

FHB welcomes staff retention measures by HA

The Food and Health Bureau (FHB) welcomes various staff retention measures by the Hospital Authority (HA) to strengthen public healthcare services.

The Government has revamped the funding arrangement to the HA in 2018-19 to increase its recurrent funding progressively on a triennium funding basis, having regard to population growth ratio and demographic changes. This enables the HA to effectively and sustainably cope with the demand arising from population growth and ageing population (including implementation of more staff retention measures). In 2021-22, the funding provided by the Government to the HA amounted to \$82.4 billion, representing an increase of 46 per cent over the actual provision in 2017-18.

Adopting a multi-pronged approach, the Government and the HA strive to ensure a sufficient supply of healthcare professionals serving in the public healthcare system. The HA's new measure to create the rank of Associate Nurse Consultant in the nursing grade career structure can provide an alternative promotion pathway for nurses aspiring to develop a career in specialty nursing, apart from the existing clinical management stream. The new grade structure will also facilitate continuous development in nursing profession and promote the standard of nursing service. FHB has been actively enhancing nursing professional standard and setting up registration system for specialisation. The Nursing Council of Hong Kong has been invited to introduce the Voluntary Scheme on Advanced and Specialised Nursing Practice (Voluntary Scheme) in January 2021. The Voluntary Scheme and HA's new measure may complement each other to lay a good foundation and pave way for nursing specialisation. FHB encourages qualified staff in HA's nursing grade to actively submit applications.

Apart from the HA's staff retention measures, the Government has rolled out and will continue to implement various initiatives to strengthen public healthcare services, including promoting public-private partnerships to relieve pressure on the public healthcare sector by making use of the capacity of the private sector; enhancing working environment and efficiency of healthcare professionals through hardware upgrade under the two 10-Year Hospital Development Plans and development of smart hospitals; and steering primary healthcare and strengthening co-ordination among various professions, sectors and organisations in the primary healthcare field to ease pressure on public hospitals. In addition, the Government will continue to allocate resources to train up local healthcare professionals, which include increasing training quotas and providing financial support to universities to upgrade and expand medical teaching facilities. Furthermore, the Government has also introduced the Medical Registration (Amendment) Bill 2021 to the Legislative Council to create a new pathway to allow non-locally trained doctors to practise in Hong Kong.

The Government will continue to proactively adopt a multi-pronged strategy to ease the manpower shortage of healthcare professionals in the public healthcare system.