

Upon receiving the enquiry, the caseworker will conduct initial screening having regard to the client's circumstances. If the client appears to meeting the eligibility criteria, the caseworker will conduct detailed social investigation and professional assessment through the means of contact including interview, visit, case consultation, etc. with the client, his / her family member(s), helping professional(s) and other parties concerned, etc.

The client and related family member(s) have to provide all the required information and supporting documents about their family background, housing need, financial condition, available resources and supportive network, etc. for the caseworker's assessment on their eligibility for CR recommendation.

The client and the related family member(s) are required to provide the supporting documents with regard to their individual circumstances. In general, the documents include, but not limited to, Hong Kong Identity Card, Birth Certificate, documents regarding the marital status (e.g. Marriage Certificate / divorce decree), court order regarding the custody of the child(ren), income proof (e.g. salary statement, payroll slip), bank passbook / statement, rental receipt, documents on asset / domestic property ownership, statutory declaration, and medical report / certificate (if applicable), etc.

If the client fails to provide the related information and supporting documents, the caseworker will not be able to complete the assessment and recommendation for CR.

## Handling Procedures

During the course in considering whether the case should be recommended for CR, the caseworker will in the meantime explore with the client on making use of other feasible means to resolve the housing needs. If it is assessed that there is no other feasible means, the caseworker will conduct professional assessment having regard to individual case circumstances, including the social and medical needs (if applicable), and the financial condition of the client and the related family member(s) with reference to the income and asset limits set by HA for PRH application. As the nature and complexity of as well as the resources and support network available to individual cases may vary, the caseworker will assess the eligibility for CR of each case with regard to individual circumstances with the information provided by the client and related family members.

If the client is assessed to have met the eligibility criteria, the caseworker will furnish and submit a recommendation to the officer-in-charge / supervisor of the service unit for consideration. To ensure consistency in assessment yardsticks, each case will be examined and endorsed by the respective

District Social Welfare Officer of SWD who will then recommend eligible cases to HD.

The processing time for CR may vary according to different case circumstances. SWD will recommend eligible cases for consideration by HD as soon as practicable upon receipt of all necessary documents and completion of the related investigation and assessment. The caseworker will inform the client in writing whether the case is recommended for CR or not.

Upon receipt of the CR case recommended by SWD, HD will conduct detailed eligibility vetting on the cases including CMT, DPT and the residence rules, etc. HD will proceed flat allocation for eligible cases and notify them of the flat allocation as soon as practicable. In general, as CR is meant to meet the imminent and long-term housing need of the client, location preference will not be made in the recommendation as it will narrow the allocation scope and prolong allocation time. Clients should also accept allocation of refurbished PRH units available.

## Alternative Housing Assistance

SWD and HD have put in place an inter-departmental referral mechanism to handle the special cases of PRH transfer, splitting of PRH tenancy, addition of family member(s) to PRH tenancy and other housing assistance for PRH tenants and PRH applicants. Under the established mechanism, HD will conduct the eligibility assessment and approval on the applications of PRH tenants and PRH applicants. In case some of the requests cannot be acceded to under HD's prevailing policy while the clients may appear to have social and medical grounds (if applicable) warranting special consideration or have welfare needs, HD may make written referral to service units of SWD or approved NGOs for follow-up or relevant assistance upon obtaining consent from the clients.

## Fees and Charges

CR and alternative housing assistance are free of charge.

### Enquiries

For enquiries on CR or alternative housing assistance, please contact the Hotline of SWD at 2343 2255. For questions on case handling for individual cases under CR or alternative housing assistance, please contact the service unit concerned.

# Compassionate Rehousing and Alternative Housing Assistance



## Compassionate Rehousing (CR)

CR is a form of special housing assistance, which aims at providing housing assistance to individuals and families who have genuine and imminent long-term housing needs but, owing to their social and medical needs (if applicable) under specific circumstances, have no other feasible means to solve their housing problems. CR is different from general public rental housing (PRH) application. It has to be assessed comprehensively by professional social workers / approved persons. The Social Welfare Department (SWD) is responsible for recommending cases to the Housing Department (HD). On receiving a CR recommendation, HD will arrange the client for detailed eligibility vetting and allocation of PRH unit for eligible cases.

### Eligibility Criteria of CR Note 1

The client and the family member(s) being included in the recommendation have to satisfy the following conditions –

1. have the right to land in Hong Kong and currently residing in Hong Kong; those having no right to land in Hong Kong or not residing in Hong Kong should not be included in the recommendation;
2. have imminent need of long-term accommodation, and have tried and demonstrated to have no other feasible means to solve their housing problems owing to their social and medical needs (if applicable) under specific circumstances;
3. have special social and medical needs (if applicable) as assessed by caseworker and doctor of public hospital or public clinic (if applicable) respectively that the granting of CR could help solve / relieve their problems or hardship Note 2.
4. pass the Comprehensive Means Test (CMT) (PRH income and asset limits as announced by the Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA)) and the Domestic Property Test (DPT) (i.e. no ownership of residential property in Hong Kong) conducted by HD; and
5. have the ability to pay PRH rent (including payment from rent allowance under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme or other forms of financial source).

