

**For information
on 19 May 2015**

Legislative Council Subcommittee on Poverty
Policies and Measures to
Support Employment of Persons with Disabilities

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on the Government's policies and measures to promote employment of persons with disabilities.

Policy Objective

2. The Government's policy objective is to assist persons with disabilities in getting prepared for employment, taking up productive jobs in society on the basis of their abilities, developing their potential and achieving self-reliance, with a view to fostering social integration and building a caring and supportive society.

3. Depending on the type and severity of disabilities of our service targets (including those not yet able to take up open employment, those requiring appropriate counselling and/or training prior to open employment and those fit for open employment), relevant government departments, statutory bodies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) provide these persons with a series of services and support measures, so that they can equip themselves through vocational rehabilitation, supported employment and/or vocational training according to their abilities, and find jobs that best suit their abilities in the open employment market. On the other hand, the Government endeavours to promote social integration, including adopting diversified promotional initiatives to enhance job opportunities for persons with disabilities.

Measures and Support Services to Promote Employment of Persons with Disabilities

(1) Vocational Rehabilitation and Training Services for Persons with Disabilities

4. For persons with disabilities who are not yet able to take up open employment, the Social Welfare Department (SWD) provides them with various services through service organisations such as sheltered workshops, supported employment service, integrated vocational rehabilitation services centres and integrated vocational training centres. With appropriate vocational training in a specially designed work environment, persons with different severity of disabilities who have different needs can learn to adapt to general work requirements, including developing social skills and interpersonal relationships. The service organisations provide job analysis, job matching and centres-based job specific training (e.g. processing, packaging and assembling, desktop publishing and laundry) for trainees who are ready for employment. In addition, placement-tied skill training (including job attachment and on-the-job-training) is offered to help trainees acquire and apply vocational skills in a real work environment. The service organizations keep in touch with employers and provide post-placement follow-up service (e.g. following up with employers the performance of employees with disabilities).

5. Moreover, SWD launched the “On the Job Training Programme for People with Disabilities” and the “Sunnyway – On the Job Training Programme for Young People with Disabilities” to provide relevant training and counselling services for participants according to their employment needs, and help them find suitable jobs upon completion of job attachment. For the purpose of encouraging attendance, during the job attachment period, participants who can fulfil the monthly attendance requirement will be granted a job attachment allowance of \$2,000 per month. Job trial is a measure to encourage employers to hire persons with disabilities. Employers can try out the work abilities of the participants through job trial programme. During the job trial period, employers will receive a wage subsidy equivalent to 50% of the actual

wage paid to each participant (subject to a ceiling of \$4,000 per month) for a maximum period of six months.

6. Apart from SWD, the Labour and Welfare Bureau (LWB), provides subsidies for the Shine Skills Centres run by the Vocational Training Council to offer a range of vocational training courses and support services for persons with disabilities aged 15 or above who are assessed as potentially capable of taking up open employment. These training courses cover business, information technology and service industry. Besides, the Employees Retraining Board (ERB) provides dedicated training courses for persons with disabilities. In 2015-16, ERB will organise courses on self-employment, food and beverage production and other subjects for persons with disabilities.

(2) Job Matching Service for Persons with Disabilities in the Open Market

7. The Selective Placement Division (SPD) of the Labour Department (LD) provides job seekers with disabilities who are fit for open employment with free and personalised employment services, including employment counselling, job matching and referrals, and free recruitment service for employers in the private sector for employing persons with disabilities. SPD also provides post-placement follow-up service for persons with disabilities. In September 2015, LD will extend the follow-up service period from three months to six months, with a view to maintaining closer contacts with employees with disabilities and providing more intensive support services for employers.

(3) Incentives for Employers to Employ Persons with Disabilities

8. LD implemented the “Work Orientation and Placement Scheme” to encourage employers, through the provision of an allowance, to employ persons with disabilities with appropriate training and support as well as appointment of mentors so as to enhance their job opportunities. An eligible employer who employs a person with disabilities with employment difficulties is entitled to a maximum allowance of \$5,500 per month during the first two months of employment. Afterwards, the employer will continue to receive an allowance equivalent to two-thirds

of the monthly salary paid to the employee with disabilities (subject to a ceiling of \$4,000 per month) for a maximum period of six months. If the mentor appointed by the aforesaid employer has successfully assisted the employee with disabilities to continue with employment after the first two months of employment, a cash award of \$1,000 will be granted to him/her.

9. SWD launched the “Support Programme for Employees with Disabilities”. The programme provides subsidies for employers of persons with disabilities to procure assistive devices and/or carry out workplace modifications so as to facilitate the work of the employees with disabilities and enhance their work efficiency. Employers of persons with disabilities may apply for a subsidy of up to \$20,000 for each disabled employee to carry out workplace modifications and/or procure assistive devices, or a subsidy of up to \$40,000 for each employee with disabilities to procure a single assistive device and its essential accessories.

