple and two children in the 4 to 5 age group.

4.5 Middle-aged estates such as Wo Che would tend to become mainly elderly estates because most of the family flats comprised one room. These would be used for one and two person units in the future, and would mainly accommodate the elderly. In addition, many of the existing residents of So Uk, Oi Man, etc, were moving away to home ownership schemes, leaving the estates to be occupied by elderly parents who did not wish to move, or to be replaced by new elderly tenants. This poses the important question of whether Housing Department should consciously allow middle aged estates, which would in future be used mainly to house the elderly, to develop a predominantly elderly demographic profile. Most of these estates are attractive and centrally located. However, the social consequences of creating predominantly elderly communities are self-evident.

4.6 It was recommended that both past and current trends should be taken into account in the context of planning new housing estates and redeveloping old estates to avoid future concentrations of elderly persons in ageing estates. The concentration of elderly people in some very old estates is as high as 27%. The age imbalance problem in very old

estates is compounded by inadequate facilities and amenities. The life cycle concept of converting kindergartens to primary schools, and primary schools to secondary schools to cater for natural ageing of an estates' population, could be applied to facilities for the elderly. The level of provision of support services in older estates is inadequate and the conversion principle might not be easy to apply. Middle-aged housing estates offer more scope for modifying and recycling existing support facilities.

4.7 The Working Group welcomed the redevelopment of very old estates with large numbers of elderly residents where readjustment of facilities and support services is not physically possible or financially viable. On redevelopment, the elderly could be redistributed to New Towns with appropriate support systems in-situ. This would enable the elderly to be cared for within the community for as long as possible and would reverse the trend towards gradual evolution of predominantly elderly communities as an estate ages. The Working Group recommended that estates such as So Uk with a high proportion of small flats and community amenities capable of renovation and adaptation should be retained. Some thought might be given to modifying a proportion of the existing flats to larger family flats, to balance the composition of the estate population. Priority for allocation of these larger family flats should be given to existing estate residents with elderly family members.

4.8 It was noted that forward planning is complicated by constantly changing trends. For example, residents of N.T. estates such as Tuen Mun were eager to buy HOS flats in more urbanized areas whereas people tended to stay longer in some of the older, more centrally located estates. Because of this difficulty, the Working Group felt that the Housing Authority should give first priority to providing adequate facilities for the 0 - 25 and 60 plus age groups. The 25 - 60 age group is financially and physically better equipped to provide for their own needs.

### **The Provision of Community Support Services, Residential Services and Infirmiry Beds**

4.9 The Working Group noted the provision of support services according to existing planning standards :

#### *(I) Day Care Centre for the Elderly*

4.10 Day Care Centres for the Elderly provide assistance to elderly persons in declining health, who are still mobile. It aims to help those who are dependent on family members for preparation of meals, attention, or personal care, but who cannot be cared for by relatives on a full-time basis. Day Care Centres provide meals; personal care and attention including personal hygiene; escort services to medical consultations; laundry services; nursing care; physical exercise; occupational therapy, and social and recreational activities. The planning standard for a day care centre is around one per district of 250,000 general population. One additional M/E would be provided for large districts of 500,000 or more. According to existing planning standards, there is a shortfall in all districts except Wanchai. By 1994, the demand will be satisfied in all areas except Kwai Tsing; Sha Tin and Tuen Mun.

#### *(II) Multi-service Centres for the Elderly*

4.11 Multi-Service Centres provide a variety of community support services on a district basis to meet the various needs of elderly people in the district. They provide opportunities for social interaction; offer counselling services to clients with a view to helping them resolve personal and family problems; provide domestic help to elderly persons who are infirm or weak and for whom help from family members or friends is not available; provide suitable and nutritionally adequate but inexpensive canteen meals to those who have no mobility problems, but who might be unable or find it inconvenient to cook for themselves; provide a laundry service for those who are in need, and educate the elderly and the public at large on the problems associated with ageing. The planning standard for Multi Service Centres for the Elderly is around one per district of 250,000 general population. One additional D/E is provided for large districts of 500,000 or more. No official shortfall exists in Eastern; Mong Kok; Tai Po; Tuen Mun; Wan Chair Yau Tsim and Yuen Long. By 1994, the demand will be satisfied in all areas except Islands; Kwun Tong; Kwai Tsing; Sha Tin and Tuen Mun.

#### *(III) Social Centres for the Elderly*

4.12 Social Centres for the Elderly provide organized activities to meet the recreational and social needs of old people in the community. The centres are open daily during weekdays for old people in the neighbourhood; some centres are

also open on Saturdays. Social Centres for the Elderly provide leisure facilities including common room facilities for old people to view television, read newspapers, play chess, etc; group activities including indoor and outdoor activities; talks on health, road safety, the problems of ageing, civic education, news and family life education; counselling services; and mutual help services including home visiting, home help, etc. The current planning standard is one social centre for the elderly for every 30,000 general population. This standard is applied flexibly, according to the demographic profile and the geographical context. No official shortfall exists in Kwai Tsing; Sai Kung and Yau Tsim. The biggest shortfalls are in Eastern (-10); Kowloon City (-6); Sha Tin (-5); Tsuen Wan (-5) and Yuen Long (-5). By 1994, shortfalls will continue to exist in Central and Western (-1); Tai Po (-1); Tsuen Wan (-1); Tuen Mun (-3); Wan Chai (-1); and Yuen Long (-3).

