

Youth Development Commission convenes seventh meeting

The Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung, chaired the seventh meeting of the Youth Development Commission (YDC) held online today (January 12).

Members noted the new initiatives on youth development in the Chief Executive's 2020 Policy Address. Amongst them, the Government has launched the Greater Bay Area Youth Employment Scheme to support Hong Kong young people to seize the career development opportunities in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA). Through the scheme, the Government encourages enterprises with operations in both Hong Kong and GBA Mainland cities to recruit and deploy local university graduates to work in the GBA Mainland cities. Participating enterprises will be paid a monthly allowance of \$10,000 for each graduate employed for up to 18 months. The Scheme will offer 2 000 places, including around 700 for innovation and technology posts. The scheme was launched last Friday (January 8) and has started to accept applications and submission of job vacancies from enterprises.

Furthermore, the YDC has introduced the Funding Scheme for Youth Entrepreneurship in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area to subsidise non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to provide entrepreneurial support and incubation services that befit the needs of young people starting their businesses in Hong Kong and GBA Mainland cities, including helping them settle in entrepreneurial bases, and to further meet their initial capital needs. In response to the Policy Address measure to raise the funding of the current-round funding scheme, the YDC discussed and agreed to introduce the following enhancement measures:

(1) To raise the funding of the start-up capital component by one-third on a pro rata basis, i.e. to raise the funding limit from \$4.5 million to \$6 million, while the matching fund from the NGO shall remain the same (i.e. at \$1.5 million). At the same time, the funding limit for each youth start-up shall also remain at \$600,000, thereby enabling the funded NGOs to deploy their funds flexibly to benefit more eligible start-ups; and

(2) To raise the funding of the service component by 10 per cent, i.e. to raise the funding limit from \$1 million per year to \$1.1 million per year (i.e. the maximum funding available for each NGO will be increased from \$3 million to \$3.3 million), thereby providing sufficient resources for the NGOs to provide services to additional youth start-ups. The YDC will also raise the funding for the NGOs to provide entrepreneurial support to start-ups, with a view to strengthening their corporate governance, adaptability and digital competence.

Mr Cheung said, "The GBA development is an important strategy for the further reform and opening up of the country, as well as a key way forward

for Hong Kong's economic recovery after the epidemic. The GBA would provide Hong Kong young people with a new runway for employment and entrepreneurship."

In addition, the YDC agreed to introduce a new thematic funding scheme under the Youth Development Fund to subsidise eligible NGOs to collaborate with schools to provide systematic, quality and sizeable local outdoor adventure training activities for young people. At the meeting, members agreed that the new scheme could nurture young people's resilience and positive thinking, and guide their healthy development through adventure activities. Members provided specific opinions and suggestions on the elements of funded activities of the new scheme, target youth participants and requirements for NGOs. The Task Force on Youth Development Fund and Programmes would follow up and implement relevant details. Subject to the developments of the epidemic, the new scheme is expected to be launched in the first half of 2021.

Members noted the progress of various youth development projects under the YDC. In response to the discussion and suggestions at the YDC's first policy thematic meeting held in August last year, the YDC had agreed to further enhance the Funding Scheme for Youth Life Planning Activities (2019-22) and introduced the Intensive Support Service for Secondary School Students and Leavers in November last year. Under the support service, the 24 currently funded NGOs were provided with one-off additional funding for a period of one year to provide comprehensive, in-depth and sustainable counselling services, particularly for secondary school students who have yet to have a clear progression or employment path as well as students in need. The relevant services are expected to be rolled out in the first quarter this year.

The YDC held two online workshops last Thursday (January 7) to discuss the multiple pathways and development opportunities in the GBA for young people. The YDC will also conduct the second policy thematic meeting via Facebook live webcast on January 19 to further discuss the multiple pathways and development opportunities for young people after their graduation. Please refer to [YDC's Facebook page](#) for more details.

