

Secretary for Health announces fees and charges reform for public healthcare (with photos)

The Health Bureau announced the details of the fees and charges reform for public healthcare today (March 25). Reforming the subsidisation structure of the public healthcare services aims to guide the public to make optimal use of healthcare resources, reduce wastage and abuse, and enhance healthcare protection for "poor, acute, serious, critical" patients on all fronts, thereby enhancing the sustainability of the healthcare system and strengthening the public healthcare system to cope with the challenges posed by an ageing population, inflation of healthcare costs, etc, and serve as a safety net for all.

As an indispensable part of healthcare reform, the fees and charges reform for public healthcare covers the following three major areas, with a view to ensuring that limited healthcare resources can be directed in a targeted manner to help those patients most in need:

1. Reforming the subsidisation structure: Reforming the subsidisation structure from a systemic perspective by setting the levels of government subsidisation and the proportion of co-payments by members of the public for various public healthcare services to rationalise the relative demands for in-patient, accident and emergency, as well as different tiers of out-patient services.
2. Reducing waste and abuse: Introducing a co-payment model for non-urgent diagnostic radiology and pathology services, adjusting the charges for and quantities of standard drugs, making use of the fees and charges to drive changes to the public's behaviour in seeking medical treatment to guide the optimal use of resources.
3. Enhancing healthcare protection: Strengthening protection for "poor, serious, critical" patients on all fronts by enhancing the fee waiver mechanism, introducing an annual cap on fees and charges at \$10,000, and increasing subsidies on drugs and medical devices for the critically ill, with a view to preventing "patients with serious conditions falling into poverty".

The Secretary for Health, Professor Lo Chung-mau, said, "Under the fees and charges reform, we will expand and enhance the co-payment mechanism, based on the principles of 'co-payment by those who can afford and co-payment by those with mild conditions', to strengthen the protection for 'poor, acute, serious, critical' patients. The Government's commitment to the public healthcare system will definitely not be lessened and all the gains from the reform will be wholly utilised for public healthcare services. On strengthening the safety net for all, the reform will enable us to further 'support the poor, save the acute patients, protect those with serious

conditions, and help the critically ill', thereby making the safety net larger, more stable, thicker and denser."

The Hospital Authority (HA) will implement the new structure of fees and charges from January next year. The Chief Executive of the HA, Dr Tony Ko, added, "The HA will press ahead at full steam with the implementation of the reform. The structure of fees and charges of public hospitals in the future will focus on providing more support to 'poor, acute, serious, critical' patients and reduce wastage. The new fees and charges will remain at a level affordable to the public, while those with financial difficulties, or those suffering from critical and serious illnesses, will be better protected."

Professor Lo emphasised, "Hong Kong's public hospitals have long been one of the most efficient healthcare systems in the world. The reform will help to ensure that limited healthcare resources are directed to those patients most in need. The reform of healthcare fees and charges will proceed in a gradual and orderly manner. The review of public healthcare fees and charges will continue to be conducted every two years in accordance with the mechanism, with a view to achieving the reform objectives in five years, by which time the 90 per cent overall public subsidisation rate will be maintained. Alongside the implementation of the fees and charges reform for healthcare, the Government will continue to take forward healthcare reform in other areas to build a 'Healthy Hong Kong'."



[Incoming driver convicted and jailed for importing duty-not-paid cigarettes \(with photos\)](#)

A 38-year-old incoming male driver was sentenced to three months' imprisonment and fined \$1,000 at the West Kowloon Magistrates' Courts today (March 25) for importing duty-not-paid cigarettes and failing to declare to Customs Officers, in contravention of the Dutiable Commodities Ordinance (DCO).

sustained no injuries and no suspicious circumstances were detected.

HKPF holds Launching Ceremony of Child Protection Comic Book Series cum Multi-Disciplinary Seminar on Navigating Online Grooming Risks: Spotting and Stopping them (with photos)

The Hong Kong Police Force (HKPF) held the Launching Ceremony of the Child Protection Comic Book Series cum Multi-Disciplinary Seminar on Navigating Online Grooming Risks: Spotting and Stopping them today (March 25). Over 500 principals, teachers, social workers, child service providers, parents and police officers participated in person and online in parallel.

The Commissioner of Police, Mr Siu Chak-ye, highlighted in his speech that there were 1 359 child sexual abuse cases in 2024, with 94 cases (7 per cent) involving online elements. In the first two months of 2025 alone, 10 cases of online grooming were recorded, including two rape cases involving victims as young as 12 years old. These figures highlighted the severity and alarming rising trend of online grooming.