#### *(IV) Residential Care*

4.13 Homes for the Aged provide a service similar to that provided by the Meals Service of a hostel for the Elderly. The Territory-wide planning ratio is 10 places per thousand elderly aged 60 and above. Care and Attention Homes provide residential facilities and general personal care for elderly persons whose requirement for nursing care does not exceed 2 hours per week. A revised Territory-wide planning ratio of 8 persons per thousand population aged 60 and above was introduced in 1988. In view of the fact that the health of residents in Homes for the Aged often deteriorated as they grew older, care and attention units are now established within Homes for the Aged. C&A units provided in Homes for the Aged in public housing estates have to be restricted to around 50 places because of the need to locate the C&A unit on the ground floor. Nevertheless, provision of C&A units in PHEs is proceeding faster than purpose built C&A Homes. This not only helps to alleviate the demand for C&A places, but also facilitates the internal transfer of frail, elderly persons without undue social or emotional disruption. The table at Appendix A (WGHE 12/89) indicates that the present shortfall in Homes for the Aged and Care and Attention Homes will be largely satisfied by 1994.

#### *(V) Infirmaries for the Elderly*

4.14 Infirmaries are provided for the chronically ill or disabled who no longer require intensive medical treatment but still need long term hospitalization. Infirmaries help to alleviate overcrowding in major hospitals and are less labour intensive and less expensive to operate. Infirmary care is provided for persons with chronic physical and mental conditions requiring constant nursing care in excess of 2 hours per week and some medical supervision; persons with medically controlled physical and mental conditions, or persons with unstable health conditions who cannot be adequately cared for in a Care and Attention Home. Infirmaries are provided on a territory-wide basis using a planning ratio of 5 general infirmary beds for 1,000 elderly persons aged 65 and above and 1 mental infirmary bed per 10,000 population. The table at Appendix A (WGHE 12/89) indicates that the shortfall in infirmary beds should be substantially reduced to around 303 bed spaces by 1994.

#### *(VI) Home Help Service*

4.15 Home Help Services are provided to meet the needs of individuals and families who are incapable of looking after themselves or maintaining the normal functioning of their households. Services include meal delivery, personal care, escort to medical consultation, and laundry services, as well as home management services. The object of the service is to support and strengthen the family, prevent family breakdown, and provide a community care service as a temporary or emergency arrangement to individuals and families to allow those in need to continue to be cared for in the community.

4.16 Home help services were originally provided under the Elderly Programme and the Family Welfare Programme. A unified home help policy was adopted in 1982, since when home help services have been provided on a district basis for the elderly, the disabled, and the family. A joint study on the social service needs of the elderly in Hong Kong in 1976 by the Hong Kong Council of Social Service and the Social Welfare Department, estimated the demand for this service for planning purposes to be 12.6 persons per thousand elderly population.

4.17 Home help services are operated on two distinct models. The central kitchen-based model has a central kitchen where meals are prepared and distributed to the clients by the home helpers who, if required, will render other services to their clients at the same time, e.g. personal hygiene service. There is also a central laundry. The central kitchen-

based model is staffed by one social work assistant, one welfare worker, seven home helpers, one clerical assistant, one driver, one cook and one laundry amah. The home-based model operates at the client's home and has neither central kitchen nor central laundry, as home helpers go to clients' homes to cook and wash for them. This model is more flexible in meeting the individual needs of clients. The home-based model is staffed by one social work assistant, one welfare worker, ten home helpers and one clerical assistant. The Social Welfare Department recently reviewed the scope and operation of the Home Help Service and recommended improvements, based on recommendations made by the Social Welfare Department and the Hong Kong Council of Social Service Joint Working Group. A paper, which seeks to strengthen and improve services, will shortly be submitted to the Social Welfare Advisory Committee for consideration.

4.18 Home Help Services are provided on a territory-wide basis by voluntary agencies. In principle, every district including Islands is covered, although planning standards are currently under review. The distribution of service teams is listed at Appendix B (WGHE 12/89).

4.19 A recent survey of elderly persons rehoused under the elderly persons priority scheme and single persons rehoused through the compassionate quota in shared accommodation had revealed a largely unmet demand for home help and other support services. However, only 5% of those interviewed had expressed a desire to transfer to Sheltered Housing, Homes for the Elderly, or other institutional establishments. Of persons housed under the Elderly Persons Priority Scheme, only 1% were receiving home help service and community nursing service against an estimated 5% demand. Of persons housed under the Compassionate Quota, 6% received home help service and 3% community nursing service against an estimated 10% demand.

4.20 The acute shortage of home help services is an area SWD plans to improve on. There have been numerous complaints from PHE tenants concerning the hygiene problems of tenants housed under the compassionate scheme, indicating a need for more home support services. It was noted that 80% of persons housed under the compassionate quota are males. It was also noted that only 15% of males are in care and attention homes compared to 85% of females. It is possible that many of the tenants housed under the compassionate housing quota represent a largely unmet demand for home support services. The survey also showed that 63% of tenants housed under the Elderly Persons Priority Scheme receive domestic assistance from their co-tenants. This indicates that the promotion of volunteer services among the elderly is an area that deserves stronger attention. It was suggested that one aspect of coping with the shortfall in social support services could be the introduction of mobile bath teams, as in Japan. This would be a great help where the elderly could not bathe themselves and where the amenities in some of the older estates did not lend themselves to the assisted bathing of the elderly. The WGHE acknowledged the need for this type of facility but noted the difficulties of practical implementation in the urban Hong Kong context.

4.21 The long waiting list for care and attention homes pointed to a lack of care within the community. In order to help prevent the elderly from deteriorating, the Working Group recommended that all support services should be strengthened. This included increased public education on the importance of medical and dental care in old age, healthier diets, appropriate exercise, health aids, and available recreational activities. All types of non-institutional accommodation for the elderly should be expanded with a view to maintaining the elderly in the community for as long as possible. Institutional homes should be seen as a continuum of the housing needs of the elderly, but must be provided relative to the needs of old people. For example, an old person capable of living in a family home or in sheltered housing should not end up in a care and attention home or an infirmary simply because of lack of appropriate housing or adequate community support services. Whereas institutionalization was the only alternative to an adequate supply of elderly housing and support services, it was both socially undesirable and financially more expensive to provide.

