

# FHB encourages foreign domestic helpers to make use of free COVID-19 testing service

The Government has been providing one-off free COVID-19 testing service to all foreign domestic helpers (FDHs) in Hong Kong since December 18, 2020. As at today (January 14), over 25 000 FDHs have made use of the free testing service at the community testing centres. The community testing centres will continue to offer free testing service to FDHs until January 31.

A spokesman for the Food and Health Bureau said, "with the prolonged local COVID-19 epidemic situation, the number of confirmed cases has remained at a relatively high level. Some of the confirmed cases have been asymptomatic, indicating the existence of many silent transmission chains within the community. Guided by the 'targeted testing' approach, the Government has been arranging testing for various targeted groups based on risk assessment. The free testing arrangement for FDHs has so far identified seven positive cases, hence a positive rate of 0.03%. We encourage FDHs to actively participate in the free test to safeguard their health and that of their employers' families. We also appeal to employers of FDHs to actively assist in arranging FDHs to make use of the free service."

FDHs should make advance booking for the free testing service via the community testing centre booking system ([www.communitytest.gov.hk](http://www.communitytest.gov.hk)). Those who did not make an appointment will need to pay for the testing service at \$240.

The community testing centres are open daily from 8am to 1.30pm and from 2.30pm to 8pm. Deep cleaning and disinfection will be conducted when they close in the afternoon and at night. When arriving at the community testing centre at the designated time slot, the FDH should present identity document used at the time of booking (such as Hong Kong identity card or passport) and the SMS booking confirmation for verification.

"FDHs can choose a suitable time slot for testing taking into account their own needs. If FDHs have symptoms, they should seek medical attention immediately and undergo free testing provided by the Government as instructed by a medical professional. They should not go to the community testing centres."

The free testing service is being offered from December 18, 2020 to January 31, 2021. During the period, each FDH can receive free testing service once only. Participants will be notified by SMS through their mobile phones if the test result is negative. Should any specimen is tested preliminary positive, it will be referred to the Public Health Laboratory Services Branch of the Department of Health (DH) for a confirmatory test. Confirmed cases will be followed up and announced by the Centre for Health Protection of the DH.

In addition to attending the community testing centres for testing, FDHs can continue to utilise other free testing channels provided by the Government, including obtaining a deep throat saliva specimen collection pack from post offices, MTR stations or designated general outpatient clinics of the Hospital Authority and return the specimen to the designated specimen collection points. For details on testing means other than community testing centres, please refer to following webpage:

[www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng/early-testing.html](http://www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng/early-testing.html).

FDHs whose previous employment contracts have expired or have been terminated and who are waiting to join the new employers' families may also collect and return specimen collection packs at Labour Department's temporary distribution/collection point located on 1/F (footbridge level), Immigration Tower, 7 Gloucester Road, Wan Chai. No prior appointment is required. For details, please refer to Labour Department's announcement:

[www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202012/24/P2020122300729.htm](http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202012/24/P2020122300729.htm).

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## **ImmD's response to Ombudsman's direct investigation into Government's regulation of boarding facilities for foreign domestic helpers**

In response to the decision of The Ombudsman to initiate a direct investigation to examine the Government's regulation of boarding facilities for foreign domestic helpers (FDHs), an Immigration Department (ImmD) spokesman said the ImmD is mainly responsible for the assessment of the employment visa applications of FDHs, while the regulation of boarding facilities for FDHs is outside the purview of the ImmD.

In the course of the investigation by the Office of The Ombudsman (the Office), the ImmD will assist the Office to further understand the functions and powers of the ImmD, and the delineation of responsibilities and distribution of work in the Government on the regulation of boarding facilities for FDHs.

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## CHP investigates 29 additional confirmed cases of COVID-19

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) announced that as of 0.00am, January 14, the CHP was investigating 29 additional confirmed cases of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), taking the number of cases to 9 415 in Hong Kong so far (comprising 9 414 confirmed cases and one probable case).

Among the newly reported cases announced, three had a travel history during the incubation period.

A total of 607 cases have been recorded in the past 14 days (December 31 to January 13), including 560 local cases of which 169 are from unknown sources.

The CHP's epidemiological investigations and relevant contact tracing on the confirmed cases are ongoing. For case details and contact tracing information, please see the Annex or the list of buildings with confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the past 14 days and the latest local situation of COVID-19 available on the website "COVID-19 Thematic Website" ([www.coronavirus.gov.hk](http://www.coronavirus.gov.hk)).

Meanwhile, the CHP reminded those who had visited specified venues under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Compulsory Testing for Certain Persons) Regulation (Cap. 599J) to receive COVID-19 nucleic acid testing according to the compulsory testing notice. The public are also urged to seek medical attention early if symptoms develop.

