

THE HONG KONG HOUSING AUTHORITY

Memorandum for the Complaints Committee

Complaints Statistics for 1998 and for the first two quarters of 1999

PURPOSE

This paper serves to give Members an overview of the public complaints received and handled by the Housing Department in 1998 and in the first two quarters of 1999.

Number of Complaints

2. In 1998, the Housing Department received a total of 7 151 complaints, with an average of 596 cases per month, while in the first two quarters of 1999, 2 216 complaints were received, averaging 369 cases a month. As compared with the total of 8 031 cases in 1997, the number of complaints received in 1998 decreased by 11%.

3. The chart at **Annex A** shows that a general downward trend in the number of complaints received per quarter has been sustained from 1997 to June 1999.

Nature of Complaints

4. The distribution of complaints by nature is shown at **Annexes B1 and B2**. The majority of the complaints for 1998 and for the first two quarters of 1999 concerned building and environment related matters. Further breakdown of the complaints under the category of building and environment is shown at **Annexes C1 and C2**. The relatively high number of complaints received under this category can be attributed to the gradual aging of some of the housing estates which exacerbates the maintenance problem. The high

population density in the estates, the heavy pedestrian flow in the adjoining shopping centres and the residents' habit of cleanliness also affect the hygiene condition in the estates.

Channels of Complaints

5. Most of the complaints received were lodged by members of the public direct, while the rest were referred by the Chief Executive's Office, Members of the Legislative Council/Provisional Municipal Services Councils/District Boards, Housing Bureau, and Office of the Ombudsman.

6. Apart from filing in complaint letters or complaining to the estate management offices direct, other channels are available for the public to lodge their complaints or express their views. These include the 24-hour hotlines (Rental Hotline 2712 2712 and Purchase Hotline 2712 8000) and the complaint forms. A dedicated complaint fax line (No. 2624 5685) has also been installed to facilitate the forwarding of complaints by the public. Breakdown of the source of complaints received in 1998 and in the first two quarters of 1999 is shown at **Annexes D1 and D2**.

Handling of Complaints

7. Under the performance pledge, all complaints received will be handled immediately, otherwise an interim reply will be given within 10 days and a substantive reply sent out within 21 days on receipt of complaint. In case a substantive reply cannot be given within the specified time, the complainant will be notified in writing of the relevant progress and be informed of the updated situation every month. In 1998 and in the first two quarters of 1999, the average time taken to handle a complaint case was 7.5 days. This aptly reflects the proactive attitude and high efficiency of the Department staff in handling the complaints.

Complaints referred from The Ombudsman

8. The Ombudsman has referred 330 and 139 cases to the Department in 1998 and in the first two quarters of 1999 respectively. A breakdown by nature of the complaints referred from The Ombudsman is shown at **Annexes E1 and E2**.

9. Although the Department ranks the first on The Ombudsman's list in terms of the number of complaints received, cases involving mal-administration which warrant formal investigation are few. Of the 330 cases referred by the Ombudsman in 1998, 31 cases (9.4%) were for formal investigation, while in the first two quarters of 1999, 6 cases (4.3%) out of 139 cases were referred for formal investigation. For the rest of complaints, the majority were simple cases which do not merit formal investigation and were referred to the Department for direct reply to the complainant under the Internal Complaints Handling (INCH) Programme. There were also cases which The Ombudsman has enquired about the case background and relevant departmental policies and were closed finally after studying the case reports provided by the Department and having been satisfied that no mal-administration has been involved.

Outcome of Investigation

10. Of the 37 cases referred in 1998 and in the first two quarters of 1999 for formal investigation into mal-administration, 22 cases have been concluded as not substantiated, 10 partially substantiated and 5 substantiated. A synopsis of the 37 cases under formal investigation is provided at **Annexes F1 and F2**.