(4) Creation of Job Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities by Promoting the Establishment of Social Enterprises

10. Under the “Enhancing Employment of People with Disabilities through Small Enterprise Project”, SWD grants seed money to NGOs for setting up social enterprises, which are required to ensure that at least half of their employees are persons with disabilities. The project creates job opportunities for persons with disabilities and enables them to take up employment in a meticulously arranged and harmonious work environment. Each funded enterprise is offered a grant not exceeding \$2 million, which will be used as start-up capital and operating fund for the first three years. A number of funded enterprises of various nature have been established under the project, including food and catering services (e.g. bakeries and restaurants), retail services (e.g. convenience stores and rehabilitation aids shops), professional services (e.g. eco-tourism and market research) and cleaning services (e.g. car beauty, office and household cleaning, etc).

Promotion of an Inclusive Culture

11. To reinforce the efforts in promoting employment for persons with disabilities, LWB and the Rehabilitation Advisory Committee (RAC) have adopted “Promotion of Employment for Persons with Disabilities” as one of the major themes of publicity programme since 2008-09. They will continue to launch a series of initiatives to enhance the understanding of different sectors in the working capabilities of persons with disabilities, as well as the provision of support services for employment of persons with disabilities by various Government departments and rehabilitation organisations. The aim is to strengthen cross-sectoral collaboration among the business sector, local communities, Government departments and NGOs in promoting the employment of persons with disabilities, thereby supporting the self-reliance of persons with disabilities and their full integration into the community. LWB will continue to earmark about \$13.5 million in 2015-16 for organising territory-wide and local public education activities, in collaboration with RAC.

12. In September 2013, LWB, in collaboration with RAC, the Hong Kong Joint Council for People with Disabilities and the Hong Kong Council of Social Service, launched the Talent-Wise Employment Charter and Inclusive Organisations Recognition Scheme to encourage employers of different sectors to create more internship and employment opportunities for persons with disabilities, and to give due recognition to employers for promoting an inclusive workplace for employees with disabilities and proactively cultivating peer acceptance.

13. In tandem, LD has been striving to organise various public education and publicity activities to enhance employers’ understanding of the work abilities of persons with disabilities encourage various sectors of the community to accept and support employees with disabilities, and enhance their understanding of different assistive devices for persons with disabilities at work and how to get along with them through diversified publicity channels and direct contacts with individual employers, so as to encourage more employers to employ persons with disabilities. LD also makes use of its employer network, including the

Human Resources Managers' Club, to promote the employment of persons with disabilities from time to time.

Policy and Related Measures on Employment of Persons with Disabilities by the Government

14. The Government, being an Equal Opportunities Employer, is committed to eliminating disabilities and other forms of discrimination in employment. Appointments to the civil service are based on the principle of open and fair competition. All applicants in an open recruitment exercise are assessed on the same basis of their ability, performance and character, having regard to the stipulated entry requirements set according to the job requirements of the grade concerned.

15. The Government welcomes persons with disabilities to apply for government jobs, and have put in place suitable facilitating measures to ensure that applicants with disabilities who meet the basic entry requirements can compete with other applicants on equal footing, thereby allowing them, able-bodied or disabled alike, to have equal access to job opportunities in the Government. These measures include –

- (a) An applicant with disability who meets the basic entry requirements for a post will not be subject to any shortlisting criteria and will automatically be invited to attend the selection test/interview.
- (b) The recruiting department/grade should proactively ascertain from the applicant with disability any assistance or accommodation needed so as to facilitate him/her in attending the test/interview. The test/interview process would also be suitably adjusted to cater for the applicant's special needs.
- (c) An appropriate degree of preference may be given to applicants with disabilities found suitable for appointment by placing them ahead of able-bodied applicants whose suitability for appointment is considered comparable to the former.

- (d) If an applicant with disability is found suitable to carry out the duties of certain posts in a specific rank, he/she may be recommended for appointment by the recruiting department/grade even though he/she may not be able, due to his/her disability, to perform the full range of duties of every post in the concerned rank.

16. The Civil Service Bureau (CSB) has also promulgated practical guidelines to all bureaux/departments (B/Ds) on the implementation of the above policy and measures, and organised briefing-cum-sharing sessions for human resource managers in all B/Ds to enhance their understanding in this regard. In addition, LD has, in collaboration with CSB, published a booklet entitled “Employ People Based on Their Abilities – Application for Government Jobs by Persons with Disabilities”, setting out the major points to be noted by applicants with disabilities in applying for government jobs and the assistance provided by SPD of LD for job seekers with disabilities. The booklet has also been uploaded onto the websites of CSB and SPD.

17. Apart from the recruitment-related measures above, B/Ds provide on-the-job assistance and reasonable accommodation to persons with disabilities working in the Government so as to facilitate their integration into the workplace and performance of duties, e.g. modifications of work areas and facilities, appropriate adjustments to job designs and work schedules, provision of necessary equipment, etc. Funding is also made available by CSB for B/Ds to purchase technical aids for officers with disabilities to facilitate their performance of duties.

18. The Government is aware of the importance of cultivating peer acceptance of officers with disabilities in the workplace and has incorporated this important message as an integral part of our training courses for human resource managers and induction programmes for new recruits to ensure that officers with disabilities can integrate into the workplace.

Advice Sought

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

Labour and Welfare Bureau

Civil Service Bureau

Labour Department

Social Welfare Department

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