

For information on
17 June 2013

Legislative Council Panel on Public Service

Employment of Persons with Disabilities in the Civil Service

Purpose

This paper sets out the policy on the employment of persons with disabilities in the Civil Service and the relevant facilitating measures.

Policy on Employment of Persons with Disabilities

2. The Government, being an Equal Opportunities Employer, is committed to eliminating disabilities and other forms of discrimination in employment. It is our objective to place persons with disabilities in appropriate jobs wherever possible. This is consistent with the Government's general policy to integrate persons with disabilities into the community through gainful employment.

3. Appointments to the Civil Service are based on the principle of open and fair competition. All candidates in an open recruitment exercise are assessed on the basis of their character, ability and performance having regard to the stipulated entry requirements set according to the job requirements of the civil service grades concerned. In line with this principle, our policy and related facilitating measures on the employment of persons with disabilities seek to enable candidates with disabilities to compete with able-bodied candidates on equal footing, thereby allowing them, able-bodied or disabled alike, to have equal access to job opportunities in the Government.

4. In view of the above, we see no need to set a maximum or minimum number of employees with disabilities working in the Government. In fact, according to the studies on promotion of employment of people with disabilities conducted by the European Commission and the International Labour Organisation in 2000 and 2003 respectively, a mandatory employment quota system has not been proven successful overseas in helping persons with disabilities secure employment. Some countries have already abolished the quota system.

The prevailing trend has moved away from employment quota system to anti-discrimination legislation and enhanced support measures for persons with disabilities. In view of the foregoing, we consider that persons with disabilities should be assisted to find suitable jobs based on their abilities rather than disabilities. On this basis, we will continue to implement our policy and facilitating measures with a view to facilitating persons with disabilities who are interested in joining the Civil Service in applying for government posts.

Facilitating Measures

5. We welcome persons with disabilities to apply for government jobs and have put in place suitable facilitating measures with a view to enabling candidates with disabilities who meet the basic entry requirements to compete with able-bodied candidates on equal footing. We have issued a set of comprehensive guidelines to all bureaux and departments (B/Ds), providing them with practical guidance on the application of the policy and facilitating measures concerning the employment of persons with disabilities.

6. Under the existing guidelines, at the initial stage of a recruitment exercise, candidates with disabilities who meet the basic entry requirements for a post will not be subject to shortlisting criteria, if any¹. Once candidates with disabilities meet the basic entry requirements, they will be automatically invited to attend selection interview/test.

7. Where a candidate who has indicated that he/she has a disability is invited to a test/interview, the recruiting B/D is required to proactively ascertain from the candidate any assistance or accommodation needed so as to facilitate him/her in attending the test/interview. The test/interview process would also suitably be adjusted to cater for his/her special needs. For example, for candidates with visual impairment, the recruiting B/D may provide them with braille examination paper, enlarged question paper, braille or personal computer with special software, or extend the examination time having regard to the degree of the candidates' disability and complexity of the paper.

8. After the test/selection interview, if a candidate with disability is found suitable by the recruitment board to carry out the duties of certain

¹ Individual B/Ds may decide whether there is a need to impose shortlisting criteria in particular recruitment exercises having regard to relevant factors (e.g. the number of applications received).

posts in a specific rank in the Civil Service, he/she may be recommended for appointment 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.

9. In addition, an appropriate degree of preference may be given to candidates with disabilities found suitable for appointment by placing them ahead of able-bodied candidates whose suitability for appointment is considered comparable to the former. Specifically, in accordance with our guidelines, the recruiting B/D should set a passing mark for the selection interview and divide the range of marks above the passing mark into three groups of suitability for appointment (i.e. very suitable, suitable and marginally suitable). The priority of a candidate with disability in a particular group will be advanced to the top of that group.

10. As stipulated in our guidelines to B/Ds, when a candidate with disability who has satisfied the basic entry requirements is not recommended for appointment, the recruitment board's recommendation should be referred to an officer not below the rank of Assistant Director for consideration and decision. This is to ensure that the merits of each candidate with disability would be duly assessed in the recruitment process and the recommendation of the recruitment board would be properly considered and processed.

11. We have recently conducted a survey with B/Ds on the application of the above recruitment guidelines within the Civil Service. According to a available information, among the 227 civil service recruitment exercises launched and concluded in 2010-11 and 2011-12, 144 exercises (or 63%) involved applicants with disabilities and adoption of shortlisting criteria at the same time. In accordance with our guidelines, all the applicants who have indicated disability status and met the basic entry requirements (i.e. 3 152) were invited to attend selection interviews, while only about 34% of the remaining qualified applicants (i.e. about 164 000 out of some 476 000) who met the shortlisting criteria proceeded to the interview stage. Among the 3 152 qualified candidates with disabilities, 1 829 candidates (or 58%) turned up for the interviews and of whom, 94 candidates (or 3%) were subsequently offered appointment².

² 11 of these 94 candidates declined appointment offer eventually.