Initiatives taken by the Complaints and Enquiries Section

11. The following initiatives have been taken by the Complaints and Enquiries Section in handling public complaints and enquiries with a view to enhance efficiency-

- (a) Expanding the positive role of the Complaints and Enquiries Section to include the role of a change agent by providing advice from the community relations perspective with a view to minimizing and resolving public complaints;
- (b) delivering more detailed quarterly analytical statistics and possible causation factors on major public complaints to service providers to facilitate their corporate strategic planning for customers satisfaction;

- (c) Disseminating quarterly complaints statistics to the public through the mass media, eg. press release, as part of our customer-care activities; and
- (d) Upgrading of the 24-hour interactive Rental Hotline (2712 2712) and providing an additional Purchase Hotline (2712 8000) in September 1998 to step up communication with the public and enhance enquiry service. The public have responded to the new hotlines favourably and over 2 millions enquiries were made to the hotlines in 1998.

Plan of Complaints and Enquiries Section in 2000

12. To enhance the quality of service provided to customers, the Complaints and Enquiries Section is now actively engaged in the setting up of a HD telephone enquiries centre which is expected to come into operation in early 2000. By then most of the enquiries and complaints will be handled by the new enquiries centre immediately. It is envisaged that provision of such enhanced service will reduce the number of unnecessary complaints.

INFORMATION

13. This paper is issued for Members' information.

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c.c. Members of Home Ownership Committee
Members of Rental Housing Committee

File Ref. : HD (A) C&E 2/14/1 Pt. IV

Date : 6 October 1999

Complaints referred from the Ombudsman in 1998
Breakdown by Nature

<u>Category</u>	<u>No of cases referred</u>			<u>Total</u>
	<u>Under INCH Programme</u>	<u>For enquiries</u>	<u>For formal investigation</u>	
Tenancy	34	20	4	58
Building and environment	54	38	7	98
Policy	35	22	14	71
Public housing application	27	8	1	36
Staff	15	8	3	26
Squatter control and cleara	10	21	1	32
Tendering	0	1	0	1
Miscellaneous	4	3	1	8
Total :	178	121	31	330

Complaints referred from the Ombudsman in the first 2 Quarters of 1999
Breakdown by Nature

<u>Category</u>	<u>No of cases referred</u>			<u>Total</u>
	<u>Under INCH Programme</u>	<u>For enquiries</u>	<u>For formal investigation</u>	
Tenancy	9	14	1	24
Building and environment	19	27	0	46
Policy	15	10	2	27
Public housing application	9	6	1	16
Staff	5	5	1	11
Squatter control and cleara	3	3	1	7
Tendering	0	2	0	2
Miscellaneous	3	3	0	6
Total :	63	70	6	139

**Synopsis of Cases under Formal Investigation by the Ombudsman
(for the year of 1998)**

	<u>Subject of complaint</u>	<u>Outcome of investigation</u>
1.	Complainant was misled by the Housing Department (HD) in that although the HD was aware of the delay of intake of Shing Kwok House, Kwai Shing East Estate due to construction problems, it still allocated the flat of the Estate to him.	Not substantiated
2.	Delay in handling the noise nuisance of a flat at Yat Hei House, Tung Hei Court by the HD.	Not substantiated
3.	The HD had not made provisions for installation of air-conditioners in the flats of Ko Chun Court as stated in the sales brochure.	Not substantiated
4.	Unreasonable deletion of the complainant from the tenancy record of a flat at Mei Fung House, Mei Lam Estate.	Not substantiated
5-6	Dissatisfied with the HD for it only allowed those who rescinded the purchase of flats of Verbena Heights to re-apply for HOS flats by using the White Form.	Not substantiated
7.	Mishandling of a lost property case by the Kai Yip Estate Office.	Partially substantiated
8.	Repeated delay of the HD to appoint management agency for Hong	Not substantiated

Lam Court for the year of 1998.

