For discussion on
16 November 2026

Legislative Council Panel on Public Service

Update on Family-friendly Employment Measures for Government Employees

Purpose

This paper updates Members on the family-friendly employment measures provided for government employees.

Background

2. As announced in Hong Kong's First Five-year Plan and the 2026 Policy Address, the coming five years will be a critical period for Hong Kong to achieve higher-quality development. The Government must steadfastly undertake succession planning, attract and retain talent, and build a professional and highly efficient civil service team. In particular, the Government is committed to creating a family-friendly working environment to facilitate its employees to better cope with both work and family commitments.

3. The Government reviews the prevailing family-friendly employment arrangements from time to time and, under the principle of striking a balance between the needs of employees, maintaining the quality of public services and prudent use of public money, enhances existing measures or introduces new ones. The family-friendly employment benefits currently enjoyed by government employees include various types of relevant leave, the five-day week, enhanced special work arrangements on festivals or their eves, as well as breastfeeding-friendly workplaces. It was also announced in the 2026 Policy Address that family care leave will be provided for government employees to further facilitate employees in balancing work and family responsibilities. The framework of the new measure and the details of other existing measures are set out below.

Leave Related to Meeting Family Needs

<u>Favourable Consideration of Vacation Leave Applications on Family Grounds</u>

4. The leave terms enjoyed by civil servants are no less favourable than those in the private sector to provide sufficient flexibility for coping with different

personal and family needs, demonstrating the Government's commitment to caring for the family needs of its employees. The Government has been encouraging departmental management to accord priority to vacation leave applications from staff on family grounds. In case of insufficient leave balance, civil servants may apply for advanced leave up to 12 days or unpaid vacation leave with full justifications. Such applications will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Introduction of Family Care Leave

5. Over the past three years, the Government introduced and enhanced marriage leave, compassionate leave and childcare leave for government employees (including civil servants and employees appointed on non-civil service terms regardless of their terms of appointment and duration of service; the same hereinafter). Since the implementation of these measures, the Government has been closely monitoring their operation and listening to views of the staff side and other stakeholders with a view to making timely adjustments. Specifically, taking into consideration staff feedback that the ageing population has led to some employees having to accompany elderly family members for medical consultations more frequently, and that staff with young children also look forward to greater flexibility to balance work and childcare needs, the Government responded proactively and announced in the 2026 Policy Address the introduction of family care leave starting from 2027 as the fourth type of leave related to meeting family needs.

6. Family care leave allows employees to be temporarily released from work under specific circumstances to attend to family needs, including accompanying their family members to medical appointments, taking care of their ill family members, attending school activities of their children, and attending to household emergencies. Each government employee will be entitled to a maximum of 12 hours of family care leave per year. Any untaken leave at the end of each calendar year cannot be carried forward to the next calendar year. Family care leave will be granted on an hourly basis. Employees may apply for a duration of one to four hours of family care leave on each occasion to take care of family matters, such as accompanying their family members to medical appointments, attending parent-teacher meetings at their children's school, attending to household emergencies, etc.. If more time is required to settle the family matters, employees should apply for vacation leave or other applicable leave.

7. To uphold the "people-oriented" principle and enhance family-friendliness, the application and approval procedures for family care leave will provide sufficient flexibility and be streamlined as far as possible. In particular, under normal circumstances, an officer is only required to submit an application record form stating the ground for application prior to taking family care leave, without having to provide documentary proof. Where an officer is not able to

submit an application in advance due to unforeseen circumstances, he/she may seek approval-in-principle for his/her absence from the approving authority verbally or by other means, and submit the application record form as soon as practicable after the leave. If the approving authority has any reasonable doubt about the application or sees any signs of abuse of family care leave, he/she may request the applicant to produce documentary proof, and accept various forms of documentation (such as medical certificate, attendance slip, school notice, etc.) taking into account the actual circumstances.

8. The Civil Service Bureau (CSB) is finalising the relevant details and implementation arrangements for family care leave. After consultation with the staff side, family care leave is expected to be implemented from January 2027.

Implemented: Marriage Leave, Compassionate Leave and Childcare Leave

9. The Government has implemented marriage leave and compassionate leave since April 2024 to help employees cope with both work responsibilities and family needs. Government employees may apply for up to three days of marriage leave or compassionate leave on each occasion of their marriage or the death of their family members. As of 30 June 2026, a total of about 7 500 applications for marriage leave and about 23 000 applications for compassionate leave were approved.

10. In addition, the Government launched childcare leave in April 2025, with a view to facilitating government employees with young children to allocate time to care for their infants and toddlers. Government employees may apply for three days of childcare leave each year in respect of each child under the age of three. As of 30 June 2026, a total of about 15 600 applications for childcare leave were approved.

Full-pay Maternity Leave and Paternity Leave

11. To allow government employees more time to spend with and take care of their newborn children and their wives after childbirth, the Government has taken the lead in providing eligible employees [1] with maternity leave and paternity leave benefits that are more favourable than the statutory requirements. Since 2018, eligible female government employees have been entitled to 14 weeks of maternity leave, and about 12 000 applications for maternity leave were approved as of 30 June 2026. Moreover, eligible male government employees have been entitled to five days of paternity leave since as early as 2012, and about 41 900 applications for paternity leave were approved as of 30 June 2026.