12. According to the separate studies conducted by the Civil Service Bureau³, for 2010-11 and 2011-12, the overall ratio of appointment offers to qualified applications is 1:53 (or 1.9%)⁴. As revealed from the findings in paragraph 11 above, the prevailing recruitment guidelines and relevant facilitating measures have served the objective of enabling qualified candidates with disabilities (of whom 3% were offered appointment) to compete with able-bodied candidates on equal footing. We will continue to work with B/Ds to ensure vigorous application of the guidelines in support for our policy on the employment of persons with disabilities.

Job Attachment for Persons with Disabilities

13. B/Ds are encouraged to support the Sunnyway Programme by identifying suitable job attachment opportunities for participants with a view to helping them acquire work habits and gain employment skills in a real working environment. Administered by the Social Welfare Department, the Sunnyway Programme provides on-the-job training to young persons with disabilities or early signs of mental illness who are aged between 15 and 25. Under the Programme, trainees with disabilities will receive job-related counselling, employment training, job attachment, job trial and post-placement service. As at June 2013, 206 trainees with disabilities completed successfully job attachments in various B/Ds.

Assistance Provided to Persons with Disabilities Working in the Government

14. As an essential part of the policy to integrate persons with disabilities in the workplace, we provide on-the-job assistance and reasonable accommodation to persons with disabilities working in the Government so as to facilitate them in performing their duties, e.g. modifications of work areas and facilities, appropriate adjustments to job design and work schedules, provision of necessary equipments, etc. A central fund has been set up under the Civil Service Bureau to finance purchase of technical aids, such as computers with braille displays, telephone amplifiers, scanners and magnifying devices, for officers with

³ The Studies on the Attractiveness of Civil Service Jobs conducted for 2010-11 and 2011-12. The Studies covered the recruitment exercises for which appointment offers were made in the two financial years in question.

⁴ Overall figures cover both able-bodied and disabled candidates.

disabilities to facilitate their performance of duties. As at 31 March 2013, a total of \$4.11 million had been disbursed from the fund for this purpose.

Continuous Promotion of the Policy and Facilitating Measures on the Employment of Persons with Disabilities

15. With the policy and facilitating measures in place, ongoing efforts are being made by the Government to promote the employment of persons with disabilities by providing them with suitable job opportunities. As at 31 March 2012⁵, there were 3 391 civil servants with disabilities⁶, representing 2% of the strength of the Civil Service. Detailed breakdown figures by types of disability are at **Annex**. It should be noted that there is no mandatory requirement for applicants for government jobs and serving officers to declare their disability, if any. The aforementioned statistics are compiled on the basis of information available to the management of B/Ds (e.g. through applicants' requests for special arrangements for selection interview/test, and serving officers' applications for central fund to purchase technical aids). Notwithstanding this, we believe the statistics are useful for helping us monitor the employment of persons with disabilities in the Civil Service. We will continue to compile and publish such statistics for public knowledge.

16. Going forward, we will further impress upon B/Ds the importance of facilitating the employment of persons with disabilities in the Civil Service. In this connection, the Civil Service Bureau will organise workshops/sharing sessions for human resources managers in B/Ds with a view to enhancing their awareness and understanding of the details of the guidelines and application of the facilitating measures. In addition, appreciating the importance of cultivating peer acceptance of disabled staff, we will continue to raise staff's awareness in this respect

⁵ We compile statistics on the number of persons with disabilities being employed in the Civil Service as at 31 March each year to keep monitoring the employment of persons with disabilities. Statistics as at 31 March 2013 will be available in Q3 2013.

⁶ Employees with colour blindness or defective colour perception are not included in the statistics, though they should fall within the definition of disability under the Disability Discrimination Ordinance (Cap. 487). The statistics quoted above are based on seven types of disability, namely, visual impairment, hearing impairment, physical disability, intellectual disability, ex-mentally ill persons, visceral disability and others (such as autism, speech impairment and specific learning difficulties).

through incorporating this important message as an integral part of our training courses for human resources managers and induction programmes for new recruits.

17. To encourage more job seekers with disabilities to apply for government jobs, we will work with the Labour Department in promoting our policy and facilitating measures on employment of persons with disabilities. In addition, we will liaise with the Social Welfare Department to explore further room for providing more job attachments in B/Ds for trainees in different age groups and with varying types of disabilities. Apart from on-the-job training, attachment programmes would help trainees with disabilities understand and familiarise themselves with the job setting of the Government. This would be useful for preparing persons with disabilities in their subsequent application for government jobs, if they so wish.

Advice sought

18. Members are invited to note the above policy and facilitating measures on the employment of persons with disabilities in the Civil Service. As regards the question raised at the Panel meeting held on 18 March 2013 concerning the employment of persons with disabilities by government-funded public bodies, which is outside the scope of the Civil Service, a response will be provided to Members separately.

Civil Service Bureau
June 2013

**Number of persons with disabilities in the Civil Service
as at 31 March 2012 (By types of disability)**

Type of disability	Number of persons with disabilities
Visual impairment	462
Hearing impairment	320
Physical disability	1 750
Intellectual disability	19
Ex-mentally ill persons	330
Visceral disability	494
Others, e.g. autism, speech impairment, specific learning difficulties, etc.	16
Total	3 391