

For information on
23 June 2014

Legislative Council Panel on Public Service

Employment of Persons with Disabilities in the Civil Service

Purpose

This paper updates Members on the implementation of the policy and relevant measures to facilitate the employment of persons with disabilities in the Civil Service.

Implementation of the Policy and Relevant Measures on Employment of Persons with Disabilities

Overview

2. 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.

3. We welcome persons with disabilities to apply for government jobs, and have put in place suitable measures to ensure that they can compete with able-bodied applicants on equal footing, thereby allowing them, able-bodied or disabled alike, to have equal access to job opportunities in the Government. We have also issued guidelines to all bureaux and departments (B/Ds), providing them with practical guidance on the application of the policy and relevant measures on the employment of persons with disabilities.

4. Under the existing guidelines, an applicant with disability who meets the basic entry requirements for a post will not be subject to any shortlisting criteria and will be automatically invited to attend the selection test/interview to compete for the post on the same grounds as other applicants. The recruiting B/D is required to proactively ascertain from individual 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, such as extension of the test time having regard to the degree of his/her disability and complexity of the paper. If an applicant with disability is found suitable to carry out the duties of certain 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. Also, 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 former¹. The degree of preference will depend on the facts and circumstances of individual cases and should satisfy the test of genuine need, rationality, proportionality and fairness.

5. As stipulated in our guidelines to B/Ds, in case an applicant 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 of the recruiting B/D concerned for consideration and decision as to why the applicant is not suitable for appointment. This is to ensure that the merits of each applicant with disability would be duly assessed in the recruitment process and the recommendation of the recruitment board would be properly considered and processed. In addition, the Civil Service Bureau (CSB) has been making arrangements to attend, as an observer, some recruitment interviews involving applicants with disabilities conducted by individual B/Ds. We will keep the monitoring measures under regular review and consider the need for enhancing our work in this area as appropriate.

6. We have conducted a survey with B/Ds to gauge the updated position on the application of the above policy and recruitment guidelines within the Civil Service. According to the available information, among the 214 civil service recruitment exercises which were launched and concluded in 2012-13 and 2013-14, 89 exercises (41.6%) involved applicants with disabilities and adoption of shortlisting criteria at the same time. In accordance with our

¹ In accordance with our guidelines, the recruiting B/D should set a passing mark into three groups of suitability for appointment (i.e. very suitable, suitable and marginally suitable). The priority of an applicant with disability in a particular group will be advanced to the top of that group.

guidelines, 2 222 applicants with disabilities who met the relevant entry requirements of the posts concerned were invited to selection tests/interviews without being subject to any shortlisting criteria. On the other hand, about 32% of the remaining qualified applicants (i.e. about 93 300 out of about 293 000) who met the shortlisting criteria were invited to interviews. Among the 2 222 applicants with disabilities, 118 (or 5.3%) were subsequently offered appointment² (versus 94 applicants with disabilities (or 3%) who were offered appointment in the relevant recruitment exercises conducted and concluded in 2010-11 and 2011-12). These 118 applicants with disabilities included 52 who were offered appointment even though they might not be able, due to their disabilities, to perform the full range of duties of every post in the concerned grade. The percentage of applicants with disabilities who were offered appointment was broadly comparable to that of other applicants which was 4 % (about 11 700 out of 293 000).

7. The findings in paragraph 6 above show the steady progress made by the Government in implementing the policy and measures to facilitate the employment of persons with disabilities in the Civil Service. As at 31 March 2013³, there were 3 401 civil servants with disabilities⁴, representing around 2% of the strength of the Civil Service. Detailed breakdown figures by disability types are at **Annex**.

Efforts to Promote Awareness of the Policy and Recruitment Guidelines

8. To raise the awareness of and ensure consistency in the application of the policy and recruitment guidelines above by B/Ds, we organised from December 2013 to February 2014 three briefing-cum-sharing sessions for human resource managers in all B/Ds to refresh their understanding of the policy and guidelines, and to share with them practical means to facilitate the

² 13 of these 118 applicants declined appointment offer eventually.

³ 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 2014 are being compiled and would be available in the third quarter of 2014.

