

Report Public Housing Abuse Award

Frequently Asked Questions

Background of the Scheme

Q1: If members of the public have found a suspected case of tenancy abuse, how can they make a report? What are the channels for making reports if they are interested to join the “Report Public Housing Abuse Award” (the Award)?

A1: Any person who has found a suspected case of tenancy abuse may report through free aerogrammes (by sending in the Tenancy Abuse Report Aerogramme, which can be obtained from any estate office of the Housing Department (HD)), emails, online forms (by submitting the completed Online Form for Reporting Abuse of Public Housing Resources) and hotlines of the Government / Housing Authority (HA) (1823 / 2712 2712); or by informing the estate offices.

Persons interested in joining the Award shall indicate in the report aerogrammes and online forms, or inform the hotline staff of their intention to join the Award. For informants who have not stated their intention to join the Award when submitting the reports (or the Award has not yet been launched), they may indicate their intention to join the Award and provide supplementary information through the above ways if the case is still under investigation.

Q2: What is the definition of tenancy abuse?

A2: Tenancy abuse includes cases of non-occupation, not retaining regular and continuous residence, subletting (with or without rental income), engaging in illegal activities, non-domestic usage and false declaration about income, assets, etc.

Q3: How is the reward level of the Award determined?

A3: We are very concerned about neighbourhood relationship, so the reward is not substantial. Having taken into account the Good Citizen Award of the Hong Kong Police Force, the reward of the Award is set at HK\$3,000.

Details of the Award

Q4: Is it the case that only Hong Kong residents can join the Award?

A4: Any person aged 16 or above (except staff directly employed by the HA/HD) who has genuine and concrete intelligence on tenancy abuse may join the Scheme.

Q5: How to define **staff directly employed** by the HA/HD? Why is the staff directly employed by the HA/HD not eligible to join the “Report Public Housing Abuse Award”?

A5: Staff directly employed by the HA/HD includes civil servants and contract staff employed directly by the HA/HD as well as body-shopped personnel employed through consultant company to execute duties of the HA/HD.

Combating tenancy abuse is one of the work focuses of the HA/HD. Staff of the HA/HD, even those who are not responsible for estate management, is obliged to report to their respective section any identified case of suspected tenancy abuse. Hence, staff directly employed by the HA/HD is not eligible to join the Scheme.

Q6: Why must the participants of the Award make non-anonymous reports?

A6: To minimise misuse and malicious reporting, we will, in operating the Award, require that persons interested in joining the Award must make non-anonymous reports and be preliminarily assessed and interviewed by dedicated personnel to ensure the accuracy of the information provided. Moreover, as the cash rewards of the Award involve public funds, all informants joining the Award must complete real-name registration and be placed on record before we can present to them the rewards.

Q7: How to determine whether the information provided by informants is “concrete”?

A7: We will take into account whether the informants’ information is able to confirm a suspected case of tenancy abuse and the abuse position, as well as the source and reliability of the information. Besides, the critical information provided must be able to support HA’s successful issuance of the “Notice-to-quit” (NTQ) to households with tenancy abuse.

It should be noted that when an informant participates in the Award and provides information on the abuse households / units, but if the HA/HD has already been informed of the case and acquired information for carrying out investigation before receiving the report, the participant concerned will not receive a reward **unless the information provided by him plays a critical role in the case.**

Q8: Why not make use of technology to conduct online interviews instead of face-to-face interviews by dedicated personnel?

A8: To minimise misuse and malicious reporting, we will, in operating the Scheme, require that persons interested in joining the Scheme must make non-anonymous reports and be preliminarily assessed and interviewed by dedicated personnel to verify the informants' identity (inspection of identity proof), with a view to ensure the accuracy of the information provided.

Disbursement of cash rewards

Q9 : How will the informant receive the cash reward?

A9 : The cash reward will be disbursed in the form of a crossed cheque made payable to the informant. If the informant is not a Hong Kong resident, the cash reward will be disbursed in the form of a non-transferrable cash cheque.

Q10 : How will the cash reward be allocated if more than one informant has provided information on the tenancy abuse of the same flat with NTQ issued eventually?

A10 : Each reported case for receiving the reward will be reviewed by an Assessment Panel. If multiple informants have provided information on the same case of tenancy abuse, the Assessment Panel will, based on whether the information provided by such informants is critical to the investigation, decide who will receive the reward. If the HA needs to rely on the information from more than one informant to conclude the investigation and establish the tenancy abuse for the issuance of NTQ, the informants can share the cash reward of \$3,000 equally, and each of them will be awarded the certificate of appreciation.

