

**For information
on 16 March 2020**

Legislative Council Panel on Public Service

Engagement of Agency Staff by the Hospital Authority

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on the engagement of agency staff by the Hospital Authority (“HA”).

Engagement of Agency Staff

2. The HA employs and deploys agency staff according to service demand. Agency staff engaged by the HA provides services mainly in hospital wards. In compiling duty rosters, the staff-in-charge of the unit or ward would estimate the workload of the nursing staff and health care assistants in that particular unit or ward, and assess the staffing requirements based on factors such as the number of patients, patient dependency and nursing activities in the unit or ward. If the number of full-time nurses and health care assistants deployed cannot meet the staffing requirements, arrangements will be made for part-time nurses, agency nurses, part-time health care assistants or agency health care assistants to be on duty. The engagement of agency staff is one of the HA’s short-term measures to alleviate the manpower situation.

Duties of Agency Staff

3. The entry requirements for full-time nurses, part-time nurses and agency nurses set by the HA are the same, i.e. applicants must hold valid practising certificates issued by the Nursing Council of Hong Kong. While the full-time nurses and part-time nurses are mainly responsible for providing nursing care to patient and assisting other healthcare personnel in patient care, agency nurses are mainly responsible for assisting full-time and part-time nurses in the patient care given their higher turnover rate.

Agency health care assistants would be engaged in basic patient care support. In general, the terms of employment and salaries of agency staff are set by individual agencies, while the HA sets out the terms in the tenders regarding the provision of services by the agencies, having regard to its service needs.

Training and Assessment

4. Regarding the training of agency nurses and agency health care assistants, the HA has incorporated terms and conditions in tenders, stating and specifying that agencies are required to provide necessary pre-employment training, and will request agencies to provide relevant training records as and when needed. Moreover, the unit or the ward in-charge concerned provides orientation for agency nurses and health care assistants to ensure that the service needs are met and the relevant workflow followed. The nurse-in-charge also provides the agencies with feedback on the performance of agency nurses and health care assistants for appropriate follow-up.

Manpower Position

5. The HA Head Office has, since December 2017, collated statistics from all hospital clusters on the man-hours provided by agency staff during the winter demand surge period. The numbers of man-hours of agency staff by ranks during the 2017-18 winter surge (from December 2017 to May 2018), 2018-19 winter surge (from December 2018 to May 2019), and 2019-20 winter surge (as at December 2019), are tabulated below –

Rank	No. of man-hours hired		
	2017-18 winter surge (from December 2017 to May 2018)	2018-19 winter surge (from December 2018 to May 2019)	2019-20 winter surge (as at December 2019)
Registered Nurse	132 622.1	141 808.4	25 546.3
Enrolled Nurse	62 226.7	72 085.8	11 959.0
Health Care Assistant	193 104.9	268 728.4	61 422.4
Total	387 953.7	482 622.6	98 927.7

Advice Sought

6. Members are invited to note the content of the paper.

Food and Health Bureau

Hospital Authority

March 2020