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## **Legislative Council Panel on Welfare Services**

### **Supporting Staff in the Social Welfare Sector**

#### **Purpose**

This paper aims to brief members on the current situation of the supporting staff in the social welfare sector and the latest situation on Programme Workers (PWs).

#### **Background**

2. Supporting staff in the welfare sector refers generally to non-professional grade supporting staff employed in various services of non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Under the Lump Sum Grant (LSG) Subvention System, the provision of central administrative support, including service coordination, planning and accounting support, etc., has been subsumed in the LSG subvention baseline. NGOs may flexibly deploy the resources, including their supporting staff, to achieve their service objectives and outcomes. To help NGOs strengthen their central administrative capacity, the Government has allocated additional resources to NGOs several times from 2008 to 2013 to support them in enhancing their human resource and financial management practices, and to increase their subvention in central administrative support. Besides, \$1 billion has been allocated from the Lotteries Fund (LF) to establish the Social Welfare Development Fund to support NGOs in implementing staff training and development programmes, business system upgrading projects and service studies so as to enhance the administrative and professional support for NGOs.

3. As professional qualification is not required for the supporting staff, there is, in general, no difficulty in recruitment in filling such vacancies in the welfare sector. The exceptions are some of the caring service posts, such as Care Worker and Health Worker in elderly services

as well as Personal Care Worker and hostel staff in rehabilitation services, which face the ageing of incumbent staff and difficulties in staff recruitment to varying extent.

### **Temporary PW Posts**

4. In 2008, the Government provided, on top of the LSG allocation, extra temporary funding for NGOs subvented by the Social Welfare Department (SWD) for creating 3 000 temporary PW posts for young people aged between 15 and 29 for three years as a special employment support measure during the economic downturn at that time. The temporary posts aim at assisting young people to obtain work experience so as to enhance their employability in the open market. The posts are temporary and time-limited in nature, and are not long-term posts of welfare services units. As a matter of fact, the young people concerned have acquired considerable work experience after serving in the temporary posts for some time, and could seek jobs in the labour market or pursue further studies according to their interests and preferences. Quite a number of them have successfully secured suitable employment or taken up further studies after serving in the temporary posts.

5. To assist NGOs to make necessary arrangements, the Administration had thrice extended the temporary posts in 2010, 2011 and 2013 for one year each until end-March 2014, involving an annual cost of approximately \$300 million.

6. As at end-November 2013, some 2 100 young people were employed as PWs in various welfare service units of 90 SWD-subvented NGOs. Among the serving PWs, the majority (about 83%) were working in youth services while the rest were working in elderly services (15%), rehabilitation or family and child welfare services (2%).

### **Arrangement for the Termination of the PW Programme**

7. The temporary PW posts will lapse by end-March 2014. In the past months, SWD has actively encouraged NGOs allocated with the temporary posts to provide life skills training and employment support for the PW incumbents so as to assist them to secure suitable employment or

training opportunities. We have also provided a series of support measures for these young people, including –

### ***Designated Webpage for PW***

8. In collaboration with the Labour Department (LD) and the Employees Retraining Board (ERB), SWD has, in February 2013, set up a designated webpage called “PW 新里程” to provide the PW incumbents and NGOs concerned with information on employment and training so as to help the former find suitable employment and training opportunities. As at December 2013, a total of 28 NGOs provided their job openings through the hyperlink in the webpage. Eight NGOs also provided information on their employment support services.

### ***Job Training and Employment Support Projects for PWs***

9. The average life expectancy of the population in Hong Kong has continued to increase. In 2012, the number of persons aged 65 or above reached almost 1 million, which accounts for 14% of the total population. The demand for elderly services will, therefore, continue to grow and care staff will be well sought after. To provide the PW incumbents with an alternative career choice and train up appropriate care staff for meeting the operational needs of care services, the Labour and Welfare Bureau has been liaising with relevant training institutes and SWD on measures to provide some of the PW incumbents with on-the-job training to assist them to secure employment in elderly services units/ homes. The major projects include –