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[1] This refers to all government employees who have completed more than 40 weeks of continuous service before taking maternity leave or paternity leave.

12. Regarding pay arrangements, all eligible government employees are entitled to full pay during their maternity or paternity leave period, and the maternity leave pay is not subject to a cap for the 11th to 14th week of the maternity leave as stipulated under the Employment Ordinance [2]. The arrangement is more favourable than that under the Employment Ordinance which calculates maternity leave pay and paternity leave pay at four-fifths of the employee's average daily wages.

Five-day Week

13. The Government has all along been endeavouring to promote the five-day week (FDW) initiative with the policy objective to improve the quality of civil servants' family life without compromising the level and efficiency of public services or incurring additional costs to taxpayers. The Government conducts biennial surveys to keep in view the implementation of FDW for staff in bureaux and departments (B/Ds). The statistics in 2024 showed that around 85% [3] of civil servants were working on an FDW pattern. We are currently compiling statistics on the relevant data in 2026, and will report the latest developments to the Panel in early 2027.

14. The FDW initiative is a family-friendly measure, but not part of the conditions of service, and we must strike an appropriate balance between improving the quality of life for civil servants and ensuring the prudent use of public resources as well as not compromising the provision of public services. Whether civil servants can work on an FDW pattern or not, therefore, depends on the actual operation and service demands of their positions. It is inevitable that some posts or jobs (especially for those providing emergency and essential services) need to remain on a non-FDW work pattern. Nevertheless, the CSB will continue to encourage those departments which have not fully implemented FDW to employ such means as harnessing technology and explore, in a pragmatic manner and subject to the four basic principles (i.e. no additional staffing resources; no reduction in the conditioned hours of work of individual staff; no reduction in emergency services; and continued provision of essential counter services on Saturdays/Sundays), ways to enable more civil servants to migrate to the FDW work pattern.

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[2] Under the Employment Ordinance, if an employee's maternity leave pay calculated at four-fifths of her average daily wages for the 11th to 14th week exceeds $80,000, the employer may pay $80,000 for those four weeks only.

[3] This included civil servants who were on FDW trial schemes, but excluded civil servants working in government schools, the Judiciary, the Hospital Authority, the Vocational Training Council, the Hong Kong Monetary Authority, the Independent Commission Against Corruption and the Legal Aid Services Council.

Enhancing Special Work Arrangements on Festivals or Their Eves

15. With a view to further facilitating employees in taking care of their family needs during working days on specific festivals, starting from January 2025, government departments may allow employees to leave work early for up to two hours on up to three of five festivals or their eves (i.e. Lunar New Year's Eve, Mid-Autumn Festival, Winter Solstice Day, Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve), depending on their operational arrangements and on the premise of not affecting public service delivery. As this measure is a special arrangement and not part of the conditions of service, its implementation in individual departments is subject to the workload and actual operational needs of the department.

Breastfeeding-friendly Workplace

16. To provide appropriate support for lactating mothers when they return to work and promote an inclusive culture for breastfeeding in the workplace, the Government has been encouraging B/Ds to implement the "Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace" policy [4], facilitating staff to sustain breastfeeding for a year after childbirth. The Department of Health has issued guidelines for employers and employees, providing specific recommendations to support breastfeeding. Specific measures include allowing staff to have one to two lactation breaks for expression of breastmilk every working day; providing a private space with a seat and an electric outlet (for operating breast pumps); and providing refrigerating facilities for proper storage of expressed breastmilk. Moreover, the Government has stipulated the provision of babycare room facilities and lactation rooms in some new government premises for providing postnatal staff with a private and suitable environment for expression of breastmilk. As of 31 July 2026, there were about 450 babycare rooms in government premises.

Other Family-friendly Employment Measures

17. The Government provides part-time job positions under the Non-Civil Service Contract Staff Scheme (the Scheme), offering employment opportunities for individuals who are unable to work full-time due to family care needs. The CSB has clearly indicated the positions under the Scheme on the Government's recruitment website to facilitate job seekers' access to relevant recruitment information. As of 30 June 2026, a total of about 5 500 part-time contract

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[4] The Health Bureau and Department of Health have been promoting and encouraging the implementation of "Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace" policy in government departments and the private sector through various channels. A "Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace" is where an organisation or enterprise provides an enabling and friendly environment for their lactating employees to sustain breastfeeding after they return to work.

positions were provided by B/Ds, involving a wide array of job types including administrative and clerical work, technical support, as well as customer service.

Way Forward

18. The CSB will consult the staff side on the detailed arrangements for family care leave with a view to implementing the initiative in 2027. At the same time, as a good employer, the Government will continue to review the prevailing arrangements in a timely manner and listen to the views and suggestions of the staff side and other stakeholders. Under the principle of striking a proper balance between taking care of its employees' family needs, maintaining the quality of public services and prudent use of public money, the Government will progressively explore room for providing its employees with a family-friendly working environment, thereby attracting and retaining talent, as well as enhancing work efficiency and morale.

Advice Sought

19. Members are invited to note the content of this paper.

Civil Service Bureau
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