

Government appeals to employers to be compassionate to employees affected by pandemic and allow flexible work arrangements

In light of the latest situation of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government today (January 13) appealed to employers to allow flexible work arrangements for employees in accordance with their operational needs, and to consider not requiring employees to return to the office but to work from home where practicable. This will help maintain good labour-management relations and reduce the risk of spreading the disease. In the meantime, employers should review the work arrangements taking into account the latest situation.

Moreover, the Government calls on employers to be compassionate and show understanding to employees who encounter practical difficulties arising from the epidemic situation and be accommodating to them as far as practicable. For example, employers are urged to adopt a more lenient and flexible approach in dealing with leave applications from employees who need to take care of schoolchildren and toddlers at home during the suspension of face-to-face classes of primary schools, kindergartens and child care centres, or to consider arranging for those employees to work from home where circumstances permit. The Government also encourages employers to maintain good communication on work arrangements with employees who are subject to compulsory quarantine or compulsory testing requirements, including granting them paid leave, or where practicable allowing them to work from locations other than workplaces.

In view of the COVID-19 situation, the Labour Department (LD) has drawn up relevant information on the related obligations and rights of employers and employees under the Employment Ordinance. Members of the public may make reference to the information through the LD's homepage (www.labour.gov.hk).