4.22 With regard to community support services, the Working Group noted that the greatest areas of shortfall existed in Day Care Centres (D/E); Multi Service Centres (M/E), and Social Centres for the Elderly (S/E), in that order. It was initially proposed that a priority list be drawn up, and that each District be provided with at least one D/E followed by one M/E and one S/E, before increasing the provision in other districts. However, it was noted that many sites had already been allocated for these facilities in housing estates under planning and that construction could not proceed independently or be accelerated. The Working Group, noting that the problem centred on provision of sites, and that funds had already been earmarked for this programme, recommended that premises should now be identified and

appropriate facilities established to meet the most urgent areas of shortfall.

4.23 It was noted that the demand for residential services was calculated on the basis of total elderly population, and that the demand equation remained constant. However, community support services were calculated on the total population of individual districts, although the ratio of elderly to total population varied from district to district. For example, D/E and M/E were provided on the basis of one per district population of 250,000, and S/E for every 30,000 head of general population in a district. Whereas the elderly population would increase from 714,230 in 1989 to 847,510 in 1994, the total estimated planning demand for M/E reduced from 26 in 1989 compared to 25 in 1994. The contradictory results of existing planning standards calculated on the basis of total general population could best be demonstrated by comparing planned demand and provision of M/E in districts with elderly populations in excess of 30,000 :

<b>1994 Multi-Service Centres for the Elderly</b>						
<b>District</b>	<b>PHE Elderly Population 1994</b>	<b>Total Elderly Population 1994</b>	<b>Demand</b>	<b>Provision</b>	<b>Shortfall</b>	<b>Surplus</b>
Kwun Tong	66,570	91,600	2	1	1	-
Eastern	27,818	85,150	2	2	-	-
Wong Tai Sin	60,568	75,530	1	2	-	1
Sham Shui Po	34,376	70,410	1	2	-	1
Kowloon City	18,472	63,950	2	2	-	-
Kwai Tsing	48,995	63,930	2	1	1	-
Sha Tin	41,762	57,540	2	1	1	-
Central & Western	3,220	45,920	1	1	-	-
Southern	24,944	37,400	1	1	-	-
Wanchai	196	37,140	1	1	-	-
Yuen Long	11,253	35,750	1	1	-	-
Tuen Mun	20,659	31,550	2	1	1	-
			18	16	4	2

4.24 The planning demand in areas such as Wong Tai Sin and Sham Shui Po, with large elderly populations of 75,530 and 70,410 persons respectively, was estimated to be only 1 ME, whereas there was an estimated planning demand for 2 ME in four other districts with smaller elderly populations, including Tuen Mun, with an elderly population of only 31,550.

4.25 Because of the size of the problem, the Working Group agreed that their first priority would be to concentrate on the adequacy of the PHE provision. They queried whether PHE shortfall should be assessed on a district basis or by groups of PHE blocks or estates. They noted that some PHE's with no facilities were served by a nearby facility in the same district. However they did not feel that it was reasonable to provide facilities such as day-care services for the elderly on a district basis, whereas home-help services and meals service could be district based. Ideally, support services for the elderly should not be more than 10 minutes walking distance away. Sha Tin, for example, covered such

a spread-out area that access to support services for the elderly might prove difficult. Accessibility should be a major consideration, even if the district had been supplied with its full planning-standard quota of support services. It was unreasonable to centralize day care centres on a district basis, because of their nature and the inherent need for accessibility, unless an intricate system of bus collection could be worked out. This problem highlighted the inadequacy of current planning standards and the Working Group recommended that standards be reviewed on the basis of location and the size of the elderly population. In future, it might be more appropriate to consider the ageing of a PHE and make advance plans to reshuffle floors and facilities to match the estate profile.

4.26 The Working Group noted that SWD was now looking at enhanced planning standard ratios for social centres for the elderly and the concept of merged services in the same set of premises. Existing welfare and community services were too compartmentalized, and did not make full use of the limited accommodation available. However, they were concerned that the design of many PHE blocks might restrict the provision of a cross-section of welfare facilities. They noted that the Housing Authority would no longer consider designing huge monolithic blocks, such as the Trident model, to accommodate a standard-plan care and attention home layout on one floor, as these blocks were uncomfortable to live in. It was preferable that blocks did not exceed 6 family flats per Wing. They noted that the Harmony design could accommodate most types of services, and suggested that this layout could be linked at ground floor level to accommodate care and attention homes on one level. A second fire escape could also be considered for the C & A unit if accommodated on upper floors.

4.27 The Working Group recommended that all district or PHE based planning standards for elderly facilities should be expressed in terms of elderly rather than general population. Pending the revision of standards, interim measures should be taken to correct the inadequacy of provision in estates with a high density of elderly persons. The percentage of elderly in PHE's ranged from 3% to 27%. Whether or not a problem existed would depend on the overall size and location of the estate and the availability of adequate facilities in the vicinity. In certain geographical areas there were few, if any, public housing estates and it would be necessary to identify other suitable premises for residential or community support services.

4.28 While the WGHE acknowledged that it was not responsible for reviewing standards set by other Working Groups, or making firm planning ratio recommendations, it was thought that it would be beneficial if their observations on the shortcomings inherent in the present planning system, and the problems generated by adherence to existing planning standards, could be reflected to the appropriate steering groups.

