

Government establishes Primary Healthcare Commission today to continue boosting primary healthcare development

The Government announced today (July 15) the Primary Healthcare Commission (PHC Commission) under the Health Bureau was officially established to succeed the work of the current Primary Healthcare Office (PHO). The Commissioner for Primary Healthcare, Dr Pang Fei-chau, will lead the PHC Commission, taking charge of overseeing the service supply, standard setting, quality assurance and personnel training related to primary healthcare. The PHC Commission will plan primary healthcare services and allocate resources through strategic purchasing with the support of the Strategic Purchasing Office, with a view to strengthening the primary healthcare services as a whole. The Government also established the Primary Healthcare Committee today to assist the PHC Commission to perform its functions and exercise its powers in an effective manner.

Since its establishment in 2019, the PHO has been overseeing and steering the development of primary healthcare services. The Primary Healthcare Blueprint was subsequently released at the end of 2022, setting out concrete recommendations and implementation plans, and outlining a strategic roadmap for the future development of primary healthcare in Hong Kong. It is the Government's goal to make every effort to revamp the healthcare system, shifting the current treatment-oriented, hospital-based structure to a prevention-focused, community-based system, and devote more resources to promote primary healthcare.

The Government is actively taking forward various initiatives to promote primary healthcare development in accordance with the Blueprint. The Government launched the Chronic Disease Co-Care Pilot Scheme (CDCC Pilot Scheme) last November, with a view to establishing a family doctor regime and positioning District Health Centres (DHCs) as a hub in fostering an expansion of the healthcare network at the community level. The CDCC Pilot Scheme has been receiving a positive response since its launch. As at July 11, the number of participants exceeded 49 000, and more than 540 family doctors participated in the scheme, covering 650 service points. In addition, in order to strengthen the role of family doctors in the community healthcare system, starting from early October last year, only doctors enlisted in the Primary Care Directory (PCD) are allowed to enrol in various government-subsidised primary healthcare programmes. Compared to the end of 2022 when the Blueprint was released, the number of doctors enlisted in the PCD increased by more than 40 per cent as at June this year, reflecting the gradual formation of the family doctor network.

The Secretary for Health, Professor Lo Chung-mau, said, "Being the

organisation responsible for the primary healthcare development, the PHC Commission will build on past achievements and continue to make efforts in co-ordinating and managing the primary healthcare services provided by the public and private sectors, setting standards and establishing quality assurance mechanisms in a more comprehensive manner. The PHC Commission will integrate and co-ordinate the primary healthcare services provided by various parties, including the Department of Health (DH), the Hospital Authority (HA), non-governmental organisations and the private healthcare sector. The PHC Commission will also develop new service and management models for fostering the all-round consolidation and promotion of primary healthcare development.

"The DH will continue to maintain its public health functions in planning the overall public health strategy for the city, as well as executing its regulatory and enforcement roles, covering enhancement of the approval and registration mechanism for regulating drugs and medical devices. Meanwhile, the HA will focus on the delivery of public hospital services and the provision of relevant medical and rehabilitation services to the public. Under the policies formulated by the PHC Commission, the HA will focus on providing an essential safety net to the socially disadvantaged, in particular those who lack the means to pay. Such division of work will facilitate the positioning of primary healthcare as the foundation of the pyramid of healthcare services, and the gatekeeping the delivery of specialised secondary and tertiary healthcare services in hospital and healthcare institution settings."

The Government will explore the formulation of new legislation to give the PHC Commission authority and statutory powers such as defining primary healthcare service providers; auditing and monitoring the service quality of relevant personnel; setting relevant service standards applicable to private primary healthcare service providers; and establishing a quality assurance mechanism for primary healthcare services.

Through a more comprehensive, co-ordinated, systematic and quality-assured strategy, the PHC Commission will take forward various key tasks in the following three areas:

(1) Co-ordinating primary healthcare services and enhancing cross-sectoral and inter-organisational co-ordination. The PHC Commission will review the service scope of general out-patient clinics with the HA; discuss with the DH in reorganising the services of Woman Health Centres and Elderly Health Centres; and strengthen the role of DHCs as primary healthcare service hubs and case managers. At the same time, the PHC Commission will plan services and allocate resources through strategic purchasing, and explore the establishment of a community drug formulary and community pharmacy programme;

(2) Setting standards and agreed protocol-driven care pathway to ensure primary healthcare services quality. The PHC Commission will establish a more systematic patient referral mechanism to manage patient referrals in accordance with an agreed protocol-driven care pathway, connect DHCs across

districts, and consolidate and share data through the Electronic Health Record Sharing System (eHealth) as a central platform. In future, eHealth's eReferral function will support primary healthcare service providers to discharge their case management and gatekeeping role through the real-time and secured electronic referral system; and

(3) Reinforcing the training for primary healthcare professionals. The PHC Commission will develop the Primary Care Register (PCR) to cover all primary healthcare professionals, and will set qualification and training requirements for the healthcare professionals enlisted on the PCR to keep improving the quality of primary healthcare services. The PHC Commission will also continue to collaborate with different academic/training institutions to design and provide relevant trainings for primary healthcare professionals, and explore relevant incentives for attracting healthcare professionals to pursue their careers in the primary healthcare field.

In order to assist the PHC Commission in performing its functions and exercising its powers effectively, the Government also set up the Committee today to gather wisdom from the Committee members to advise the PHC Commission from multiple perspectives. Concurrently chaired by the Commissioner for Primary Healthcare, Dr Pang Fei-chau, the Committee comprises ex-officio members and non-official members. The latter covers persons from different professional backgrounds, including professionals from family medicine, Chinese medicine, dentistry and other professional sectors.

The tenure of members of the Committee lasts for two years, from today to July 14, 2026. The membership list is as follows:

Chairperson

Commissioner for Primary Healthcare

Non-official members

Dr David Chao Vai-kiong
Dr Kam Pok-man
Dr Lam Ching-choi
Dr Lam Wing-wo
Mr Lawrence Lee Kam-hung
Professor Gabriel Matthew Leung
Dr Sigmund Leung Sai-man
Ms Ellen Li Ka-yan
Dr Donald Li Kwok-tung
Dr Alexander Ng Man-tat
Professor Marco Pang Yiu-chung
Professor Agnes Tiwari Fung-yee
Dr Tse Sut-yee
Professor Ian Wong Chi-kei
Professor Samuel Wong Yeung-shan

Ex-officio members

Deputy Secretary for Health (or representative)
Deputy Director of Health (or representative)
Deputy Secretary for Labour and Welfare/Deputy Director of Social Welfare (or representative)
Deputy Secretary for Home and Youth Affairs (or representative)
Deputy Director of Home Affairs (or representative)
Director (Strategy and Planning), Hospital Authority (or representative)
Chief Manager (Nursing), Hospital Authority (or representative)

For more details on the work of the PHC Commission, members of the public may visit the website (www.healthbureau.gov.hk/phcc).