

Ombudsman commends public organisations and officers for positive complaint handling (with photo)

The following is issued on behalf of the Office of The Ombudsman:

The Office of The Ombudsman broadcasted this year's Presentation Ceremony of The Ombudsman's Awards online today (December 4) in order to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 in the community.

The Grand Award this year went to the Transport Department (TD), while the Department of Health (DH) and the Water Supplies Department (WSD) were the other two winning organisations. The Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency (WFSFAA) was presented the Organisation Award on Mediation. In addition, 57 public officers were given Individual Awards.

The Ombudsman, Ms Winnie Chiu, complimented the TD's positive and proactive attitude in handling public complaints. In its replies to the complainants and the Office, the TD elaborated its policies and procedures precisely. The department also earnestly put forward ideas for improvement and took the initiative to identify room for further enhancement of services.

The other two winning departments were the DH and the WSD. The DH treated and responded to complaints with a humanised approach, and strove to understand issues and answer queries from the perspective of the complainants. Upon receipt of complaints about service arrangements, the DH proactively reviewed the relevant procedures and guidelines so as to further improve its services. The Ombudsman considered the DH's assiduous and people-oriented approach in dealing with complaints commendable.

The Ombudsman appreciated the WSD's attitude of "putting people's needs first" in handling complaints. The WSD dealt with enquiries and complaints about water supply promptly and furnished the Office with clear and detailed accounts for and of events. The department also explained relevant legislation and procedures with related data and records. For cases involving the internal plumbing system of private premises, the WSD proactively assisted the owners and management companies concerned in solving the problems of such systems.

The WFSFAA was presented the Organisation Award on Mediation this year. In 2019/20, there was a remarkable increase in the number of complaint cases resolved by the WFSFAA through mediation. The figure went up from only one case in 2018/19 to 25 in 2019/20, which made up nearly 17 per cent of all mediation cases of the Office in the year. In the course of mediation, the WFSFAA responded swiftly to the complainants' concerns and made pragmatic and constructive suggestions for resolving the matters under complaint.

Staff is an extremely important asset to an organisation, whose efficiency and image are built on its staff performance and work approach. This year, 57 public officers were presented with Individual Awards by The Ombudsman to recognise their professionalism and efforts in delivering quality public service.

A full list of the recipients of the Individual Awards this year and the experience and thoughts of some awardees are at Appendices (I) and (II) respectively. The Presentation Ceremony is available on the Office's social media fan page (www.facebook.com/Ombudsman.HK) and video channel (www.youtube.com/user/OmbudsmanHK) for public viewing.

The Ombudsman's Awards Scheme was introduced in 1997. In 1999, the Scheme was extended to honour individual public officers. In 2018, an additional Award on Mediation for a public organisation was introduced.