#### **Provision of Urgent Remedial Measures in Public Housing Estates with High Concentrations of Elderly Persons. (More than 20% in the 60 plus age-group)**

4.29 The Working Group noted that the average elderly population in housing estates was about 12.5%. Older estates in urban areas tended to have higher concentrations of elderly persons. Twenty PHE's with elderly populations in excess of 20% were identified. (Appendix VIII) It was observed that there was a high overall shortfall of community support services in districts where these twenty estates were located. Fifteen of these estates were earmarked for redevelopment, leaving 5 estates unprovided for. These five estates comprised Sai Wan; North Point; Nam Shan; So Uk and Choi Hung. It was proposed that priority should be given to improving the support services for the elderly in these 5 estates in order to maximise the use of limited resources. Choi Hung, So Uk and Nam Shan, which had sizeable elderly populations, should be dealt with first, and it was proposed that, as an emergency stop-gap measure, an additional S/E be set up in each of these estates.

4.30 The Working Group proposed that special estate social workers (ESWs) should be employed on a trial basis to coordinate and train the elderly in organizing their own activities and implementing voluntary-work schemes. The scheme should be given an adequate trial period of two years to gauge its usefulness. Elderly people should be motivated and encouraged to reach out to other old people, and to build up social networking schemes. Initially, they could be mobilized and directed in their volunteer work by Estate Social Workers. This was a productive and flexible scheme, especially as most of the S/E in housing estates were already oversubscribed. If the scheme proved successful, it could eventually be extended to all housing estates.

4.31 The WGHE proposed that Social Administration Students could be taken on for a 10-week period, to assist ESWs,

thereby performing the practical element of their studies, and could be paid some remuneration under the hire of summer students scheme.

4.32 The Working Group noted that the implementation of urgent remedial measures such as the additional S/E scheme did not absolve government of policy responsibility to provide adequate facilities in all estates with high concentrations of elderly persons. As and when standards of provision were reviewed, steps should be taken to redress the problems. This might include short term measures in respect of the 15 PHE's with high concentrations of elderly, which were earmarked for eventual redevelopment. Additional activities directed at meeting the needs of elderly residents should be organized either by Government, welfare agencies, volunteer groups, or the elderly themselves. However, opportunities should be taken to acquire any space which Housing Department could release to organize community-support activities. This might involve the conversion of some existing flats where no other accommodation was available for this purpose.

### *Conclusion*

4.33 With refined projections of estate population profiles in hand, the WGHE recommended that the Housing Authority and Social Welfare Department should redetermine the acceptability of the existing and planned provision of estate facilities and support services, and ascertain what needed to be injected to bring the estates up to a reasonable standard.

### Provision of an Emergency Alarm System in Residential Accommodation for the Elderly

4.34 The Housing Authority provides sheltered housing for able-bodied elderly persons in public housing estates, based on a standard provision of 150 places for each new estate with more than 3,000 flats. Each sheltered housing scheme is manned around the clock by resident wardens. Accommodation units are linked to a panic alarm system by way of an alarm button installed in each bedroom. When pressed, the alarm button activates a red light and buzzer on a communication board in the warden's room, indicating the flat number of the originator. The warden on duty will immediately respond to the call.

4.35 The Housing Authority also houses elderly people through the Elderly Priority Scheme which started in 1982. About 1,000 flats are allocated to elderly applicants each year. Current allocation exceeds 4,500 flats and provides about 13,000 places. In addition, 3,700 single person flats provide shared accommodation for singleton elderly. Although most of these elderly people are able-bodied, they are all over 60 years of age and many of them are living independently. If they fall ill, they need care and support. However, they are not at present provided with an alarm system.

4.36 In view of the increase in elderly persons living independently in public housing estates, a panic alarm system to enable them to get help in an emergency was thought to be beneficial. A radio alarm system which could easily be installed or removed without conversion work had been extensively used in the United Kingdom. When the alarm was triggered, a signal would be transmitted to a computer in a district-based control centre operated by the Housing Department which would be manned around the clock. The elderly person's personal data would be printed out by the computer, including personal address; the addresses and telephone numbers of friends or next of kin nearby; medical records, etc. Upon receiving the alarm, the control operator would immediately respond by alerting stand-by personnel including resident wardens, resident estate caretakers, voluntary workers, or such friends or next of kin as are available at that time, in order that immediate assistance can be provided.

4.37 The radio alarm system, which was inexpensive, had been proven effective in the United Kingdom. If the scheme were implemented successfully in public housing estates, it could be extended in due course to elderly persons living alone in private tenements. Furthermore, arrangements could be made for existing alarm systems in individual sheltered housing schemes to be switched through to the district control centre. This could reduce the number of shift-duty staff currently required and provide savings in staffing costs.

4.38 The Working Group, recommended the extension of the alarm system to elderly residents of public housing estates who lived alone. If successful, they proposed that the scheme be extended to elderly residents living alone in private accommodation. It was proposed that the scheme should be self-financing. In the case of accommodation



provided by the Housing Authority, the cost could be partially offset by staff - cost savings and the balance reflected in monthly rental fees.

4.39 The Housing Department would submit a detailed costing exercise to the Housing Authority, comparing optional systems, including those employing existing telephone lines, and highlighting the potential for off-setting savings in staff costs.

## **CHAPTER 5 ESTATE SOCIAL SERVICE FOR THE ELDERLY**

5.1 Working Group noted that, with the exception of elderly people living with families or in sheltered housing, the majority of the elderly had to look after themselves. It was therefore proposed that an outreaching service should be organized, manned entirely by able-bodied elderly and mobilized by an 'Estate Social Worker' created for that purpose. The Working Group considered the operational options available and initially suggested that the Estate Social Worker could be centred in a Social Centre for the Elderly or Multi Service Centre. They would supervise volunteers; handle referrals/requests for assistance; keep records and help elderly volunteers organize social and recreational activities for other residents. Apart from some organizational assistance or advice from a social worker, the volunteers would be fairly autonomous and self-motivated. It was alternatively proposed that Estate Social Workers could be employed by the Housing Department and attached to the Estate Management Office. It was intended that this type of outreaching service be implemented as an informal, low-budget, community- motivation scheme. Members felt that whether or not the scheme was centred around the M/E, S/E or Estate Management Office, the elderly volunteers should be given assignments in response to referrals, rather than just left to seek out informal socialization with persons who might be at risk.

