

**For information  
on 17 June 2004**

## **LegCo Panel on Manpower**

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

#### **Purpose**

This paper outlines the measures currently adopted by the Administration to promote employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

#### **Background**

2. The Administration is committed to promoting employment for people with disabilities and to ensuring that they enjoy equal opportunity of participating in productive and gainful employment in the open market. We have put in place a wide range of measures to facilitate their entry into open employment in both the public and private sectors. For those who do not have the ability or are not ready to take up open employment, we provide supported or sheltered employment.

#### **Collaboration among Bureaux and Departments**

3. A Sub-committee on Employment has been set up under the Rehabilitation Advisory Committee to advise the Government on all matters concerning employment for people with disabilities. Its membership includes both government and non-government representatives. All relevant bureaux and government departments are represented on it. They work closely with each other and seek advice, where necessary, from the Sub-committee with the common goal of improving employment prospects and exploring new employment avenues for people with disabilities in both the public and private sectors.

#### **Labour Department's Employment Services for People with Disabilities**

4. The Selective Placement Service ("SPD") of the Labour Department (LD) provides a personalized employment service to help place people with disabilities in open employment. A placement officer is assigned to look after each disabled job-seeker registered with the SPD.

Apart from providing employment counselling and arranging job matching and referral, the placement officer will prepare disabled job-seekers for job interviews beforehand and, where necessary, accompany them to attend such interviews. When a job-seeker has been placed, the placement officer will provide follow-up services. In 2003, the SPD provided assistance to 4,309 people with disabilities and successfully helped 2,442 of them find employment, representing a placement rate of 57%. For the first five months of this year, 874 job-seekers with disabilities were placed through SPD. A breakdown of the placements is at Annex A.

### **Employment Measures taken by Labour Department**

5. The LD has taken the following measures to enhance employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

#### ***Trial Placement cum Mentor Scheme for People with Disabilities***

6. The scheme was launched by the SPD in January 2002. It aims at encouraging employers 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 the latter's working abilities. Participating employers will each receive financial incentive equivalent to half of the wages paid in the trial period (with a ceiling of \$3,000). Employers are also encouraged to appoint a staff member to be the "mentor" to help the disabled workers settle in their jobs smoothly. Successful mentors will receive a cash award of \$500 and a certificate of appreciation.

7. The scheme has been well received by employers and disabled persons. As at 31 May 2004, a total of 644 vacancies have been offered by 331 employers for trial placement. Of the 568 disabled persons participating in the scheme, 472 or 83% have been offered full employment upon completion of their one-month trial placement. The scheme will end in 2004/05. LD is currently reviewing the scheme and, subject to the availability of resources, plans to introduce a new placement scheme with improved features.

#### ***Self Help Integrated Placement Service (SHIPS)***

8. The SPD launched this service in April 2000 to encourage and help disabled job-seekers to be more proactive and independent in their job search. Under this programme, SPD provides group counselling sessions to the participants to improve their job searching skills and interviewing

techniques. Computer facilities (including internet browsing), telephones and fax machines, and access to up-to-date careers information are made available to them in the employment offices. Whilst enjoying the continual placement service rendered by the SPD, they are encouraged to search and apply for suitable jobs on their own initiative. As at 31 May 2004, 2,672 job-seekers with disabilities have participated in the programme. They have made a total of 11,025 self-initiated job applications. The programme has achieved an overall placement rate of 73%.

### ***Interactive Selective Placement Service (iSPS)***

9. The SPD has since January 2003 established the “Interactive Selective Placement Service” web-site to provide improved employment services to disabled job-seekers and their prospective employers through the Internet. The web-site enables disabled persons to register for the SPD’s placement service or renew their previous registrations, browse the vacancies available and perform preliminary job-matching. It also enables employers to place vacancy orders with the SPD, identify suitable disabled job-seekers to fill their vacancies, or request the SPD to refer candidates to them for selection interview.

10. Response to the iSPS has been favourable. Up to the end of May 2004, it has recorded a total of 4,981,549 page views and 9,100 online requests for SPD’s services.

### ***Public Education and Promotional Programmes***

11. The SPD regularly organizes 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 souvenir presentation ceremonies to give public recognition to enlightened employers and outstanding disabled employees.
- Staging 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 videos/VCDs on successful employment cases of people with disabilities.
- Collaborating with the Vocational Training Council and Employees Retraining Board in organizing tailor-made training courses for job-seekers with disabilities to improve their employability.

