

SLW visits RCHE in new private development (with photos)

The Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong, visited Forward Living, the first purpose-built residential care home for the elderly (RCHE) under the Scheme to Encourage Provision of RCHE Premises in New Private Developments, in Tuen Mun this afternoon (August 31). The Permanent Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Ms Alice Lau, also joined the visit.

Accompanied by its management team, Dr Law first took a closer look at anti-epidemic measures in the RCHE. The RCHE is equipped with an air monitoring system for regular testing of air quality. He was then briefed on the application of gerontechnology in the RCHE, including the smart Elderly Homes Management System linking various facilities for one-stop drug management and monitoring of residents' health, the provision of nutritional soft meals for elderly persons with swallowing difficulty, and the installation of rehabilitation and cognitive training equipment as well as care and anti-bacterial furniture.

According to the above Scheme, the relevant RCHE premises will be exempted from payment of premium under land transactions on the condition that the developers are willing to accept certain lease conditions to ensure the delivery of the RCHE premises and that the proposed projects must be supported by the Social Welfare Department and relevant departments. So long as the developers will bear the construction cost and the premises will only be used as RCHEs, they are allowed to lease or sell the premises as one whole unit, or engage an organisation to operate the RCHEs. Developers/operators also have the flexibility to set their own fees in accordance with the market situation. The land transaction involving "Forward Living" was made at end-2012 and the RCHE commenced operation in June 2021, providing 191 residential care places for the elderly.

Dr Law said that the Government would continue to increase residential care places for the elderly by adopting a multi-pronged approach and maximising land use. These measures include reinstating the population-based planning ratios for RCHE places in the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines, providing an additional choice via the Pilot Scheme on Residential Care Service Voucher for the Elderly, purchasing additional EA1 places under the Enhanced Bought Place Scheme, encouraging non-governmental organisations to make better use of land through the Special Scheme on Privately Owned Sites for Welfare Uses as well as inviting the Hong Kong Housing Authority and Hong Kong Housing Society to explore reserving about 5 per cent of the total domestic gross floor area in future public housing development projects exclusively for welfare uses, in particular RCHEs which are much needed by the community, on the premise that the public housing supply and other ancillary facilities will not be affected. Apart from the above, the Government will continue to encourage participation by more private enterprises in providing quality RCHE services.

