

Time-limited measures for importation of care workers to alleviate manpower shortage of the care sector during the pandemic

The Labour Department (LD) announced today (March 1) that with immediate effect, the Government relaxed certain requirements for the care sector to import care workers under the Supplementary Labour Scheme (SLS) for three months ending on May 31.

An LD spokesman said, "During the outbreaks of the fifth wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, residents of hundreds of residential care homes (RCHs) for the elderly and persons with disabilities in Hong Kong have been infected which have substantially increased the need for care services. At the same time, more and more care workers are also infected which further aggravate the already tight manpower situation".

"To alleviate the grave challenge of manpower shortage in the care sector, the Government has decided to exempt the care sector from the prerequisite arrangement of undergoing four-week local recruitment under the SLS, flexibly approve the number of care workers to be imported having regard to the needs of individual RCHs and suspend the circulation of each application to the Labour Advisory Board for views during the aforesaid three-month period. These seek to expedite the processing of applications to address the urgent needs. Besides, subvented RCHs can apply for importation of care workers in accordance with the same requirements. All applicant RCHs shall continue to comply with the other SLS requirements."

RCHs for the elderly and persons with disabilities may browse the LD's website (www.labour.gov.hk/eng/form/eform/sld/note/EF0601/content.htm) for information about the SLS and downloading its application form. For enquiries, please call the SLS hotline at 2150 6363.

Concurrently, to underpin all-out efforts to fight against the new wave of the pandemic, the Social Welfare Department (SWD) urgently recruits 1 000 temporary contract care staff from the Mainland direct to reinforce the manpower. These care staff will be engaged for three months and deployed to provide necessary care services in community isolation facilities and RCHs for the elderly, persons with disabilities and children who are suspected or confirmed to be infected. SWD has commissioned employment service agencies to proceed with the recruitment, and the HKSAR Government has also sought help from the Central People's Government for coordination amongst the concerned Mainland authorities to provide facilitation on speedy approval of applications.

All along, RCHs for the elderly and persons with disabilities may make

use of the employment services of LD to recruit local employees. The LD's Interactive Employment Services website has set up a dedicated webpage for the elderly care and rehabilitation services sector (www.jobs.gov.hk/0/en/JobSeeker/jobsearch/quickview/careservices/) to facilitate job seekers to browse the relevant job vacancies. Job seekers may also make use of the LD's Telephone Employment Service Centre and Job Centres to enquire about the relevant job vacancies and receive employment services by telephone (telephone numbers are shown at www.jobs.gov.hk/0/en/information/ourservices/jobcentres).

The spokesman continued, "In face of the current severe pandemic, we urge the community to make concerted efforts to fight against the pandemic".