### **Employment Programmes offered by Social Welfare Department (SWD)**

12. The SWD provides a range of employment programmes and services covering both sheltered and supported employment.

#### ***Sheltered Workshops and Integrated Vocational Rehabilitation Services***

13. Sheltered workshops aim at providing people with disabilities with practical training in a planned and controlled environment in order to enhance their working capacity with a view to preparing them for supported or open employment wherever possible. Programmes provided by sheltered workshops include income-generating work process, training in work habits and skills, and activities to meet developmental and social needs. As at June 2004, there were 37 sheltered workshops providing 5,194 places. With effect from April 2004, 16 sheltered workshops have been renamed as Integrated Vocational Rehabilitation Services Centres to provide 2,796 integrated sheltered employment places. In addition, the two Skills Centres operated by NGOs have also re-engineered their services since September 2003 to provide 453 integrated vocational training and sheltered employment places to people with disabilities.

#### ***Supported Employment***

14. Supported employment for people with disabilities allows them to work in an integrated open setting with necessary support service and to have access to all the usual benefits of having a job such as income at market rates and job security. Its ultimate objective is to serve as an

avenue for upward mobility of people with disabilities in sheltered workshops and enable them to secure and maintain a job in open and competitive employment. Supported employment provides job matching, job placement, on-the-job coaching and support, training and counselling to people with disabilities. The operational modes include individual placement, group approach such as mobile crew, simulated business, etc. As at June 2004, there were 29 non-governmental organizations providing a total of 1,655 supported employment places.

***On the Job Training Programme for People with Disabilities (OJT)***

15. OJT is a three-year experimental project launched by SWD in October 2001 with a provision of \$22.5 million to enhance the employment of people with disabilities through a proactive training, market-driven and placement-tied approach, and to encourage employers to create or offer job opportunities for people with disabilities. Participants can receive job training/counselling, job attachment, job trial and post-placement services under the programme. An allowance of \$1,250 per month for a maximum of three 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 wage 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 three months. The programme is now operated by 14 non-governmental organisations (NGOs) offering a total of 360 places per year. As at March 2004, 1,129 people with disabilities have been enrolled into the programme and 564 have successfully secured permanent jobs.

***Enhancing Employment of People with Disabilities through Small Enterprise Project (the Project)***

16. The “Enhancing Employment of People with Disabilities through Small Enterprise Project” was launched by SWD in 2001 with a capital commitment of \$50 million. The objective of the project is to assist 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. 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 of each business. As at June 2004, 21 businesses from 16 NGOs have been approved, involving a total grant of about \$10.5 million. The supported businesses are of a great variety including vegetables processing and supply, direct sales, retail shops, massage service by the blind, floral design and sales, pest control and cleaning service, household service for private residential estates, travel service for elders and people with disabilities (including the chronically ill), etc. These businesses are expected to create 316 jobs, of which 235 are for people with disabilities.

### ***Marketing Consultancy Office (Rehabilitation) (MCO(R))***

17. MCO(R) became a regular establishment in SWD in January 2001. The objective of the Office is to enhance employment opportunities for people with disabilities through innovative, effective and efficient business development and marketing strategies. Services of the MCO(R) include promoting the working abilities of people with disabilities, enhancing the image and status of sheltered workshops and supported employment units, identifying tenders and job opportunities, providing advice on marketing strategies for sheltered workshops, supported employment units and other vocational rehabilitation service projects, promoting the products and services of people with disabilities, developing training programmes for vocational rehabilitation personnel to enhance their knowledge and skills in marketing and business, and providing advice to SWD on business and marketing issues related to the employment of people with disabilities. In 2003-04, the Office successfully secured job orders and tender contracts with a total value of about \$8.6 million for sheltered workshops and supported employment units and 44 jobs for people with disabilities. In addition, a total of 43 marketing programmes and three training workshops were organized.

### **Employment Opportunities in the Civil Service**

18. As the largest employer in Hong Kong, the Government fully recognises the importance of taking a lead in employing people with disabilities in order to optimise their potential in work and help them integrate into the community. The Government's prevailing policy is to place people with disabilities in appropriate jobs wherever possible. A

proper mechanism to pursue this policy is already in place. In respect of recruitment, applications from people with disabilities for both civil service posts and posts on non-civil service terms are welcome. To ensure that candidates with disabilities will be given a fair opportunity to be considered alongside other candidates, shortlisting criteria will not apply to applicants with disabilities provided that they meet the basic entry requirements specified for the post. In other words, if they meet the basic entry requirements, applicants with disabilities will be automatically invited to selection interviews. They will then compete for the post on the same ground as other applicants. If they are considered suitable by the selection board to carry out the duties of a particular post, they would be recommended for appointment even though they may not be able, due to their disabilities, to perform the duties of every post in the same rank. As at 1 April 2004, the number of disabled persons employed on civil service terms was 3,319, representing about 2% of the total strength of the civil service. Another 211 disabled persons were employed on non-civil service contract (NCSC) terms as at 1 April 2004, representing about 0.9% of the total number of NCSC staff employed by the Government. A breakdown of the figures is at Annex B.