5.2 The views of voluntary agencies were sought by the HKCSS. It was confirmed that the demand for such a service existed, and that it be introduced as soon as planning targets and staffing standards were agreed. It was suggested that the scheme might have a better chance of success if ESWs were located in the management offices of PHEs; this would strengthen co-ordination and mutual support between housing management staff and ESWs. However, this might give rise to overlapping of work or poor co-ordination of services between the staff of M/Es and S/Es situated nearby, and ESWs would also be deprived of professional support. While the function of M/Es and S/Es could be expanded to include estate social services as one of their major tasks, it was felt that this would be unlikely to achieve the same degree of co-ordination and support generated by the location of ESWs in housing management offices. At present, Block Officers of PHEs maintained a list of elderly and handicapped persons and kept a watchful eye on them. Tenants were also notified of support services available to them in the quarterly estate newsletter.

5.3 If the Estate Social Worker scheme were implemented, the names of elderly tenants housed under the EPS and CQ schemes could be forwarded to the Estate Social Worker and volunteer outreach service for follow up. The HKCSS emphasised that the different social services provided in PHEs must be streamlined and co-ordinated to avoid any overlap in duties and responsibilities, and to ensure parity of staffing standards.

### **Conclusion**

5.4 After much consideration, the Working Group recommended that there were strategic advantages in locating Estate Social Workers in Public Housing Estate Management Offices. Estate Social Workers should be recruited by the Housing Department into the Estate Management Grade at an appropriate level.

5.5 Having regard to the shortage of social workers, it was proposed that University and Polytechnic graduates in social administration could be employed as Estate Social Workers. Social administration students could also be employed to give paid assistance under the employment of summer students scheme, thereby helping the students to fulfil the practical work requirement of their study programmes.

5.6 The Working Group recommended that the Estate Social Service for the Elderly be implemented on a trial basis for a period of two years in selected estates with a high complement of elderly persons, to ascertain the demand for the service and to establish standards and mode of operation. If the scheme proved successful, it could eventually be

extended to all estates with a large elderly population.

5.7 The Working Group recommended that a joint steering group be formed with representatives from Housing Department, Social Welfare Department and the HKCSS to monitor and review the pilot scheme.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **MEETING THE HOUSING NEEDS OF ELDERLY PERSONS LIVING IN PRIVATE ACCOMMODATION**

#### **Estimated Demand for Public Housing for the Elderly**

6.1 According to the 1986 By-census, the elderly population of Hong Kong stood at 618,200. It grew by about 89,600 to approximately 707,800 in January 1988. Out of these 707,800, about 630,700 elderly persons were already adequately housed in various types of housing; a minority had income above the Waiting List limit. The balance of 77,100 forms the basis of committed and potential demand. This number includes more than 40,800 elderly persons with income below the Waiting List limit who are living in permanent private accommodation. However, not all may be in need of rehousing. A breakdown of these figures is provided at Appendix 1.

6.2 There is a committed demand for 1-person and 2-person flats for the elderly arising from the Housing Authority's redevelopment programme; clearance of Kowloon Walled City and squatter areas, and trawling exercises and clearance operations in Temporary Housing Areas. Committed demand has also to be met in rehousing compassionate or emergency cases and unrelated elderly persons under the Elderly Priority Scheme. For the period 1988/89 to 1990/91, the estimate of committed demand from one person and two person households is 5,600 and 9,060 units respectively. If no outstanding cases need to be carried over during this period, the committed demand will be represented by 6,640 one person and 14,770 two person households between 1991/92 and 1995/96.

6.3 There is also a potential demand from the private sector from elderly persons aged 60 or above who are within the G-Waiting List income limit. Demand by the elderly for one person and two person units may also be increased as a result of friction within extended families and desertion or abandonment by children as a result of emigration or purchase of HOS or private tenements. The Housing Department has estimated that the potential demand for 1-p and 2-p households between 1988/89 and 1990/91 will be 6,610 and 4,320 units respectively. Between 1991/92 and 1995/96 the demand will be 4,460 and 4,230 units. The overall estimated committed and potential demand for 1-p and 2-p units for the period 1988/89 to 1995/96 is shown at Appendix II.

#### **Projected Supply of Public Housing for the Elderly**

6.4 Supply of accommodation for 1-person and 2-person elderly households is composed of Sheltered Housing managed by the Housing Authority; Home cum Care and Attention Units managed by the Social Welfare Department and Voluntary Agencies in housing estates, and the Housing Authority's Elderly Priority Scheme. Casual vacancies in existing estates and flats in new estates are also available for housing eligible elderly persons as a result of rehousing operations.

6.5 The estimated supply of 1-p and 2-p units for the period 1988/89 to 1990/91 will be 7,646 and 8,094 respectively while the provision for the period 1991/92 to 1995/96 will be 8,793 1-p units and 10,631 2-p units for elderly households. The total estimated supply for the period 1988/89 to 1995/96 is shown at Appendix III.

#### **Estimated Shortfall in Supply of Public Housing for the Elderly**

6.6 The Housing Department estimates that the shortfall in respect of 1-p and 2-p elderly households for 1988/89 to 1990/91 will be about 3,314 and 5,736 units respectively. Between 1991/92 and 1995/96 there will be a deficiency of about 2,307 1-p and 8,369 2-p units. A detailed breakdown of these figures is given at Appendix IV.