Of note is that there is no mandatory requirement for applicants for government jobs and serving officers to declare their disability, if any. The statistics quoted in paragraphs 6 and 7 are compiled on the basis of the information available to the management of B/Ds (e.g. through applicants' requests for special arrangements for selection tests/interviews, and serving officers' applications for fund to purchase technical aids).

⁴ Civil servants 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 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).

recruitment and integration of persons with disabilities in the workplace. Efforts will continue to be made for promoting the importance and understanding of the policy and recruitment guidelines among B/Ds.

Participation in the Talent-Wise Employment Charter and Inclusive Organisations Recognition Scheme (the “Scheme”)

9. In September 2013, the Government joined the Scheme as a pioneer participating organisation to demonstrate our commitment in promoting the employment of persons with disabilities. The Scheme has been launched by the Labour and Welfare Bureau, in collaboration with the Rehabilitation Advisory Committee, Hong Kong Council of Social Service and Hong Kong Joint Council for People with Disabilities, to mobilise the Government, public and subvented bodies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), commercial enterprises and private companies to make collective efforts for promoting the employment of persons with disabilities through a host of sustainable measures commensurate with their modes of operation. As at 31 May 2014, about 70 B/Ds have joined the Scheme to show their respective commitment to promoting the employment of persons with disabilities.

Assistance Provided to Persons with Disabilities Working in the Government and Efforts to Promote their Integration in the Workplace

10. As an essential part of the policy to integrate them in the workplace, we continue to 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 equipment, etc. Also, funding is made available by CSB for B/Ds to purchase technical aids, such as braille displays, telephone amplifiers, scanners and magnifying devices, for officers with disabilities to facilitate their performance of duties.

11. In addition, special arrangements have been made, where appropriate, to job-match suitable posting for appointees with disabilities having regard to their different nature and degree of disabilities. One example is the recent posting of a new recruit using wheelchair and carrying a ventilator to assist in breathing round-the-clock to an office in the vicinity of his place of residence.

12. In addition, we are aware of the importance of cultivating peer acceptance of officers with disabilities in the workplace. Apart from incorporating this important message as an integral part of our training courses for human resource managers and induction programmes for new recruits (e.g. through the provision of courses on code of practice on employment under the Disability Discrimination Ordinance as well as valuing diversity in the workplace), we have made other efforts including the publication of feature article on the story of serving officers with disabilities in the newsletter to all civil servants to underline the message that the Government's policy on employment of persons with disabilities has proven to be a win-win situation for both employees with disabilities and the Government, as these individuals have been successfully integrated in the productive workforce while the Government could benefit from the contribution of these talented individuals.

Job Attachment

13. In collaboration with the Social Welfare Department, we have been implementing a job attachment scheme in B/Ds under the Sunnyway Programme since 2006. Apart from on-the-job training, the Sunnyway Programme helps trainees with disabilities to understand and familiarise themselves with the job setting. We will continue to explore further room for providing more job attachments in B/Ds for persons with disabilities. We will also develop information kits for reference by these trainees during their attachment with a view to facilitating their subsequent application for government jobs, if they so wish.

Way Forward

14. Going forward, we will continue with our efforts, in collaboration with B/Ds, in implementing the policy and measures for promoting the employment of persons with disabilities in the Civil Service. In parallel, to encourage more job seekers with disabilities to apply for government jobs, we are working with the Labour Department (LD) to issue 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 the Selective Placement Division (SPD) of LD for job seekers with disabilities. This booklet will be distributed to registrants of SPD and other persons with disabilities through NGOs, local universities, the Vocational Training Council, training bodies of the Employees' Retraining Board, etc. It will also be

uploaded onto the websites of CSB and SPD to facilitate wider dissemination of the relevant information.

Advice sought

15. Members are invited to note the content of this paper.

Civil Service Bureau
June 2014

**Number of persons with disabilities in the Civil Service
as at 31 March 2013 (By types of disability)**

| Type of disability | Number of persons with disabilities |
|--|--|
| Visual impairment | 456 |
| Hearing impairment | 320 |
| Physical disability | 1 729 |
| Intellectual disability | 19 |
| Ex-mentally ill persons | 348 |
| Visceral disability | 511 |
| Others, e.g. autism, speech impairment, specific learning difficulties, etc. | 18 |
| Total | 3 401 |