19. We also provide assistance to officers with disabilities in order to facilitate them in performing their duties. This includes modifications of work areas and facilities; appropriate changes of job design or work schedules; provision of necessary equipment and training, etc. In April 1996, we set up a central fund to finance purchase of technical aids to facilitate disabled officers to better perform duties in their workplace. Each application is considered on its own merits and on the basis of justifiable operational grounds. So far, we have approved 100 applications with a total amount of about \$3.29 million allocated to departments to facilitate the work of 74 officers. We will continue to adopt a positive approach in processing applications that fall within the ambit of the fund.

20. At the same time, we consider it important to promote better understanding of departmental management on the working abilities of disabled people. In 2002, we published a booklet entitled 'Working with People with Disabilities in the Civil Service' to set out our policy on employment of people with disabilities and provide practical tips on how to work with them. To continue our effort in this regard, we have included this subject in induction training and management courses for officers involved in personnel management with a view to clarifying the role of the management in facilitating disabled officers to realise their abilities and cultivating peer acceptance of disabled officers.

## **Employment Opportunities through Local Community Economy**

21. In the context of Local Community Economy (LCE), the Home Affairs Department plays the role of a facilitator and provides necessary facilitation measures such as suitably relaxing Government rules and regulations, enhancing co-ordination among departments, lending promotional and publicity support etc. The Government looks mainly to the private sector/non-government organizations to come forward with business proposals, invest the necessary resources and take charge of their operation.

22. The key objectives of LCE are to stimulate domestic consumption and promote district characteristics thereby benefiting the public and the community as a whole, including people with disabilities. Examples include the 2002 Bauhinia Square Bazaar with booths operated by people with disabilities and the 2003 Tuen Mun Summer Fantasy etc.

## **Vocational Training for People with Disabilities**

23. The Vocational Training Council (VTC), with subventions from the Government, operates three skills centres for people with disabilities aged 15 and above who are assessed as having the abilities to work in the open market. The skills centres offer a wide variety of vocational training courses covering different occupations and trades for people with disabilities. The objective is to enhance the employability of people with disabilities to prepare them for eventual open employment. In addition, there are two other skills centres run by two NGOs, which have been converted into integrated vocational training centres, providing an expanded service scope of vocational training. These five centres provide altogether 1,129 full-time training places (including 360 boarding places) in the 2003/04 academic year.

24. The training programmes of the skills centre are reviewed regularly to ensure that the training courses offered and planned match with the local occupational skills required and meet the needs of the employment market.

25. According to the last round of employment survey conducted in January 2003 for graduates from these skills centres in the 2001/02 academic year, the employment rate for those actively seeking employment was 82.2%.



## **Conclusion**

26. The Administration is sparing no effort in helping people with disabilities to find jobs in the open employment market or secure placements, where appropriate, in sheltered and supported employment. We will continue to explore viable measures to further enhance the employment opportunities of people with disabilities.

Economic Development and Labour Bureau  
Health, Welfare and Food Bureau  
Civil Service Bureau  
Social Welfare Department  
Labour Department  
Home Affairs Department

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**Placements of Registrants by the Selective Placement Division**  
**Labour Department**

<b>Disability group</b>	<b>No. of Registrants</b>		<b>No. of Placements</b>		<b>Placement Rate</b>	
	2003	2004 (Jan-May)	2003	2004 (Jan-May)	2003	2004 (Jan-May)
Hearing impaired	933	393	540	214	58%	55%
Visually impaired	163	71	87	23	53%	32%
Physically handicapped	630	257	208	86	33%	34%
Chronically ill	694	273	352	121	51%	44%
Ex-mentally ill	908	344	391	151	43%	44%
Mentally handicapped	981	425	864	279	88%	66%
Total	4,309	1,763	2,442	874	57%	50%

**Number of Civil Servants and NCSC staff with a disability**  
**(as at 1.4.2004)**

<b>Disability group</b>	<b>Number of Civil Servants with a disability</b>	<b>Number of NCSC staff with a disability</b>
Visual impairment	565 (17.02%)	29 (13.74%)
Hearing impairment	287 (8.65%)	48 (22.75%)
Physical handicap	1,814 (54.66%)	71 (33.65%)
Mental handicap	28 (0.84%)	8 (3.79%)
With history of mental illness	267 (8.04%)	20 (9.48%)
Visceral disability	348 (10.49%)	28 (13.27%)
Others ( e.g. autism, speech impairment )	10 (0.30%)	7 (3.32%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,319</b>	<b>211</b>
<b>% of overall strength</b>	<b>2.02%</b>	<b>0.94%</b>