The Assessment Panel has the right of final decision.

Progress of the Investigation

Q11 : Will the HA/HD notify the informants of the investigation progress or results concerning the households with tenancy abuse?

A11 : Investigation should be kept confidential. The HA will not disclose the investigation progress, process and details to the informants. Upon completion of all investigations and follow-up actions, the HA will inform the informants whether they are eligible for the rewards.

Q12 : How will the informants know if they are eligible to join the Award and receive the rewards?

A12 : At present, the HD will issue an acknowledgement notice to the informants of each reported case. After launching the Award, the HD will issue a “Confirmation of Participation” notice to the participating informants. During the formal interview, the participants will be briefed on the operational procedures of the Award, and will be notified in writing upon completion of the investigations or conclusion of the cases concerned, confirming whether any reward will be granted and informing them of the subsequent arrangements.

Q13 : When will the informants receive the rewards after the issuance of an NTQ to the households with tenancy abuse?

A13 : Each reported case will be reviewed by an Assessment Panel comprising directorate officers of the HD, which will decide on the rewards to be granted and the disbursement arrangements. The Assessment Panel will generally hold meetings once every six months. Participants are advised to wait patiently for the results and relevant notifications.

Q14 : Even if an NTQ is served to the households with tenancy abuse, is there still any possibility that the informants will not be eligible for the rewards?

A14 : Anyone who can provide genuine and concrete information that leads to HD’s successful issuance of NTQ to households with tenancy abuse is eligible to join the Award, even if the HD eventually fails to recover the flat due to various special reasons (e.g. the NTQ is revised upon appeal, etc.).

However, if the HA has already known the reported cases and initiated an investigation into them before the reports are received, or if the informants fail to provide more concrete information, the cases will be reviewed by the

Assessment Panel comprising directorate officers of the HD to decide whether any reward should be granted.

Confidentiality of the Informant's Information

Q15 : How will the HA protect the informant's information from leaking?

A15 : All information will be kept strictly confidential. Apart from designated HA/HD staff directly involved in handling the Award, no other person will be informed of the identity of the informants or the source of information.

Q16 : For criminal cases, will the informant be required to testify at court?

A16 : For criminal cases, we will, when necessary, invite the informants to attend as a witness at a court hearing and give evidence if they are willing to do so. The informants may choose whether to testify at court according to their own will.

Q17 : Must the awardee attend the award ceremony?

A17 : We will hold a simple and small-scale award ceremony at the HA/HD. It is up to the awardee to decide whether to attend the award ceremony. If he chooses not to attend the award ceremony, we will arrange separately for him to receive the certificate of appreciation and the reward of \$3,000.

Preventing Misuse of the Award

Q18 : How to prevent the public from misusing the Award?

A18 : To prevent misuse of the Scheme, each reported case for receiving the reward will be reviewed by an Assessment Panel. In particular, cases of a more complicated or controversial nature (e.g. the same case is reported by more than one person but they each provide different information) will be examined by the Assessment Panel.

Q19 : Property services agents (PSAs) and security companies will receive "additional marks" in their performance assessment reports if they have dedicated additional resources to enable HA's successful issuance of NTQ

for tenancy abuse cases, which will be an added advantage to their future tender submission. Furthermore, their employees (e.g. security guards) can participate in the Award in their own capacity. How does the Department ensure that abuse cases with NTQ issued successfully will not result in duplicate rewards (i.e. the company receiving “additional marks” and the employee receiving “a reward”)?

A19 : The incorporation of an award system in the “Performance Assessment Scoring System” for PSAs and security companies is to encourage them to dedicate extra efforts and resources to assist the HA’s successful issuance of NTQ to households with tenancy abuse.

If the HA/HD has already received a report about an abuse case from the PSA / security company, **any subsequent informant (regardless of whether they are employees of the PSA or security company concerned) will not receive a reward unless the information they provide plays a crucial role in the case.**

Conversely, if the HA/HD has already received an abuse report (assuming the informant is an employee of a PSA / security company), no “additional marks” will be awarded to the PSA or security company for their reports **unless the subsequent information they provide plays a crucial role in the case, or they have dedicated extra efforts and resources leading to HA’s successful issuance of NTQ to households with tenancy abuse.**

In summary, if the information provided is complementary and crucial, or the “company” has dedicated additional resources, both “additional marks” and “reward” will be granted. If the crucial information is duplicated, the reward will generally be based on the sequence of receiving the information.

To prevent misuse of the Award, the reported cases for receiving the reward will be reviewed by an Assessment Panel.