

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)626/13-14(04)

Ref : CB2/PL/WS

Panel on Welfare Services

**Background brief prepared by Legislative Council Secretariat
for the meeting on 13 January 2014**

Shortage of programme workers in the social welfare sector

Purpose

This paper summarizes major concerns raised at meetings of the Council and the Panel on Welfare Services ("WS Panel") regarding the shortage of programme workers ("PW") in the social welfare sector.

Background

2. To support youth employment during the economic downturn, the Government created 3 000 temporary programme worker ("PW") posts in 2008 under non-governmental organizations ("NGOs") for young people aged between 15 and 29. According to the Administration, about 2 600 young people are still employed in these temporary positions which are due to lapse in March 2013. In the 2013-2014 Policy Address, the Chief Executive announced the extension of these temporary posts for 12 months, so as to allow the Administration and the NGOs concerned time to help the young participants find suitable employment.

Members' deliberations and concerns

3. At the meeting of the WS Panel on 21 January 2013, some members were of the view that if the Administration considered support for youth employment a form of social welfare planning, the temporary PW posts should be extended for a longer period. In the debate on the Motion of Thanks at the Council meeting of 31 January 2013, some

Members pointed out that since the NGOs concerned were forbidden to fill the vacancies arising from the departure of existing PWs, they were unable to map out an annual plan. Moreover, when various types of service units encountered an increase in the demand for services, social workers who originally needed to do everything alone could focus on counselling and organizational work with the support of PWs. Given that the support from PWs had a great positive effect on the organizations and service quality, some Members called on the Administration to make PW posts permanent. They suggested that the Administration should immediately discuss with the NGOs concerned and adopt a lenient approach in dealing with recruitment of PWs to replace those who had left office.

4. In the aforesaid debate, some Members considered that making PW posts permanent could enable young people to fulfill their dream of joining the social welfare sector as well as assist the service units in maintaining high quality services. If the PW posts were deleted, many young people who had an aspiration for the social welfare profession would have no channel to join the sector. Noting that there were permanent Programme Assistant ("PA") posts in different working units, they called on the Administration to review these posts afresh to facilitate PAs to also handle programme-related work, thereby allowing young people who were interested in the profession and with high qualifications to join the sector.

5. According to the Administration, the 3 000 PW posts were of temporary and short-term nature. The purpose of creating temporary posts was to facilitate the gaining of work experience and increase the chances for such youngsters to secure jobs in the employment market. The objective of extending the posts for 12 months was to provide appropriate employment support to the some 2 600 youngsters who were still holding these temporary posts to help them secure suitable jobs. Organizations should thus not employ new PWs upon vacation of such posts.

6. In their joint submission to the WS Panel in June 2013, a number of trade unions and concern groups of the social welfare sector expressed concerns that putting a halt to recruiting replacement for PWs who had left office and deleting the PW posts would result in an even tighter supply of manpower for the social welfare sector. With a serious shortage of manpower, the service standard would inevitably be affected. They called on the Administration to abolish the arrangement and make PW posts permanent, so as to provide opportunities for more young

people to join the social welfare sector, thereby facilitating a stable supply of manpower for the sector. The Administration should also formulate a pay scale and improve the remuneration for PWs.

7. The aforesaid concerns were discussed at a Members' interview with one of the relevant trade unions in July 2013 and a case conference in September 2013. Members attending the case conference had requested the WS Panel to follow up the policy issues arising from the case.

Latest development

8. The WS Panel will discuss the subject and receive views from deputations at its meeting on 13 January 2014.

Relevant papers

9. A list of the relevant papers on the Legislative Council website is in the **Appendix**.

Appendix

Relevant papers on shortage of programme workers in the social welfare sector

Committee	Date of meeting	Paper
Panel on Welfare Services	21 January 2013 (Item I)	Agenda Minutes
Legislative Council	31 January 2013	Official Record of Proceedings Pages 223 to 225
Legislative Council	1 February 2013	Official Record of Proceedings Pages 18 and 19

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
7 January 2014