9-10	Due to the poor timing of the Housing Authority in announcing the Tenants Purchase Scheme (TPS), the complainant, a HOS flat buyer, was unable to make decision on the purchase of HOS flat by taking the TPS into consideration; and the refusal of the Authority to return the deposit to complainants who applied to rescind the purchase of HOS flats was not justified.	Not substantiated
11.	Mishandling and unfair treatment of the application by Hiu Lai Court Owners' Committee for letting an office premises.	Not substantiated
12-13	The HD failed to inform the complainant prior to his purchase that Verbena Heights was not an HOS court, and that he was not entitled to the benefits of preferential interest rate for purchasing HOS flat.	Not substantiated
14.	The HD did not directly inform the owners of the intended clearance of structures in Hung Shek Road, Yuen Long; and did not inform the affected residents of the reasons for repeated postponement of the clearance date.	Partially substantiated
15.	Unreasonable cancellation of the complainant's HOS application and his additional registration numbers.	Not substantiated
16.	Unreasonable refusal by the HD to application for splitting of tenancy.	Not substantiated
17.	Unreasonable request by the HD for the complainant to include his father, who was not living with him, in his HOS application.	Not substantiated
18.	Mishandling of an application under Single Elderly Persons	Substantiated

Priority Scheme.

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| 19. | The HD used grading of shops as the basis for calculation of compensation to commercial tenants affected by redevelopment of Kwai Chung Estate without notifying the tenants and explaining how shops were graded; and the restricted tendering system imposed by the HD was neither fair nor reasonable. | Not substantiated |
| 20-
22 | Unreasonable installation of a common flush water pipe which routed through the complainants' HOS flats without their knowledge beforehand. | Partially
substantiated |
| 23. | Improper handling of the request for deletion of tenancy by a HOS tenant. | Substantiated |
| 24. | Dereliction of duty of the HD in handling an application for HOS; unsatisfactory attitude of HOC staff in answering enquiry; and instead of keeping the complainant's particulars in strict confidence upon receipt of the complaint about the HOC staff through the hotline, the complaint was referred to the staff being complained for handling. | Not substantiated |
| 25. | Delay in handling the complainant's application for external transfer on medical ground. | Substantiated |
| 26. | Mal-administration of the Authority in handling application for waiver of overdue interest. | Not substantiated |
| 27. | The complainant claimed that the HD had stopped his autopay for rental payment in February 1998, but his rental payment was still | Partially
substantiated |

debited from his autopay account in March and April, hence causing disturbance and inconvenience to him; and the notice on arrears in rental payment had not been put into an envelope.

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| 28. | In handling an application under the Direct PRH Offer Exercise, the HD had misled the complainant that he would be given three housing offers which led to cancellation of his PRH application. | Not substantiated |
| 29. | Delay in reducing the noise generated from the pump room at Block A, Tsz Oi Court. | Not substantiated |
| 30. | Delay in rectifying the problem of drainpipe blockage, hence causing repeated flooding in the complainant's flat at On Wu House, Cheung on Estate and damage to the tenant's property. | Not substantiated |
| 31. | Improper handling of the complainant's application for deletion of tenancy from his HOS flat by the Ka Lung Management Office. | Partially substantiated |

**Synopsis of Cases under Formal Investigation by the Ombudsman
(for the first two quarters of 1999)**

	<u>Subject of complaint</u>	<u>Outcome of investigation</u>
1.	The HD had allocated a wrong priority number for flat selection to the complainant leading to his failure to purchase an HOS flat.	Partially substantiated
2.	Delay in the refund of deposit to a TPS buyer by Wah Kwai Estate Office, poor working attitude of the staff, shirking of responsibility and mal-administration.	Partially substantiated
3.	Delay in handling of application for addition to tenancy and mal-administration.	Substantiated
4.	Refusal to accept the HOS application form and unsatisfactory working attitude of the staff at Tai Wo Estate Office.	Partially substantiated
5.	Delay by more than 5 months in notifying the complainant of the cancellation of his PRH application and mishandling his letters.	Substantiated
6.	Failure to take enforcement action against the illegal metal sheet structure on Shau Kei Wan Road.	Not Substantiated