#### **Housing Problems of Elderly Persons Living in Private Accommodation**

6.7 The WGHE recognises that many needy elderly persons over 60 years of age who live in private accommodation

face housing problems and may need rehousing in PHE's. A 1982 HKU study on the needs of the elderly estimated that, 5.54% of elderly persons occupying private accommodation had housing problems which necessitated transfer to public housing. By projecting this percentage, The HKCSS estimated that 39,746 elderly persons might require assistance with public housing in 1989. However, as at the end of 1988, only 13,728 could be provided by the H.A. under various special housing schemes for the elderly, leaving a possible unmet demand for 26,018 places. More up-to-date statistics will become available in late 1989 as a result of a recent HKU random sampling survey. The WGHE recommended that the Housing Authority should review current planning targets at that time with a view to accommodating the revised estimated shortfall.

6.8 The problems of elderly tenants living in bed space accommodation were highlighted by a random study of 150 elderly persons by the Mongkok Kaifong Association Social Service Centre in 1985. Approximately half of those interviewed did not wish to move, for various reasons, in spite of their poor living conditions. The reasons they gave included fear of poor co-tenant relationships in shared accommodation) moving from familiar surroundings; and fear of moving to remote areas. The WGHE recommended immediate remedial measures to improve living conditions such as strengthening community care facilities; mutual care networking, and encouraging physical improvement of the environment and facilities by landlords including improved fire-safety measures. It was also recommended that tenants be encouraged to move to public housing, where available, by counselling them on the different types of accommodation provided and removing anxieties relating to removal, shared accommodation, etc. Trial residency opportunities might also be made available for short periods, with counselling provided during that period. Long term measures suggested, included the provision of more singleton units for problem personality cases and provision of non-profit making hostels in urban areas operated by VA's or government.

6.9 Although Housing Department staff provided applicants and potential applicants with a fair understanding of facilities available, wider publicity could be given to this service. VA's could also help advise potential applicants through outreaching and counselling services. It was noted that HKCSS already provided a limited, non-subverted, outreaching service to some private housing areas.

6.10 The trial residency scheme was an innovative idea that would need to be developed on a practical basis. Possibly, those who could not adapt to an appointed area might be given a second opportunity elsewhere. The WGHE recommended that a trial residency scheme be further explored by the HD.

6.11 It was agreed that there was merit in providing various support services to maintain elderly people in existing private accommodation wherever possible, including provision of alarm systems, home-help, community nursing, and meal services. It was noted that the Housing Department provides accommodation for home help teams and it was recommended that this facility might be extended to cover private-sector requirements in the same district.

6.12 A 1987 Survey recorded the existence of 166 apartments which provided bedspaces for approximately 6500 persons. The majority of bedspace apartments were located in West Kowloon and they provided accommodation mainly to singletons and elderly persons in the lower income group. The 1986 By-Census revealed that, in March 1986, 3.5% (21,700) of the elderly population shared collective households with unrelated persons. Of the remaining 96.5% (596,456), 11.5% (70,865) lived alone, and 17.6% (107,258) lived with only one other person. The Working Group considered that the operation of hostels in urban areas represented a viable option which would be preferred by certain categories of elderly persons. Either the Government or the Housing Authority should be encouraged to purchase property in problematic, densely populated areas such as Mongkok, where housing or support services were severely limited or non-existent. These could be operated by voluntary agencies, and rentals would help to defray operating costs. The Working Group recommended that this proposal be given serious consideration.

## **CHAPTER 7 PUBLICITY CAMPAIGNS AND PUBLIC RELATIONS**

7.1 The Working Group recommended that a territory-wide campaign on 'Care for the Elderly' should be organized to advertise and promote the various schemes to be adopted by the Housing Department on the advice of the WGHE, thereby actively encouraging more young families to live with their elderly parents.

7.2 More active marketing of new public housing estates was needed to motivate elderly people to move to the New Towns where better support services could be provided. Housing Department could provide coach tours at regular intervals for elderly persons living in urban areas to encourage them to visit new estates and familiarize themselves with the amenities provided there. More organizations for the elderly in the New Towns should be encouraged to host estate lunches for elderly persons living in urban areas.

## **CHAPTER 8 SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **GENERAL CONCLUSIONS**

8.1 The Working Group summarized their general conclusions as follows:

8.2 As far as possible, elderly persons should be helped to remain in the community. To achieve this, community support services should be made more readily available, and elderly persons should be encouraged to make better use of them.

8.3 Efforts should be made to prevent elderly persons from deteriorating, thereby reducing their need for a more intensive, and often more expensive, form of care or housing. Priority should be given to expanding all housing services which cater specifically for the needs of the able-bodied elderly.

8.4 The transition from one form of housing (or care) to another, should be made as smooth as possible. Care for the elderly should be viewed as- a continuum of life-cycle related accommodation and support services and co-ordinated accordingly.

### **Ch.3 SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS, SUGGESTIONS AND PROPOSALS**

#### **ACCOMMODATION & RESIDENTIAL CARE**

##### **Elderly Persons Priority Scheme**

**Priority**

8.5 The WGHE recommends that families awaiting rehousing along with elderly parents (Elderly Parents Priority Scheme) should have their housing allocation 1 advanced by 2 years, provided that they had been registered on the waiting list for not less than 2 years.[paragraph 3.9]

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8.6 The WGHE recommends that the Elderly Parents Priority Scheme should not be restricted to families with elderly parents, but should be extended to include other dependent elderly relatives. [paragraph 3.9]

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##### **Sheltered Housing**

8.7 The WGHE recommends that in future, each public housing estate should have a sheltered housing unit appropriate to the level of demand, with Care and Attention Home, Home for the Aged, and other support services being provided as a flexible part of the integrated whole. It was also recommended that the standards of provision be reviewed from time to time with regard to the district demographic profile of elderly residents. [paragraph 3.22]

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##### **Hostels for the Elderly Priority**

8.8 The WGHE recommends that some of the existing Hostels for the Elderly eventually be converted to Care and Attention Homes for the Aged, and that Hostel tenants be rehoused in sheltered housing schemes within their own districts wherever possible. They also recommended that the remaining hostels be retained for certain categories of tenant who were uniquely suited to this type of service.[paragraph 3.27]

