

# SWD releases consultancy study report on "Skill and Qualification Requirements of Residential Care Home Staff providing Health and Rehabilitation Services in Hong Kong"

The Social Welfare Department (SWD) today (January 21) released the report of the consultancy study on "Skill and Qualification Requirements of Residential Care Home (RCH) Staff providing Health and Rehabilitation Services in Hong Kong".

The SWD established a Steering Committee on Review of Manpower for Healthcare Services in RCHs in July 2023 to provide advice and steer on the holistic review of the skill and qualification requirements of RCH staff to build professional standards and a career progression path, thereby retaining talent and attracting new blood. The Committee was chaired by Dr Lam Ching-choi, and its membership comprised stakeholders from various sectors, including RCH operators/organisations, allied health professionals, trade union members and representatives of relevant policy bureaux/departments. Under the steer of the Committee, the Consultant commissioned by the SWD collected views from the stakeholders through RCH field observation and data analysis, questionnaire surveys, workshops, focus groups and individual interviews, and sought advice from relevant advisory bodies. Following the conclusion of the review at the end of 2024, the Consultant submitted the report of the consultancy study scrutinised by the Committee to the SWD. The SWD has accepted the report.

According to the report of the consultancy study, there has been a growing demand for professional care services in the RCH sector due to an ageing population, rendering it essential to nurture professional health and care talent dedicated to the social welfare sector to sustain its steady development. The report puts forth four key recommendations:

1. It is recommended to establish a new professional rank of "Health&Care Practitioner" (HCP) responsible for health and care procedures at the RCHs for the Elderly (RCHes), the RCHs for Persons with Disabilities (RCHDs) and other elderly/rehabilitation welfare service units. The HCP, which covers care and health duties with due emphasis on practice, can both attract people who aspire to pursue a career in the social welfare sector and offer promotion and career prospects for Health Workers (HWs), which is conducive to talent retention. Additionally, this new rank would provide RCHs with greater flexibility in utilising their manpower resources, reduce competition for talent with the medical health sector and alleviate the tight manpower situation in RCHs.

Based on the existing regulatory mechanism for HWs, the SWD is

recommended to be in charge of such matters as the registration, assessment and complaint of the HCPs to ensure their professional competency and ensure that they would be put under effective regulation. The validity period of a registration or renewal of registration as an HCP would be not more than five years.

At the initial stage of the establishment of the HCPs, it is recommended to invite serving registered HWs who have served in the position for not less than three years to undergo the training. To become an HCP, one must complete a recognised training course and attain a professional diploma. The diploma concerned is pitched at Qualifications Framework Level 4 with a total of 760 learning hours. Its entry qualification requirements would be identical to those of the Enrolled Nurse (General) Training Programme, and in respect of the required health and care work in the social welfare service units, the assessment standards of the HCP training course would also be the same as those of Enrolled Nurses.

2. Adjustments are recommended to the training content of the Certificate in Progression Training for Care Workers (Certificate Training). At present, Care Workers (CWs) who have completed the local Form Three programme and worked as a CW in RCHes or RCHDs for not less than three years are eligible to enrol in the Certificate Training, and only those who have successfully passed the assessment are eligible to enrol in the HW Training Programme. Since the work of HWs is mostly practical, it is proposed to reduce the number of learning hours in language subjects of the Certificate Training with a corresponding increase in those training hours on vocational-related knowledge, so that CWs who aspire to take up health care work in RCHs would be equipped with more practical operational experience and competencies.

3. Amendments to the Residential Care Homes (Elderly Persons) Regulation (Cap. 459A) and the Residential Care Homes (Persons with Disabilities) Regulation (Cap. 613A) are recommended to introduce the new HCP rank into the relevant Regulations without altering the existing statutory staffing requirements. This would allow RCHs to employ Enrolled Nurses or HCPs to meet the relevant statutory staffing requirements.

4. RCH operators are recommended to attract and retain staff through measures such as enhancing career development and promotion opportunities, applying information technology and gerontechnology, and encouraging RCH staff to undergo training.

A spokesman for the SWD said that the Department agrees with the key findings and recommendations of the report of the consultancy study and will report to the Panel on Welfare Services of the Legislative Council in due course. The recommendations of the consultancy report will be implemented progressively with a view to nurturing specialised health and care professional talent dedicated to the social welfare sector.

The full text and the executive summary of the report (Chinese only) have been uploaded to the SWD's website [www.swd.gov.hk/en/pubsvc/lr/lr\\_info/cons\\_study/](http://www.swd.gov.hk/en/pubsvc/lr/lr_info/cons_study/).