

Mr Lai Kin-kei, Project Officer of Home Plus of the Salvation Army: Home Plus is located at Ha Heung Road in To Kwa Wan. This eight-storey tenement building was donated by a kind-hearted landlord. After the Hong Kong Council of Social Service had refurbished the building, the Salvation Army arranged for residents to move in. The nature of this social housing project is primarily one of transitional housing. We invite applications from residents in the neighbourhood who have waited for public rental housing (PRH) for more than three years. Residents are expected to rent the units for a tenancy period of two years, from their intake in end-2018 till the end of 2020.

This project has its distinctive features, one of which is the “co-residing, co-housing, co-managing and co-living” mode of operation. Through our matching activities, we match up residents with suitable units. Residents’ traits will be taken into consideration. For instance, we may match a young person with a family in the hope that vitality in the young person can generate motivation in the family’s life. Also, the family will show their kindness by taking care of their young flatmates, such as preparing meals for these young tenants just as they do so for their children. We hope that our tenants in Home Plus, be they young people, family households or elderly people, can live together in harmony in an inclusive environment.

The major target beneficiaries of Home Plus are families that have waited for PRH for more than three years with pressing housing needs. In terms of criteria, applicants must have a full-time job, but those receiving Government assistance are also eligible to apply. We hope to provide them with a decent place to stay in so that they can develop their potentials in other areas.

We also arrange activities such as dessert gatherings and housewarming parties to enhance community connection. In this way, residents can get to know their neighbours in the same building and offer support to one another.

The Salvation Army has introduced into Home Plus the concept of “work exchange”, that is, exchanging work for their accommodation. While some young people may not meet the eligibility criteria under the Community Housing Movement, they too have housing needs. We understand that some of them may be living in “capsule-like accommodation” and long for a better living environment. Here in Home Plus, young people will engage in different types of work, such as making floor and stairway signs. This tenement building is quite dilapidated and the flats are not numbered. Young tenants have therefore created some cute cartoon signs to show residents clearly which directions they should take when going up and down the stairs. These young people also organise activities on a monthly basis to promote a positive atmosphere in Home Plus. For example, they take other residents outdoor for jogging or make Mother’s Day cards when the occasion approaches.

From the residents’ feedback that we received in the past six months, we learn that they are very pleased with the improved living environment. Compared with the past where they possibly have to cram a family of four into a subdivided unit of some 100 square feet, it is spacious over here in Home Plus. Through different types of activities we have organised, residents also get acquainted with their neighbours and have fostered a better neighbourhood relationship.

The Salvation Army will continue to support the Community Housing Movement and offer help to people with housing needs.