

**LegCo Panel on Manpower
(Meeting to be held on 18 July 2002)**

**Measures to promote employment opportunities
for people with disabilities**

Introduction

The Administration's objective is to ensure that people with disabilities have an equal chance to participate in productive and gainful employment in the open market. A wide range of measures are in place to facilitate open employment both in the public and private sectors. Supported and sheltered employment is provided for those who cannot cope with the demands of the competitive open market. This paper outlines the measures currently being taken by the Administration to promote employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

Employment services for people with disabilities

2. The Labour Department (LD) is tasked with assisting people with disabilities in securing open employment. Apart from providing disabled job-seekers with employment counselling, job matching and referral, and post-placement follow-up services, placement officers also actively pay visits to employers of public and private organizations to canvass vacancies for disabled job-seekers. The department provided assistance to 4,128 people with disabilities seeking open employment in 2001, and helped 2,348 of them to find employment, representing a placement rate of 57%.

3. For those people with disabilities who cannot or who are not yet ready to return to open employment, there are 55 sheltered workshops with 7,527 places and 1,870 supported employment places operated by Social Welfare Department (SWD) and NGOs under government subvention.

Employment of People with Disabilities in the Civil Service

4. As the largest employer in Hong Kong, the Government fully recognises

the importance of taking a lead in the employment of people with disabilities. The Administration's policy is to place people with disabilities in appropriate jobs in the civil service wherever possible. Job-seekers with disabilities who meet the basic entry requirements will be invited for interview. If they are found suitable for employment, they will be given an appropriate degree of preference for appointment over other applicants. At present, there are about 3,600 civil servants with disabilities, representing about two per cent of the overall strength of the civil service.

5. The LD has been working in close collaboration with the Civil Service Bureau (CSB) to encourage government departments to employ more people with disabilities through joint promotional visits. Talks and seminars are also conducted to enhance government departments' understanding of the working abilities of people with disabilities. The LD also actively takes note of advertisements for government posts and refers suitable people with disabilities to the recruiting departments for consideration. A central fund has been established to provide technical aids for officers with disabilities in the civil service to assist them to better discharge their duties. A booklet titled "Working with People with Disabilities in the Civil Service" has recently been published by CSB to advise government departments of the principles on the employment of people with disabilities in the civil service and practical tips on how to work with them.

Measures to promote employment opportunities of people with disabilities

6. The Administration has taken various measures to enhance the employment opportunities of people with disabilities. These are set out in the paragraphs below.

Trial Placement Scheme for People with Disabilities

7. The scheme was first launched by the LD in September 2000. The scheme aimed at encouraging employer to offer job vacancies to try out the working abilities of people with disabilities through a one-month trial placement, thereby enhancing employers' understanding of their working abilities and hence voluntary employment of them. Participating employers would receive a small financial incentive equivalent to half of the wages paid in the trial period (with a ceiling of HK\$3,000). The scheme was well received by employers and disabled persons, and results were encouraging. Up till the conclusion of the scheme in January 2002, a total of 389 vacancies were offered by 230 employers for trial placement. 228 (77%) of the 295 disabled persons participating in the 1-month

trial placement were offered full employment by the participating employers. The scheme was highly cost-effective in enhancing the employment opportunities of the disabled. With an average financial incentive of \$2,028 per case, 77% of the 295 trial workers could enjoy full employment after the trial, earning an average monthly salary of \$5,000.

New "Trial Placement cum Mentor Scheme for People with Disabilities"

8. To continue this highly meaningful project, the LD secured a funding of \$1.9 million to launch a new "Trial Placement cum Mentor Scheme for People with a Disability" for a further three years commencing January 2002. About 600 disabled job-seekers will be able to benefit from the scheme in the three years. Under the new scheme, "mentors" are also appointed to help the disabled trial workers to settle in their jobs more easily. Successful mentors will be awarded a cash reward of \$500 and a certificate as a token of appreciation. Initial results of the new scheme are again encouraging, with 76 (90%) of the 84 trial workers being offered full employment after the one-month trial.

Self Help Integrated Placement Service (SHIPS)

9. The SHIPS programme has been developed and implemented by the LD since April 2000. The programme aims at encouraging and helping job-seekers with disabilities to be more proactive and independent in the search for jobs. Group counselling sessions are provided to the disabled job-seekers to improve their job searching skills and interviewing techniques. Computer facilities (including internet browsing), telephones and fax machines, and access to the update careers information are made available to them in the employment offices. Parallel to the continual placement service rendered by the department, these disabled job-seekers are encouraged to search and apply for suitable jobs on their own initiative. As at 30 June 2002, 1,528 job-seekers with disabilities have participated in the scheme. They have made a total of 6,445 self-initiated job applications. The programme achieved an overall placement rate of 70%, a figure which compares favourably with the general placement rate of 57% for disabled job-seekers of the department in 2001.