[Government announces enhancement measures under the \\$2 Scheme \(with video\)](#)

The Government announced today (January 12) the completion of the final report by the consultant commissioned by the Government to review the Government Public Transport Fare Concession Scheme for the Elderly and

Eligible Persons with Disabilities (the \$2 Scheme), and the implementation of enhancement and anti-abuse measures under the \$2 Scheme.

The Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong, said, "The consultant commissioned by the Government proposed a number of recommendations in the final report. Having thoroughly examined the recommendations, we have decided to adopt various enhancement measures under the \$2 Scheme. In addition to extending the \$2 Scheme to red mini buses, kaitos and the tramways on specified conditions, the eligible age will be lowered to benefit more than 600 000 persons aged 60 to 64."

In summary, the enhancement and anti-abuse measures include:

1. implementing the lowering of the eligible age on the strict condition that persons aged 60 to 64 must apply for and use tailor-made Personalised Octopus Cards (P-Cards) with photo and age eligibility as a prerequisite for benefitting from the concessionary fare;
2. extending the mandatory requirement of using P-Cards to all existing beneficiaries aged 65 and above in the following two years upon completion of the issue of P-Cards to new beneficiaries;
3. requiring all public transport operators under the \$2 Scheme to enhance ticket inspections and passenger identifications, and to strictly enforce the penalty as set out in relevant legislation and by-laws; launch publicity programmes to enhance public awareness towards any abuse of the \$2 Scheme and to remind beneficiaries of making appropriate use of "section fare" to ensure proper use of public money;
4. extending the \$2 Scheme to red mini buses and kaitos on the condition of their strict compliance with the Transport Department's monitoring conditions prior to their admission, including registration with the department of origin and destination of the routes and fares, installation of an Octopus payment system on admitted routes to ensure adherence to pre-set registered fares for calculating reimbursement of differential fares, as well as compliance with its regular reporting and audit requirements;
5. upon lowering the eligible age of the \$2 Scheme to 60, extending the \$2 Scheme to the tramways on the condition that Hong Kong Tramways Limited will adhere to the standard requirements under the \$2 Scheme (i.e. participating public transport operators will only be reimbursed the difference between the full adult fare and the \$2 flat rate); and
6. making appropriate adjustments to the fixed rate of \$2 every five years to reflect the real value of the beneficiary's contribution in light of fare increases.

Furthermore, the consultant pointed out that Residents' Services primarily serve property owners and residents of specific private residential developments with the fares being determined on the basis of the mutual agreement of the operators concerned and the owners or residents groups of relevant properties, and thus did not recommend Residents' Services be

covered by the \$2 Scheme. The consultant also pointed out that the public generally supported that the \$2 Scheme should be restricted to local elderly residents. The Government adopted the consultant's recommendation and noted that the current problem will be resolved upon implementation of the mandatory use of P-Cards by local beneficiaries.

Upon confirmation of the technical specifications for P-Cards, the Government estimates that the issue of P-Cards to some 600 000 new beneficiaries aged 60 to 64 may be completed within 13 months. If passage of all relevant procedures proceeds smoothly, including the appropriation procedures under the Legislative Council, the Government may implement progressively this measure and other enhancement measures from the first quarter of 2022.

The Government commissioned a consultant to conduct a comprehensive review of the effectiveness and sustainability of the \$2 Scheme and possible enhancements having regard to demographic trends, operational considerations, public aspirations and financial commitments. The consultant conducted public engagement sessions in 2019 with stakeholders including public transport operators, concern groups of the elderly and persons with disabilities, district personalities, etc. Furthermore, the Chief Executive announced in January 2020 the eligible age of the \$2 Scheme would be lowered from 65 to 60 to benefit some 600 000 persons aged 60 to 64. In this regard, the consultant was required to take into account this improvement measure in finalising the assessment and recommendations in the consultancy report. The Chief Executive further announced in the Policy Address in November 2020 that on the premise of being able to combat and prevent abuse effectively, the Government would include the required funding in the 2021-22 Budget with a view to progressive implementation within that financial year.

The consultant's final report has been uploaded onto the website of the Labour and Welfare Bureau (www.lwb.gov.hk).