In view of the latest epidemic developments in the Mainland, starting tomorrow (January 15), inbound travellers who have been to Jilin Province in the past 14 days arriving via land boundary control points will be provided with specimen collection containers. They are required to collect their deep throat saliva samples by themselves in accordance with the instructions and return the samples for conducting COVID-19 testing. On the other hand, the previous arrangement to provide specimen collection containers to inbound travellers arriving via land boundary control points who have been to Sichuan Province in the past 14 days will be cancelled from tomorrow. These travellers, if they are not exempted persons, are subject to compulsory quarantine for 14 days at a designated place (home or other accommodation) upon arrival in Hong Kong. For the arrangement of distributing specimen collection containers to inbound travelers who have been to Tianjin, Heilongjiang Province, Liaoning Province, Beijing, Hebei Province and Shanxi Province in the past 14 days arriving via land boundary control points, which has come into effect earlier, remains unchanged.

Regarding the severe epidemic situation, the CHP called on members of the public to avoid going out, having social contact and dining out. They

should put on a surgical mask and maintain stringent hand hygiene when they need to go out. The CHP strongly urged the elderly to stay home as far as possible and avoid going out. They should consider asking their family and friends to help with everyday tasks such as shopping for basic necessities.

The spokesman said, "Given that the situation of COVID-19 infection remains severe and that there is a continuous increase in the number of cases reported around the world, members of the public are strongly urged to avoid all non-essential travel outside Hong Kong.

"The CHP also strongly urges the public to maintain at all times strict personal and environmental hygiene, which is key to personal protection against infection and prevention of the spread of the disease in the community. On a personal level, members of the public should wear a surgical mask when having respiratory symptoms, taking public transport or staying in crowded places. They should also perform hand hygiene frequently, especially before touching the mouth, nose or eyes.

"As for household environmental hygiene, members of the public are advised to maintain drainage pipes properly, regularly pour water into drain outlets (U-traps) and cover all floor drain outlets when they are not in use. After using the toilet, they should put the toilet lid down before flushing to avoid spreading germs."

Moreover, the Government has launched the website "COVID-19 Thematic Website" ([www.coronavirus.gov.hk](http://www.coronavirus.gov.hk)) for announcing the latest updates on various news on COVID-19 infection and health advice to help the public understand the latest updates. Members of the public may also gain access to information via the COVID-19 WhatsApp Helpline launched by the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer. Simply by saving 9617 1823 in their phone contacts or clicking the link [wa.me/85296171823?text=hi](https://wa.me/85296171823?text=hi), they will be able to obtain information on COVID-19 as well as the "StayHomeSafe" mobile app and wristband via WhatsApp.

To prevent pneumonia and respiratory tract infections, members of the public should always maintain good personal and environmental hygiene. They are advised to:

- Wear a surgical mask when taking public transport or staying in crowded places. It is important to wear a mask properly, including performing hand hygiene before wearing and after removing a mask;
- Perform hand hygiene frequently, especially before touching the mouth, nose or eyes, after touching public installations such as handrails or doorknobs, or when hands are contaminated by respiratory secretions after coughing or sneezing;
- Maintain drainage pipes properly and regularly (about once a week) pour about half a litre of water into each drain outlet (U-trap) to ensure environmental hygiene;
- Cover all floor drain outlets when they are not in use;
- After using the toilet, put the toilet lid down before flushing to avoid spreading germs;

- Wash hands with liquid soap and water, and rub for at least 20 seconds. Then rinse with water and dry with a disposable paper towel. If hand washing facilities are not available, or when hands are not visibly soiled, performing hand hygiene with 70 to 80 per cent alcohol-based handrub is an effective alternative;
  - Cover your mouth and nose with tissue paper when sneezing or coughing. Dispose of soiled tissues into a lidded rubbish bin, then wash hands thoroughly; and
  - When having respiratory symptoms, wear a surgical mask, refrain from work or attending class at school, avoid going to crowded places and seek medical advice promptly.
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## [Speech by CS at Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce Greater Bay Area Youth Employment Scheme Webinar \(English only\) \(with photos\)](#)

Following is the speech by the Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung, at the Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce (HKGCC) Greater Bay Area Youth Employment Scheme Webinar today (January 14):

Peter (Chairman of the HKGCC, Mr Peter Wong), George (Chief Executive Officer of the HKGCC, Mr George Leung), members of the Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce, ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon. It is my great pleasure to join you all at this webinar to talk about the Greater Bay Area Youth Employment Scheme, which may also be called "GBA YES". Let me first express my sincere gratitude to the Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce, under the capable leadership of Peter, for pulling together this meaningful and timely webinar, and, more importantly, for the invaluable support that the Chamber has lent the Scheme. I noticed that on the day we launched the Scheme, that is last Friday, January 8, the Chamber issued a press statement to pledge your unwavering support, and, more importantly, the Chamber has immediately lined up a long list of your members to provide some 300 positions for the Scheme. Your member enterprises have set a truly remarkable example in the business sector to provide golden career opportunities for our fresh university graduates. I would like to express my deep gratitude for your gracious support.