- (a) With funding support from the LF in May and November 2013, the Yuen Yuen Institute (YYI) has implemented the Pilot Scheme for Training of Multi-skills Workers, i.e. the Youth Career Navigation Scheme in Elderly Services (YCNSSES) with a total of 200 quotas. The trainees will be matched with residential care homes for the elderly (RCHEs) for employment of around two years and be provided with mentorship as well as employment guidance and support to facilitate them to adjust to the unique work environment in the RCHEs. To assist the trainees to develop their future career with upward mobility, they will, during the employment period, be admitted to a

part-time Diploma in Health Studies (Community Health Care) course at the Open University of Hong Kong (OUHK), and the course fees will be borne by the Administration. The benefit of this pilot project is to provide the young people with one-stop and multi-skills pre- and on-the-job training as well as continuous learning opportunity so that they may, step by step, move up the career ladder in the elderly service industry. Upon completion of the 37-month programme, the trainees would be qualified for registration as Health Workers for residential care services for elderly and rehabilitation, and obtain the Diploma in Health Studies (Community Health Care) at the Open University of Hong Kong (recognised at the Qualification Framework (QF) level 4), and could pursue further qualifications such as Enrolled Nurse along the upward career path put in place to develop their career in the elderly service industry in the long run. Scheme 1 of the pilot project, which targets mainly secondary school graduates, has recruited 75 trainees while the recruitment for Scheme 2, which targets mainly PW incumbents, has begun in December 2013.

- (b) Funding was also granted to the Tung Wah Group of Hospitals by the LF in November 2013 to launch a pilot project “Caring Angels”. Recruitment for 30 PW incumbents for the pilot project is now underway.
- (c) The Boys’ and Girls’ Club Association was also approved funding by the LF in November 2013 to launch the nine-month “Career Development Project”. Recruitment for 200 PW incumbents is now underway. The Project will facilitate their life planning, enhance their self-understanding (including their own personality and ability), explore the hurdles and support for their career development, and provide them with systematic training, in order to assist them to gradually pursue the career plan they have drawn up.

### ***Labour Department***

10. In fact, the current employment situation in Hong Kong remains favourable. In November 2013, LD recorded 101 611 job vacancies

from the private sector of which 55 982 were suitable for the PW incumbents (i.e. qualification of F.5 or below with working experience of one year or below), which accounted for 55.1% of the total number of job vacancies in the private sector. Of these job vacancies, 45 615 (81.5%) were full-time jobs and 10 367 (18.5%) were part-time jobs. If classified by industry, the job vacancies in November 2013 were mainly from the financial industry (13 211, 23.6%), catering industry (10 200, 18.2%) and retail industry (7 938, 14.2%).

11. LD has always adopted a multi-pronged strategy to promote youth employment. Its 12 job centres, Telephone Employment Service Hotline, Interactive Employment Service Website and two recruitment centres are assisting young people to find suitable jobs. In addition, LD has launched the “Youth Employment Training Programme” and two Youth Employment Resource Centres named “Youth Employment Start” (Y.E.S.) to provide young people with employment and self-employment support services.

12. Besides, LD has specially set up an enquiry hotline (2150 6397) for the PW incumbents to enquire on LD’s employment services. PW incumbents may also visit the Interactive Employment Service Website of LD (<http://www.jobs.gov.hk>) to find out more about LD’s employment services and obtain other employment information.

### ***Employment Retraining Board***

13. ERB endeavours to provide employment-oriented training courses. To meet the needs of different service users, ERB offers a diverse range of courses under the Manpower Development Scheme, including “Placement-tied Courses”, “Skills Upgrading Scheme Plus Courses” and “Courses for Young People”.

14. In the next few months, the Administration will continue to keep in view the situation of youth employment and collaborate with concerned departments and organisations to help the PW incumbents and young people in need find suitable employment/ training opportunities and to develop their career direction.

## **Government Relief Measures for Supporting Staff in the Welfare Sector**

15. At present, various training institutes are providing Care Workers with different general or specialised training courses on the caring of the elderly or persons with disabilities. For example, ERB is providing serving Care Workers or interested persons with Certificate in Care Worker Training Course, Certificate in Elderly Home Care Worker Training Course and Health Worker Training Course. On the other hand, SWD has, in collaboration with the Department of Health, been running regular training courses for care personnel in RCHEs, including Care Workers.

### **Advice Sought**

16. Members are invited to note this paper.

Social Welfare Department  
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