Public hospitals daily update on COVID-19 cases

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

As at 9am today (January 12), 56 COVID-19 confirmed patients were discharged from hospital in the last 24 hours. So far, a total of 8 524 patients with confirmed or probable infection have been discharged.

At present, there are 678 negative pressure rooms in public hospitals with 1 235 negative pressure beds activated. A total of 568 confirmed patients are currently hospitalised in 25 public hospitals and a community treatment facility, among which 40 patients are in critical condition, 35 are

in serious condition and the remaining 493 patients are in stable condition. Moreover, an 81-year-old male patient (case number: 8636), with chronic illness and confirmed with COVID-19 infection, succumbed in Princess Margaret Hospital at 3.29pm today. Including this patient, 156 COVID-19 patients have passed away in public hospitals so far.

The Hospital Authority will maintain close contact with the Centre for Health Protection to monitor the latest developments and to inform the public and healthcare workers on the latest information in a timely manner.

Details of the above-mentioned patients are as follows:

| Patient condition | Case numbers |
|-------------------|--|
| Discharged | 6561, 6722, 7986, 7996, 8014, 8076, 8235, 8252, 8360, 8365, 8433, 8451, 8461, 8510, 8516, 8563, 8651, 8658, 8677, 8698, 8702, 8732, 8737, 8754, 8761, 8785, 8806, 8831, 8874, 8883, 8892, 8898, 8901, 8906, 8908, 8909, 8913, 8925, 8926, 8927, 8933, 8966, 8967, 8968, 8973, 8975, 9009, 9019, 9025, 9028, 9048, 9054, 9065, 9095, 9123, 9279 |
| Critical | 1989, 3496, 5409, 5511, 5735, 5754, 6125, 6232, 6255, 6444, 6547, 6607, 6754, 6794, 6913, 7021, 7123, 7259, 7323, 7424, 7680, 8018, 8055, 8078, 8126, 8195, 8323, 8384, 8449, 8452, 8564, 8820, 8900, 8937, 9031, 9049, 9060, 9062, 9164, 9267 |
| Serious | 5739, 5745, 5990, 6386, 6543, 6824, 6850, 6920, 6921, 7076, 7208, 7305, 7468, 7632, 7653, 7824, 7964, 8443, 8446, 8477, 8558, 8587, 8611, 8729, 8819, 8832, 8931, 9040, 9045, 9055, 9081, 9124, 9133, 9166, 9185 |

[CHP investigates 60 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 12, the CHP was investigating 60 additional confirmed cases of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), taking the number of cases to 9 344 in Hong Kong so far (comprising 9 343 confirmed cases and one probable case).

A total of 612 cases have been recorded in the past 14 days (December 29 to January 11), including 555 local cases of which 173 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).

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.

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) 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, 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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A male police constable posted to Railway District preliminarily tested positive for COVID-19

A 50-year-old male Police Constable who is posted to the Patrol Sub-unit of Island Rail Line, Railway District, preliminarily tested positive for the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19). Feeling unwell on January 11, he consulted a doctor with the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) test conducted on the same day. He was preliminarily tested positive today (January 12). He has no travel history in the past 14 days. He wore face mask during his tour of duty. His last working day was January 7.

Police are highly concerned and have the following messages:

(1) While awaiting further assessment and recommendations from the Department of Health (DH), officers that might have come into close contact with the police officer have been arranged to quarantine for observation and undergo tests for the virus;

(2) Police have deployed staff to clean and disinfect the premises where the officer works in;

(3) Police have reminded officers to maintain personal hygiene and reduce social contact to minimise the risk of infection. They should immediately report their cases and consult a doctor if they feel unwell; and

(4) Police will deploy resources flexibly to ensure the provision of emergency services remains unaffected.

Police will continue to maintain close communication with the DH and proactively provide information such as the recent duty record and roster of the police officer concerned. Arrangements will be made for close contacts to be conveyed to quarantine centres to undergo quarantine.