



22 January 2025

**HKHS's Response to Office of The Ombudsman's
Direct Investigation Report**

The Hong Kong Housing Society (HKHS) expresses its gratitude for the recommendations made in the report released by the Office of The Ombudsman today (22 January) on its direct investigation into the Government's work in combating abuse of public housing resources. HKHS will carefully study each recommendation in the report and proactively implement measures whenever viable and practical.

HKHS is pleased to note that its proactive work and attitude in combating abuse of public housing resources and the significant outcomes achieved by related initiatives were recognised by the Office of The Ombudsman, in particular, the multiple tightened measures introduced by HKHS in October 2023, and the enhanced "Well-off Tenants Policy" (WTP) implemented in last April were highlighted. HKHS also welcomes the appeal by the Office of The Ombudsman to relevant government departments and organisations to support HKHS's work in combating the abuse of public housing for enhancing the overall effectiveness.

HKHS is in complete accord with the government on stepping up efforts to combat public housing abuse and ensure rational use of public housing resources. Since 2023, HKHS has allocated additional resources to implement tightened measures to combat tenancy abuse and enhancements to WTP. Some of the key measures include:

- Shortening the periods of non-occupation or not retaining regular and continuous residence in the definition from six months to three months;
- Banning tenants and their family members who have had their tenancy terminated due to breach of lease agreement from applying for public rental housing for five years;
- Expanding the prevailing WTP to all tenants who have to sign new tenancy agreements, and tenants and all of his/her family member are
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Press Release

required to declare biennially on domestic property ownership and their occupancy status;

- Establishing a mechanism with the Land Registry since 2024 to conduct proactive check if tenants own any domestic property;
- Issuing “Notice-to-Quit” directly to terminate the tenancy agreement without prior warning if tenants are found to have seriously breached the terms of the tenancy agreement, such as non-occupation, subletting or leasing of flats, engaging in illegal activities inside the flats, or making false declaration; and
- Establishing the “Housing Resources Management and Operations” (HRMO) team in 2024, with a dedicated focus on combating abuse of public housing resources. The team comprises professionals with investigative experience, including former members of the disciplined services.

In addition, HKHS will launch a “Report Public Housing Abuse Award” programme in coming April, encouraging the public to provide information on suspected cases of public housing abuse. This initiative aims to raise public awareness and assist in the investigation of such cases. In fact, HKHS has been receiving reports on public housing abuse from various sources and since the introduction of the online reporting form on the HKHS’s corporate website in 2023, the total number of reported cases of public housing abuse has surged from 85 in 2023 to more than 400 in 2024.

HKHS is also planning to extend the scope of the WTP to cover all the tenants of its rental estates in about five years. HKHS will continue to allocate resources and adopt a multi-pronged approach to combat public housing abuse by using smart technologies and enhancing communication with relevant government departments. HKHS will also further explore the feasibility of establishing a channel with government authorities in Mainland China & Macau, increase the frequency of surprise home visits, and strengthen training for frontline staff and security personnel in order to enhance the effectiveness of public housing abuse investigations. HKHS will also request the involvement of law enforcement

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agencies for assistance as appropriate shall the case under investigation is subject to the liability of criminal offences.

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