

EC Chairman appeals to RCHE fellows to fight the pandemic in solidarity

The following is issued on behalf of the Elderly Commission:

The Chairman of the Elderly Commission (EC), Dr Lam Ching-choi, today (February 19) made the following statement on the situation of residential care homes for the elderly (RCHEs) in fighting against the recent pandemic:

Since the pandemic, our fellow staff of the RCHEs have been holding fast to their positions and doing their best to prevent outbreaks in RCHEs. However, the fifth wave of the pandemic has been rapidly escalating, which poses unprecedented challenges for the RCHEs as well as the entire community.

I am deeply concerned about the recent discussion in the community regarding the hospitalisation and discharge arrangements for our RCHE residents. In these difficult times, while we get so exhausted from dealing with all sorts of problems and limitations, I still firmly believe that we all care about our elderly and we are working together to achieve the common goal of ensuring the ongoing well-being of our elderly.

The Government has implemented a number of measures to support RCHEs so that elderly residents can continue to receive proper care. These measures include providing additional allowance to RCHEs undergoing on-site quarantine/isolation for purchasing personal protective equipment, offering a special anti-pandemic allowance of \$2,000 per month per person for eligible staff members for five months, and issuing guidelines for on-site quarantine/isolation arrangement.

In the past few days, I have been exploring with various sectors of the community to strengthen our support for RCHEs. Among those, the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust will look into whether subsidy can be provided for RCHEs undergoing on-site quarantine/isolation to purchase air purifiers, through its "Jockey Club Facilities Enhancement Scheme for Pandemic Preparedness at Residential Care Homes" implemented earlier. In addition, I am exploring with the Government the possibility of introducing remote monitoring system in RCHEs undergoing on-site quarantine/isolation to measure and monitor the various vital signs of the elderly residents, e.g. oxygen saturation, pulse rate and body temperature, and provide warning in case of abnormality. This will not only facilitate timely identification of elderly residents requiring medical attention, but also reduce the workload on routine monitoring in these difficult times. If materialised, the Hong Kong Council of Social Service has undertaken to coordinate the distribution of the devices to RCHEs.

Meanwhile, I learnt from the Chief Executive of the Hospital Authority (HA), Dr Tony Ko, that the HA would continue to provide appropriate support for RCHEs. They will also enhance communication to ensure frail elderly persons as well as those potential severe cases arising from infection will

receive timely treatment.

Various sectors of the community are extremely grateful to the RCHEs and medical staff for sparing no effort in quelling the virus. Let's fight the pandemic in solidarity. Together, we will win this battle.