Note 1 The eligibility criteria of CR also apply to the two schemes set up under CR, that is, Conditional Tenancy Scheme and Ex-gratia Scheme for Elderly Property Owner-occupiers.

Note 2 Having regard to individual case circumstance, the caseworker may also obtain the medical assessment by doctor of public hospital or public clinic on whether the client is suitable to be the householder of PRH unit.

The caseworker will look into the client's family background and financial conditions, and scrutinise relevant information and documents for assessment of his / her eligibility under the above conditions. As the nature and complexity of as well as the resources and support network available to individual cases may vary, the caseworker will assess each case with regard to individual circumstances, including the specific social and medical needs (if applicable).

At the time of PRH allocation for recommended CR cases, the client and the related family member(s) have to be living in Hong Kong and at least half of them must have been living in Hong Kong for at least seven years. Under the following circumstances, a child under the age of 18 is deemed to have fulfilled the seven-year residence rule:

- (a) at least one of his / her parents, regardless of whether the child was born in Hong Kong, has lived in Hong Kong for at least seven years; or
- (b) the child is born in Hong Kong with established permanent resident status.

### Conditional Tenancy Scheme

Conditional Tenancy (CT) is a scheme under CR aiming at providing assistance to those persons, who have filed petitions for divorce, have genuine and imminent long-term housing needs and have no other feasible means to solve their housing problems owing to their social and medical needs (if applicable) under specific circumstances. SWD recommends eligible cases to HD for temporary accommodation in PRH units in the form of CT, while awaiting the court decision on their divorce applications. Upon the completion of the divorce proceedings when they fulfill the eligibility criteria for applying for PRH, they may apply for converting the CTs into normal tenancies.

As CT is a special scheme under CR, the client must meet the eligibility criteria of CR listed above and also meet the following conditions -

1. is facing undue hardship in continuing to stay in the same unit with the spouse while pending result of divorce proceedings;
2. bona-fide petition for divorce has been filed to court, or grant of legal aid for divorce proceedings has been obtained;
3. has been assuming custody of the child(ren), if applicable Note 3, and in the opinion of the processing unit, is considered to be the most suitable party to take care of the child(ren); and

Note 3 The criteria 3 and 4 are not applicable to the victims of domestic violence having no offspring. For victims of domestic violence bringing along no dependent child(ren) when leaving the matrimonial home, the criterion 3 is also not applicable.

4. if the case involves child custody matter Note 3, the beneficiary of the CT must undertake that the CT will be terminated and the PRH unit be surrendered to HD if he / she fails to be granted custody as well as care and control (if applicable) of the child(ren) upon the court's award of divorce decree.

After completion of the divorce proceedings with the court's award of divorce decree, the beneficiary may apply for converting the CT into a normal tenancy, if he / she passes the CMT and DPT conducted by HD and meets other criteria, including the grant of custody as well as care and control (if applicable) of the child(ren) Note 4.

### Ex-gratia Scheme for Elderly Property Owner-occupiers

To help the elderly property owner-occupiers (EPOs) living in the private dilapidated buildings resolve the housing problem encountered, the Ex-gratia Scheme for Elderly Property Owner-occupiers has been set up under CR. The requirement of not owning domestic property in Hong Kong will be temporarily waived and the eligible EPOs will move into PRH on a licence basis as a transitional arrangement. If the elderly concerned is still able to meet the eligibility criteria for applying for PRH after selling / disposal of the property and completion of related matters, he / she can apply for conversion to normal PRH tenancy.

As the Ex-gratia Scheme for Elderly Property Owner-occupiers is a special scheme under CR, the client and the family member(s) being included in the recommendation must meet the eligibility criteria of CR listed above and also meet the following criteria for granting temporary waiving of DPT requirement –

1. the client and related family member(s) being included in the recommendation are aged 60 or above;
2. the client and his / her family member(s) (if applicable) has / have owned and lived in the concerned property for 10 years or more; and
3. the property concerned is located on a walk-up floor without lift service.

## Channels for Seeking CR Recommendation

Eligible individuals or families may approach the Integrated Family Service Centres / Integrated Services Centres, Rehabilitation Service Units, Medical Social Services Units, Social Security Field Units, etc. of SWD and the approved non-governmental organisations (NGOs) for enquiries.

Note 4 For client who has joint ownership of private residential property or a flat under the Home Ownership Scheme / Tenant Purchase Scheme with his / her divorcing / divorced spouse, upon SWD's recommendation, HD will give special consideration for temporary waiving of DPT requirement in granting a CT while waiting for court order for the disposal of their entitlement in the property.