With the severe blow to Hong Kong's economy by the COVID-19 pandemic, the GBA undoubtedly provides a key direction for reviving Hong Kong's economy after the epidemic. The GBA, with a population exceeding 70 million, provides new impetus to our economy and creates ample development opportunities for

our young people. With support of the Central People's Government, governments of the Guangdong Province and the municipalities in the GBA, the Hong Kong SAR Government has introduced a series of policy initiatives to encourage Hong Kong residents, especially our young people, to study, work and pursue their career in the GBA Mainland cities.

To further leverage such development momentum, the Hong Kong SAR Government has for the first time launched this youth employment scheme. Through encouraging the enterprises to provide employment opportunities and station the graduates to work in GBA Mainland cities, we want to help our fresh graduates to set clear career goals, understand the GBA more deeply and seize the unique opportunities of GBA development. The Governments of Guangdong Province and Shenzhen Municipality have expressed strong support for the Scheme.

The Scheme provides 2 000 places, with some 700 places designated for innovation and technology posts. The Government will provide participating enterprises with a monthly allowance of HK\$10,000 for each qualified graduate employed for up to 18 months. We hope that, with the concerted efforts made by the Hong Kong SAR Government and the business sector, the Scheme would be most successful in helping our university graduates not only to acquire valuable knowledge and establish interpersonal networks to support their career development, but also experience the remarkable progress of the region, which in turn contributes to the continuous prosperity and development for Hong Kong and other partners in the GBA.

Once again, my heartfelt thanks for your support and active participation. This is a singularly important pioneer scheme that enables our youth to receive on-the-job training and gain valuable experience and exposure in the GBA. This is extraordinarily significant in nurturing our young talents, and I strongly encourage members of this Chamber to offer more positions to make this a greater success. Together, surely we will be able to help our youth grow and find a suitable career or even a lifelong career for themselves.

Our colleagues from the Labour Department, Charles (Assistant Commissioner for Labour (Employment Services), Mr Charles Hui) and CK (Senior Labour Officer (Employment Information and Promotion), Mr Yeung Chi-kit); and also from the Innovation and Technology Bureau (ITB), Sandy (Principal Assistant Secretary for Innovation & Technology, Ms Sandy Cheung) and Loretta (Chief Executive Officer (Fund for Better Living) of the ITB, Ms Loretta Wong), will be happy to clarify about any questions. Charles will do a presentation first. Thank you.



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## [CE meets University Grants Committee members \(with photo\)](#)

The Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, met members of the University Grants Committee (UGC) today (January 14) in a video conference to exchange views on the latest developments of the higher education sector.

The UGC Chairman, Mr Carlson Tong, briefed the Chief Executive on the concerted efforts by the UGC and the universities to fight the COVID-19 pandemic and adapt to the "new normal" with an online teaching and learning environment when most face-to-face classes are suspended. Specifically, the UGC had allocated additional funding for the strategic development of virtual teaching and learning, research projects related to COVID-19 and other novel infectious diseases, as well as support services for students in need. The UGC has worked closely with all universities to address various challenges throughout the pandemic together with the implementation of a number of major initiatives, including the Planning Exercise for the 2022-25 triennium, the Research Assessment Exercise 2020 and the Targeted Taught Postgraduate Programmes Fellowships Scheme.

The Chief Executive expressed her gratitude to Mr Tong and all UGC members for the tremendous efforts they have made during an unprecedented challenging environment brought by the COVID-19 pandemic. She said this was her fourth annual meeting with the UGC and she was pleased to note sterling progress made on each and every initiative announced in her previous Policy Addresses to promote Hong Kong's higher education sector. She was particularly grateful to the research and expert support given to the Government by UGC-funded institutions in the enduring battle against the pandemic.

Mrs Lam said that significant developments would take place during the year 2021. These include discussions between the UGC and the Government on the 2022-25 triennium funding and the outcome of the Research Assessment Exercise 2020. She also briefed UGC members on the Global STEM Professorship Scheme she announced in the 2020 Policy Address and looked to

members for their support, in particular overseas members, in identifying suitable talents to come to teach and conduct research in UGC-funded institutions.

Mrs Lam remarked that the city's quality universities represented Hong Kong's strengths in national, regional and global contexts, and she was appreciative of the vision and commitment of some institutions planning to set up a new campus in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area. The Government would continue to render support to such endeavours.

Mr Tong thanked the Chief Executive for her tremendous support for UGC-funded universities over the past few years. The UGC would continue to spare no efforts in performing its role as a bridge between the Government and universities, and would provide expert advice to the Government on the funding and strategic development of higher education in Hong Kong.

