

Hospital Authority implements new round of staff retention measures

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

The Hospital Authority (HA) Board today (December 16) discussed and approved a new round of staff retention measures, including a low-interest home loan scheme for staff, an increase in promotion posts for doctors and nurses and the establishment of the Hospital Authority Academy.

"Amid concerns over staff turnover in public hospitals, the HA Task Group on Sustainability has already recommended various staff retention measures. Following the earlier announcement of extending the employment of retired staff to retain experienced staff, we will introduce a new round of staff retention measures targeting relatively younger employees. With enhancements in staff welfare and professional development, the new measures will help create a happy living and working environment for staff members so they will continue to stay in public hospitals and serve the public," the HA Chairman, Mr Henry Fan, said.

The low-interest home loan scheme for staff is a staff welfare measure that is an enhancement of the existing Home Loan Interest Subsidy Scheme (HLISS). Home loans chargeable at a preferential interest rate will be offered to staff for down payment assistance for their purchase of properties for self-occupation. The loan amount will be linked to the staff member's basic salary with a loan cap. The interest rate will also be lower than the market rate. The initial proposal of the scheme will be applicable to eligible staff members who are entitled to housing benefits and have joined the HA for more than three years. The loan amount will be around 36 to 48 months of the basic salary.

"The HA Board has approved the direction of the scheme. Details of the scheme such as the exact loan amount and the interest rate are still being worked out. The scheme, being an enhancement of the current HLISS, does not require additional funding from the Government. We will continue to consult relevant government departments and monetary regulatory authorities, seek legal advice and consider staff reaction towards the scheme, with a view to launching it as soon as possible," Mr Fan added.

Meanwhile, to strengthen professional training and self-enhancement, the HA Board has also approved two key measures in facilitating professional development, namely increasing the posts of Consultant, Nurse Consultant (NC) and Associate Nurse Consultant (ANC) and the establishment of the Hospital Authority Academy.

For the increase in promotion posts, the HA has already upgraded 100 Associate Consultant posts to Consultant posts in 2020-21 and 2021-22. The Board further approved to significantly scale up the upcoming plan threefold, i.e. upgrading 300 Consultant posts instead of 100 in the following three

years.

For nursing staff, 300 ANC and 40 NC posts will be created in the next two years, to make a total of about 442 ANCs and 200 NCs to help enhance the quality of clinical services in public hospitals.

The HA Board has also approved the strategic direction of establishing the Hospital Authority Academy. The Academy, to be established in 2022-23, will consolidate the existing Institute of Advanced Nursing Studies, Institute of Advanced Allied Health Studies and Institute of Health Care under the HA. The establishment of the Academy can both enhance the core competencies of HA staff and nurture professionals for the entire healthcare industry through accredited professional training programmes.