

HA statement in response to appeals from nursing staff union

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

In response to the views expressed today (January 20) by a nursing staff union towards heavy workload in public hospitals during winter surge, the Hospital Authority (HA) spokesperson responded as follows:

There has been significant rapid increase in demand for public hospital services since the commencement of winter surge and Hong Kong entering the influenza season. HA is fully aware of the tremendous workload faced by the frontline and has committed to support the frontline by every possible means.

In 2018-19, HA has already added 574 beds according to the Annual Plan. HA has also allocated \$520 million upfront to the hospital clusters to enable their early preparation in manpower deployment and supportive measures for the opening of time-limited beds and implementation of contingent measures, in anticipation of the increase in workload.

HA has already enhanced the flexibility of application of special honorarium scheme (SHS) to a minimum of one hour duty since last December. To further encourage staff and to boost morale, HA will have a one-off 12-week arrangement to increase the rate of SHS allowance by 10 per cent from January 28.

To address the nursing manpower issue, HA will recruit 2 230 nurses this year (2018-19), resulting in a net increase of 830 nurses after accounting for the attrition. To alleviate the workload of frontline staff during the winter surge, public hospitals have recruited about 800 part-time and temporary nurses, apart from over 40 nurses recruited through the newly established Locum Office. Hospitals will continue to recruit patient service and clerical support staff in wards to support nurses in handling patient care and clerical duties.

HA will continue to listen to the views of healthcare staff unions and frontline staff. HA would also like to express its gratitude once again to all frontline staff for their commitment and dedication in taking care of the patients.