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##### **Homes for the Aged cum Care & Attention Units**

**Priority**

8.9 The WGHE recommends that some level of infirmary beds be retained in Home cum Care and Attention Units as this was in line with the concept of providing multi-faceted, life-cycle related, public housing and residential services. This would help to avoid social dislocation and the uprooting of elderly persons from a familiar environment when their physical condition

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deteriorated, and a greater degree of nursing care was required. [paragraph 3.34]

8.10 The WGHE notes the shortfall of care and attention places, and recommends that underutilized or vacant accommodation in PHE's might be modified to accommodate more Home cum Care & Attention Units. They also suggest that underutilized shop units, primary schools, kindergarten premises and restaurants in older estates with high concentrations of elderly persons be adapted to meet the specialist needs of the elderly. [paragraph 3.35]

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### **New Avenues To Public Housing**

### **Priority**

8.11 The WGHE recommends the introduction of a New Application Scheme for Families with Elderly Persons, whereby young families be allowed to apply with their elderly parents or dependents for two separate flats in the same PHE Block in New Towns. [paragraph 3.37].

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8.12 The WGHE recommends that a better mix of 1 person and 2 person flats be provided in standard blocks to facilitate the implementation of the 'New Application Scheme'. [paragraph 3.38]

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8.13 The WGHE recommends that more spacious flats, comparable to the Harmony Block Design, be constructed, with priority given to families with elderly persons. [paragraph 3.38]

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8.14 The WGHE recommends an enhancement scheme for existing tenants to encourage flat-sharing with elderly relatives. Young families in New Towns should be encouraged to add elderly parents or relatives from public housing or private tenancies to their households, and apply for larger flats in New Towns. Elderly Parents or relatives in New Towns should be allowed to add children or relatives in old urban estates to their tenancies and apply for transfers to larger flats in New Towns. (The WGHE noted that it would not be possible at this stage to allow elderly parents in New Towns to add relatives or children from private accommodation to their tenancies, unless such relatives were on the Housing Department's waiting list and eligible for allocation of a flat.) [paragraph 3.40]

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8.15 The WGHE recommends that elderly family members be allowed to transfer to estates in New Towns where their children or close relatives live, and permitted to occupy a separate flat if required, and accommodation available. Close relatives or children of elderly persons to be allowed to transfer from urban areas or other New Towns and be permitted to occupy separate flats where appropriate and available. (The WGHE noted that it would not be feasible to allow any transfers from New Towns to Urban Areas.) [paragraph 3.41]

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### **Conclusion**

### **Priority**

8.16 The WGHE recommends that in future, Public Housing Estates should be built or redesigned to provide a comprehensive system of demographically related accommodation. Modular units, including sheltered housing, homes for the aged cum care and attention/infirmary units, and home-help services should be capable of expansion or flexible deployment according to the changing demographic profile of the area. This would meet the needs of tenants appropriate to different stages of ageing and ensure a smooth progression within the community from one category to another, thereby avoiding social dislocation. [paragraph 3.45]

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## **Ch 4 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE ELDERLY AND EXISTING & PLANNED SUPPORT SERVICES IN PUBLIC HOUSING ESTATES AND BY DISTRICT**

### **A Demographic Profile of the Elderly in Public Housing Estate**

### **Priority**

8.17 The WGHE recommends that both past and future trends be taken into account in the context of planning new housing estates, in order to avoid future concentrations of elderly persons in ageing estates. [paragraph 4.6]

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8.18 The WGHE recommends that older estates such as So Uk, with a high proportion of small flats and community amenities capable of renovation and 1 adaptation, should be retained. Some thought might be given to modifying a proportion of the existing flats to larger family flats, in order to balance the composition of the estate population. Priority for allocation of these large family flats should be given to existing estate residents with elderly family members. [paragraph 4.7]

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### **The Provision of Community Support Services, Residential Services and Infirmary Beds**

8.19 The WGHE recommends that all types of community support services be strengthened, including public education, and that non-institutional accommodation be expanded with a view to maintaining the elderly in the community for as long as possible. [paragraph 4.21] 1

8.20 The WGHE recommends that premises should be identified and appropriate facilities established to meet the shortfall in respect of Day Care Centres for the Elderly, Multi-Service Centres for the Elderly and Social Centres for the Elderly, in that priority order. [paragraph 4.22] 1

8.21 The WGHE recommends that planning standards of community support services such as Day Care Centres and Multi Service Centres for the Elderly be reviewed on the basis of population profile, location, and the need, where appropriate, for easy access, and not just on the basis of hypothetical planning ratios. [paragraph 4.25] 1

8.22 The WGHE recommends that all district or PHE-based planning standards for elderly facilities be expressed in terms of elderly, rather than general population. [paragraph 4.27] 1

8.23 The WGHE recommends that their observations on the shortcomings inherent in the present planning system, as well as the problems generated by rigid adherence to existing, district-based planning standards, should be reflected to the appropriate steering groups responsible for reappraising planning standards. [paragraph 4.28] 1

### **Provision of Urgent Remedial Measures in Public Housing Estates with High Concentrations of Elderly Persons**

8.24 The WGHE recommends that priority should be given to improving the support services for the elderly in 5 estates which have high concentrations of elderly persons (over 20%) and which are not scheduled for redevelopment.[paragraph 4.29] 1

8.25 The WGHE recommends that, as an emergency stop-gap measure, priority should be given to providing additional S/E in 3 Estates, namely, Choi Hung, So Uk and Nam Shan Estate. [paragraph 4.29] 1

8.26 The WGHE recommends that special Estate Social Workers be provided to organize outreaching volunteer groups on a trial basis in these estates and that the Estate Social Worker Scheme be given an adequate trial basis of two years in order to gauge its usefulness. If the scheme proved successful, it could eventually be extended to all housing estates. [paragraph 4.30] 1

