



THE  
**LAW SOCIETY**  
OF HONG KONG  
香港律師會

# 法律同行 齊心抗疫

## WE UNITE, WE STRIVE

### **The Law Society of Hong Kong's Support Measures for the Legal Professionals and Members of the Public amid the Pandemic**

The COVID-19 pandemic has severely impacted our lives and economy. The business of many lawyers and law firms has also been adversely affected to various degrees. In view of this, the Council of The Law Society of Hong Kong has resolved to implement a number of support measures, through the sharing of professional expertise and collective positivities, to help our members and the public go through these difficult times of the pandemic. The Law Society hosted an online media briefing today (18 March 2022) to introduce these measures. Please click [here](#) to review the media briefing. A summary is as follows:

#### **Support Measures for the Public**

##### **1. Explaining legal issues relating to the pandemic**

The Law Society is planning to collaborate with the Agency for Voluntary Service to produce short videos, which will feature volunteer solicitors explaining legal issues of particular concern to members of the public during the pandemic, for instance, issues related to employees' rights under the Employment Ordinance, personal injuries and how people can go about civil and criminal litigations during the temporary closure of courts in the General Adjournment Period. The videos will be made available to the public via the social media platforms of the two organisations.

Besides, members of the public can make use of the Law Society's Free Legal Consultation Service and the Free Legal Helpline 8200 8002 to obtain a free preliminary legal advice session up to 45 minutes in duration. For details, please visit "[Pro Bono Legal Services](#)" of the Law Society website.

##### **2. Giving back to the community**

The Law Society has been fulfilling its social responsibilities by participating in community work. Recently, some members of the Council of The Law Society already took the initiative to hand out anti-pandemic supplies to families in need.

The Law Society sincerely appeals to our members to make all forms of donations to help build a caring community. The Law Society will also be forming a team of volunteer solicitors to reach out to render assistance to the community, for example by distributing anti-pandemic supplies to people in need.

### **3. Law Week and Teen Talk**

During the pandemic, the Law Society will continue our community projects as far as practicable. An annual flagship programme of the Law Society for more than 30 years, Law Week aims at promoting legal services and enhancing legal knowledge of the general public. Every year, Teen Talk delivers a series of law-themed activities for students to gain insights into the meaning of the rule of law through group discussions, seminars, debates, mootings and guided visits.

### **4. COVID-19 Online Dispute Resolution Scheme**

eBRAM, of which the Law Society is one of the co-founders and managers, has been appointed as an Online Dispute Resolution service provider to provide members of the public and enterprises with e-negotiation, e-mediation, and e-arbitration services dedicated to the early resolution of COVID-19 related disputes. With a registration fee of only HK\$200 for each party, the maximum claim amount is HK\$500,000.

### **5. Open Letter to medical professionals, healthcare workers and volunteers**

Mr C. M. Chan, President of the Law Society, yesterday (17 March) issued an Open Letter to express his gratitude and admiration for all medical professionals, healthcare workers and volunteers who have been devoting their united effort and wholeheartedness on the forefront of this hard battle against the virus to help build a caring community and keep the public safe.

### **Support Measures for Members**

#### **6. Waivers and points to note for work from home arrangements**

According to the relevant Practice Directions, legal practices must be conducted in self-contained premises, such as the office premises of law firms, because solicitors have a legal and professional duty to their clients to hold in strict confidence all information concerning the business and affair of their clients.

The Council of The Law Society has considered the practical situation of the pandemic and resolved to grant waivers from the aforesaid requirements in relation to the work from home arrangements that Hong Kong firms and registered foreign firms have put in place as a result of the pandemic. Despite the waivers, the principals of law firms are still required to ensure their practices are in compliance with all rules and regulations governing their practices,

particularly the provisions on remote supervision, client confidentiality, and the anti-money laundering requirements on client identification and verification.

The waivers are for a specific term, currently granted until 7 April 2022. Depending on the development of the pandemic situation, the term of the waivers can be further extended where necessary.

## **7. Meeting with the Judiciary Administration**

Earlier this week, the Law Society had met with the Judiciary Administration to discuss the vaccine pass arrangements and related administrative measures in the event of stay-home orders being in force in order to facilitate law firms' operations and minimise disruptions to their business arising from stay-home orders.

As all hearings have been adjourned till 11 April 2022, at the meeting, we reflected to the Judiciary Administration our views on the wider application of hearings by paper disposal and remote hearings for civil cases. For criminal cases, we discussed the prospect of legislative arrangements to allow remote hearings. We reviewed the progress for defining court documents. We also discussed the possibility of paper admission of trainee solicitors, etc.

## **8. Legal Talent Recruitment Scheme (Trainee Solicitors)**

Since last year, The Law Society has been administering the Legal Talent Recruitment Scheme (Trainee Solicitors), which is funded by the Anti-epidemic Fund, to provide each eligible law firm with a monthly salary subsidy for one newly created job opening for a trainee solicitor. The application period commenced in July last year and ended in January this year. Over 100 applications have been received.

The Law Society is now actively discussing with the Department of Justice to roll out another round of the recruitment scheme in order to continue to create new job opportunities during the pandemic and ensure a steady and sufficient supply of legal talent. We will announce details of the scheme in due course.

## **9. Liaison with Government departments and public body**

The Law Society has also been in touch with a number of Government departments and public body to enquire about the administrative arrangements for and legal consequences of stay-home orders. We will continue to liaise, discuss and follow up with these organisations, keep abreast of the latest situation and reflect our members' concern.

## **10. Exploring opportunities in Greater China region**

During the pandemic, the Law Society remains committed to maintaining strong connection with counterparts in the Greater China region. Our Greater China Legal Affairs Committee will continue to promote Hong Kong legal services and explore business opportunities in

the Greater Bay Area, the Mainland, Taiwan and Macau for our members. We will continue to organise online seminars with lawyers associations in the Greater Bay Area to discuss how legal practitioners in Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macau can handle relevant legal matters in the three jurisdictions. For the fourth year in a row, the Law Society is co-organising with the Peking University Law School a legal course. The title of this year's course is "An Introduction to Legal Services and Risk Management for Cross-border Transaction".

#### **11. Distribution of RAT kits to members**

The Law Society is grateful to lawyers associations in the Mainland for their kind donations of Rapid Antigen Test kits. The Law Society will be distributing these kits to our members and staff members of the Secretariat of the Law Society for the benefit of early detection of the virus and peace of mind.

#### **12. To address members' difficulties**

To address members' difficulties, the Law Society is developing online platform(s) whereby members can raise concerns and request assistance in areas such as work from home arrangements; issues arising from the General Adjournment Period of courts; staff shortage arising from staff being infected or quarantined; arrangements for remote operations; wellness support for staff, etc.

The Law Society will refer the concerns and enquiries to the relevant departments of the Secretariat for timely follow-up. Where appropriate, we will also take up the issues with relevant government departments and organisations. The information gathered will also help the Law Society and its relevant committees devise further support measures for members.

#### **13. Official social media accounts**

The Law Society is going to launch its official social media accounts to enhance communication with members and the general public. Relevant support measures amid the pandemic will also be published on these platforms.

#### **Continuation of essential services**

The Law Society has already put in place contingency plans to cater for the event of stay-home orders being in force. If the Law Society office has to be temporarily closed, special arrangements will be in place to provide essential services to members of the Law Society and the general public.

**The Law Society of Hong Kong**

**18 March 2022**