10. In addition, the LD has just produced 10,000 sets of "Self Learning Kit on Job-searching Skills for People with Disabilities" to help the disabled job-seekers to improve their job-searching skills and interviewing techniques, thereby enhancing their employment opportunities.

Interactive Employment Service for People with Disabilities through the Internet

11. To provide better employment services to the disabled job-seekers and to enhance their employment opportunities, the LD is embarking on the establishment of an interactive web site to provide employment services to the disabled job-seekers and their prospective employers through the Internet. The interactive web site will (1) allow display of profiles of disabled job-seekers and job vacancy information through the Internet for user browsing, (2) receive registrations for employment service from disabled job-seekers through the Internet, (3) receive vacancy orders from employers through the Internet, and (4) provide user employers and disabled job-seekers with useful information on the services and support available to them. The interactive web site is planned to roll out in November 2002.

Public Education and Promotional Programmes

12. The LD regularly organizes various public education and promotional programmes to promote public acceptance of people with disabilities and to enhance their employment opportunities. These programmes include:

- Conducting special promotional campaigns to targeted trades to canvass vacancies and explore new employment opportunities for people with disabilities.
- Organising ceremonies to give public recognition to enlightened employers and outstanding disabled employees.
- Organising seminars and exhibitions in collaboration with employers associations to enhance employers' understanding of the working abilities of people with disabilities.
- Launching radio programmes to promote public understanding and acceptance of people with disabilities.
- Producing video/VCD on successful employment cases of people with disabilities.

- Collaborating with the Vocational Training Council and Employees Retraining Board in organising tailor-made training courses for job-seekers with disabilities to improve their employability.

On-the-Job Training Programme for People with Disabilities

13. The On-the-Job Training Programme for People with Disabilities is a three-year experiential project launched by SWD in October 2001 to enhance the employment of people with disabilities through proactive training, market-driven and placement-tied approach and to encourage employers to create or offer job opportunities for people with disabilities. The total cost for the Programme is \$22.5 million for 3 years and the Programme will benefit more than 1,080 people with disabilities. Participants can receive job training/counseling, job attachment, job trial and post-placement services under the Programme. An allowance of \$1,250 per month for not more than 3 months will be given to each disabled participant during the job attachment period. To attract and encourage potential employers to give job trial to the participants, employers will receive a subsidy equal to 50% of the actual wage paid to the participant with a ceiling of \$3,000 per month for a maximum period of 3 months. In the first six months of operation of the Programme, 230 people with disabilities had been enrolled in the Programme and 100 of them had been arranged to attend job attachment and job trial. As at March 2002, 48 people had successfully secured permanent jobs through the Programme.

Enhancing Employment of People with Disabilities through Small Enterprise Project

14. The objective of the “Enhancing Employment of People with Disabilities through Small Enterprise” project is to assist the NGOs to create and run small businesses employing people with disabilities so that they can enjoy genuine employment in a carefully planned and sympathetic working environment. A total provision of \$50 million is earmarked for the Project and the maximum amount of grant is \$2 million per business. To achieve the objective of employment of people with disabilities, the number of employees with disabilities should not be less than 60% of the total number of persons on the pay-roll for the businesses. SWD has completed the vetting of first batch applications. A total of 8 projects with the total amount of \$6.5 million have been supported by the Department. It is estimated that around 130 employment opportunities will be created and among them 90 are for people with disabilities. All the businesses are expected to commence operation from June to December 2002. SWD will invite

second batch applications from the NGOs in early 2003.

Marketing Consultancy Office (MCO)

15. The Marketing Consultancy Office (Rehabilitation) (MCO[R]) became a regular establishment in SWD in January 2001. Through proactive marketing and business development strategies, MCO[R] promotes the work abilities of the people with disabilities and enhances the employment opportunities for them. The Office manages two sales outlets, one in the Hong Kong International Airport and the other in Mongkok Government Offices Building, to promote the products made by the people with disabilities. In 2001-2002, a total of 12 marketing programmes and 8 training courses had been organized by MCO[R]. During the year, the Office had also successfully secured 74 jobs for the people with disabilities; 192 job orders and 8 tender contracts for the sheltered workshops and supported employment units amounting to \$4 million.

Summing Up

16. We believe that the current policy to find jobs actively for people with disabilities through various measures and to make employers aware of the working abilities of people with disabilities by means of promotion and education is effective and appropriate. Nevertheless, the Administration will continue to explore viable new measures to further enhance the employment opportunities of people with disabilities.

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