8.27 The WGHE recommends that Social Administration Work Students be employed to assist Estate Social Workers under the hire of summer students scheme and to help them gain relevant experience. [paragraph 4.31] 1

8.28 The WGHE recommends that steps should be taken to redress the problem of inadequate facilities in all estates with high concentrations of elderly persons as and when the standards of provision are reviewed. This might include short term measures in respect of the 15 PHE's with high concentrations of elderly which were scheduled for eventual redevelopment. Additional activities directed at meeting the needs of elderly residents could be organised by Government, welfare agencies, volunteer groups, or the elderly themselves. However, opportunities should also be taken to acquire any space which Housing Department could release, to organize community-support activities. This might involve the conversion of some existing flats where no other accommodation was available for this purpose. [paragraph 4.32] 2

### **Conclusion**

8.29 The WGHE recommends that, with refined projections of estate population profiles in hand, the Housing Department and Social Welfare Department should redetermine the acceptability of the existing and planned provision of estate facilities and support services, and ascertain what needed to be injected to bring the estates up to a reasonable standard.

### **Emergency Alarm System**

8.30 The WGHE recommends the extension of the emergency alarm system to elderly residents of public housing estates who live alone. If successful, they propose that the scheme be extended to elderly residents living alone in private accommodation. The WGHE recommends that the scheme 1

should be self-financing. [paragraph 4.38]

## **Ch.5 ESTATE SOCIAL SERVICE FOR THE ELDERLY**

### **Priority**

8.31 The WGHE recommends that an Estate Social Worker Scheme be implemented to mobilize community volunteer outreaching teams. [paragraph 5.1]

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8.32 The WGHE suggests that volunteers should be given assignments in response to referrals rather than being left to seek out informal socialization with persons who might be at risk. [paragraph 5.1]

8.33 The WGHE recommends that the names of elderly tenants housed under the EPS and CQ schemes be forwarded to Estate Social Workers for follow-up. [paragraph 5.3]

8.34 The WGHE recommends that Estate Social Workers should be based in Public Housing Estate Management Offices. [paragraph 5.4]

8.35 The WGHE recommends that Estate Social Workers should be employed by the Housing Department and recruited into the Housing Management Grade at an appropriate level. [paragraph 5.4]

8.36 Having regard to the shortage of social workers, the WGHE recommends that University and Polytechnic graduates in social administration be employed as Estate Social Workers. Social administration students could also be employed under the employment of summer students scheme; this would help students fulfil the practical work requirement of their study programmes. [paragraph 5.5]

8.37 The WGHE recommends that the Estate Social Service for the Elderly be implemented on a trial basis for a period of two years in selected estates with a high complement of elderly persons. If the scheme proved successful, it could eventually be expanded to all estates with large elderly populations. [paragraph 5.6]

8.38 The WGHE recommends that a joint steering group be formed with representatives from Housing Department, Social Welfare Department, and the HKCSS to monitor and review the pilot scheme. [paragraph 5.7]

## **Ch.6 MEETING THE HOUSING NEEDS OF ELDERLY PERSONS LIVING IN PRIVATE ACCOMMODATION**

### **Housing Problems of Elderly Persons Living in Private Accommodation**

### **Priority**

8.39 The WGHE recommends that the Housing Authority review current planning targets for housing the elderly when the results of a HKU Survey on the housing needs of the elderly become available in late 1989. [paragraph 6.7]

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8.40 The WGHE recommends that remedial measures be taken to strengthen community care facilities; organize mutual-care networking, and encourage improved fire-safety measures and physical improvement of the environment and facilities by landlords of private housing. [paragraph 6.8]

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8.41 The WGHE recommends that elderly tenants occupying sub-standard private accommodation be encouraged to move to public housing, where available, by counselling them on the different types of accommodation provided and removing anxieties relating to removal, shared accommodation, etc. [paragraph 6.8]

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8.42 The WGHE recommends that Trial Residency opportunities be made available for short periods, with counselling provided during the adjustment period. Those who could not adapt to an appointed area might be given a second opportunity elsewhere. [paragraph 6.8; 6.10]

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8.43 The WGHE recognises that there is merit in providing various support services to maintain elderly people in existing private accommodation wherever possible, including provision of emergency alarm systems; home-help; community nursing; and meal services. The WGHE noted that the Housing Department provides accommodation for Home Help Teams and

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recommends that this facility might be extended to cover private-sector requirements in the same district. [paragraph 6.11]

8.44 The WGHE considers that the operation of hostels in urban areas represents a viable rehousing option which might be preferred by some categories of 1 elderly persons. They recommend that either the government or the Housing Authority should be encouraged to purchase property in problematic, densely populated areas such as Mongkok, where housing or support services are severely limited or non-existent. These hostels could be operated by voluntary agencies, and the rentals would help to defray operating costs. The Working Group recommends that this proposal be given serious consideration. [paragraph 6.12]

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## **Ch 7 PUBLICITY CAMPAIGNS AND PUBLIC RELATIONS**

### **Priority**

8.45 The WGHE recommends that a territory-wide campaign be organized on 'Care for the Elderly', to promote the various schemes adopted by the 1 Housing Authority on the advice of the WGHE, thereby actively encouraging more young families to live with their elderly parents. [paragraph 7.1]

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8.46 The WGHE recommends employing more active marketing techniques to motivate elderly people to move to New Towns where better support services could be provided. They suggest that Housing Department provide coach tours at regular intervals for elderly persons living in urban areas, to encourage them to visit new estates and familiarize themselves with the amenities provided there. Organizations for the elderly in New Towns could also be encouraged to host estate lunches for elderly persons living in urban areas. [paragraph 7.2]

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