

LCSD suspends recreation and sports programmes and provides ex-gratia payment to personnel affected by cancellation of programmes under Anti-epidemic Fund

A spokesman for the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) said today (December 30) that in view of the severe COVID-19 pandemic situation in Hong Kong, the LCSD will continue to suspend the recreation and sports programmes to be held in January 2021 with the exception of "Online Interactive Sports Training Programmes", so as to reduce social contacts and prevent the spread of the virus in the community. The LCSD will arrange refunds for the affected participants of paid activities.

In addition, to align with the Government's further tightening of social distancing measures, the LCSD had already closed again its leisure and cultural venues/facilities from December 2, and the programmes to be organised or subvented by the LCSD were also cancelled starting from November 28 by phases. To relieve the impact of the epidemic and with a new injection into the Anti-epidemic Fund, a new round of ex-gratia payments will be arranged to those personnel engaged in these programmes, including coaches and instructors.

The ex-gratia payment will be offered again to those directly engaged by the LCSD, or sports coaches and staff hired by National Sports Associations (NSAs) or sports organisations (SOs) to conduct subvented programmes under the Sports Subvention Scheme, or sports coaches from NSAs or SOs who were engaged by the LCSD through the Direct Purchase Authority Management System to provide services. The amount of ex-gratia payment is equivalent to their full remuneration for the cancelled programmes scheduled to commence or to be held from November 28, 2020, to January 31, 2021.

Coaches and personnel benefiting from this subsidy scheme are not required to submit applications. The LCSD will release the ex-gratia payment to the personnel directly or through the relevant NSAs and SOs. Disbursement of the ex-gratia payment is expected to start in February 2021 in batches.

In addition, the LCSD will make the same arrangement and provide the ex-gratia payment to instructors and speakers of seminars and workshops organised by the Hong Kong Public Libraries whose programmes were cancelled and could not be rescheduled due to venue closures amid the epidemic. Part-time ushers and part-time ticketing assistants affected by the closure of cultural venues will also be provided with the ex-gratia payment.