

Ombudsman probes maintenance and repair of playgrounds in public rental housing estates (with photo)

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

The Ombudsman, Ms Winnie Chiu, today (May 21) announced a direct investigation to examine the maintenance and repair of playgrounds in public rental housing (PRH) estates to identify any areas for improvement.

There were over 4 500 playground facilities in the PRH estates managed by the Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA) as at January 2019. In recent years, there have been reports about many play/fitness facilities in PRH estates being in a state of disrepair. There has also been a delay in repairing some facilities, rendering them unavailable to PRH residents for a prolonged period. Many people also find the design of playground facilities in PRH estates to be outdated and uninspired, falling short of meeting the public's demand for engaging outdoor leisure and fitness equipment.

Currently, most playgrounds in PRH estates use multi-play equipment and movable parts to provide recreational/fitness options. Under the HA's policy, such facilities must be installed and repaired by the agents on the Housing Authority Play/Fitness Equipment Agents Reference List (the List). For day-to-day management matters, the Housing Department (HD) conducts routine inspections of the facilities in PRH estates. Under the existing mechanism, the HD will notify works staff and the agents concerned of any damages found so that staff can carry out inspections and repairs. In case any facilities need replacement, the HD will request the agents on the List to provide information and suggestions on available products for the consideration of the relevant Estate Management Advisory Committee and then invite tenders.

"In Hong Kong, PRH estates accommodate a large number of residents, and the playground facilities in those estates serve as the major outdoor pleasure area for the residents in the neighbourhood. Hence, the provision and safety of these facilities are crucial. This direct investigation will examine the mechanism for the maintenance and repair of playground facilities in PRH estates, which includes the HD's procedures for routine inspections and the HA's monitoring of agents' performance. Playground facilities to be examined include both play equipment in children's playgrounds and fitness equipment. We intend to explore ways to improve the standards of playgrounds in PRH estates in general," Ms Chiu said.

The Ombudsman now invites members of the public to provide their views on the above topic in writing to the Office of The Ombudsman by June 21, 2020:

Address: 30/F, China Merchants Tower, Shun Tak Centre

168-200 Connaught Road Central, Hong Kong
Fax: 2882 8149
Email: complaints@ombudsman.hk