He noted that the HKPF conducted a survey on online grooming in 2024, interviewing 2 000 students of secondary One to Four. The findings revealed that over 60 per cent of the participants had encountered online grooming, including receiving explicit messages, being asked for nude photos, or even being lured into meetings for sexual exploitation. The survey also indicated that factors such as using social media at a younger age, spending more time online, and having multiple social media accounts significantly increase the risk of falling victim to online grooming.

Mr Siu emphasised that the threat of online grooming should not be overlooked. Addressing the issue requires the joint efforts among schools, parents and students to foster a safer online environment through education, supervision and trust. He stressed that much like other crime prevention efforts, educating children about safe internet practices must "start from a young age with continuous and concerted efforts". He called on parents and educational stakeholders to work together continuously, helping children develop the ability to resist dangers and establishing a safer environment for future generations.

The HKPF has been actively promoting child protection initiatives,

including the "Let's T.A.L.K. – Child Protection Campaign" and the newly launched eight-volume "Child Protection Comic Book" Series. The comic books address topics such as online child sexual grooming, prevention of child abuse, naked chat and court trial procedures. The series aims to educate children and juveniles on how to identify risks and protect themselves. The comic books will be distributed to over 1 500 primary schools and kindergartens, public libraries, and related non-profit organisations across Hong Kong, thereby spreading the message of child protection and fostering a safe and healthy environment for children to grow up.

Mr Siu, along with the ambassadors of the HKPF Child Protection Campaign, Mr Bernard Chan and Ms Guo Jingjing; the Director of Public Prosecutions of the Department of Justice, Ms Maggie Yang; the Chairman of the Agency for Volunteer Service, Ms Melissa Kaye Pang; the Assistant Director (Family and Child Welfare) of the Social Welfare Department, Ms Wendy Chau; Clinical Professor of the Department of Paediatrics and Adolescent Medicine of the University of Hong Kong, Professor Patrick Ip; and the Chairman of the Committee on Home-School Co-operation, Mr Eugene Fong; officiated at the comic book series launching ceremony.

To raise public awareness and create a safer online environment for children, a seminar was held following the launching ceremony. Officers from the HKPF and representatives of the relevant sectors discussed the risks of online grooming faced by children and explored practical coping strategies.

Speaking at the seminar were the Chairman of the Hong Kong Direct Subsidy Scheme Schools Council, Mr Dion Chen; the Founder and Honorary President of the Smart City Consortium, Mr Eric Yeung; the Hong Kong E-sports Team member, Mr Pang Ka-kit; and the senior social worker of the Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups, Mr Eric Chu Heung-hung.

The seminar marked the successful conclusion of the fourth year of the "Let's T.A.L.K. – Child Protection Campaign". Details of the campaign have been uploaded onto the one-stop child protection online platform (www.childprotection.gov.hk).





Police launch interactive theatre against “space oil drug” to promote anti-drug messages among upper primary students (with photos)

The Hong Kong Police Force staged its new play, "Interactive Anti-Drug Theatre – A Space Study Adventure", at an experience session today (March 25), to deliver anti-drug messages to over 200 principals, teachers and upper primary students, aiming to safeguard schools from the emerging "space oil drug".

Speaking at the session, the Commissioner of Police, Mr Siu Chak-ye, pointed out that 31 students were arrested for serious drug offences last year, with the youngest arrestee involved in the "space oil drug" being 12 years old. He noted that although the number of arrests was the lowest since 2021, one juvenile drug case is still far too many. While law enforcement efforts are being stepped up, it is important to pass on the anti-drug culture through education and to "start from a young age with continuous and concerted efforts".

Mr Siu added that the Police Narcotics Bureau (NB) has organised the "Interactive Anti-Drug Theatre" for the third consecutive year. Over the past two years, anti-drug messages have been disseminated to more than 13 500 primary students in nearly 100 school performances. He described the interactive engagement of the student audience as one of the best parts of the theatre, demonstrating the passing on of the anti-drug culture.

Before the performance, a representative from the anti-drug service unit of the Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups' Youth Crime Prevention Centre shared insights into the serious consequences of using the "space oil drug", cautioning students about its far-reaching harm while urging them to adopt a firm stance: "Drugs? Never, Ever!".

Representatives of school sponsoring bodies, principals, teachers and students from over 60 primary schools attended today's event. The actors in the play took the audience on a study trip, during which they resisted the temptation of drugs. Through interactive questions designed to inspire critical thinking, students gained a thorough understanding of the harmful effects caused by drug abuse, and became more vigilant against the "space oil drug".

As the NB's first flagship publicity campaign for this year on the "space oil drug", the "Interactive Anti-Drug Theatre – A Space Study Adventure" will be staged in primary schools starting this month. Schools interested in learning more and arranging a performance can contact the NB by email (ip-sip-int-1e-nb@police.gov.hk).

