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Panel on Public Service

Meeting on 22 June 2015

Updated background brief on employment of persons with disabilities in the civil service

Purpose

This paper provides background information on the employment of persons with disabilities ("PWDs") in the civil service, and summarizes the major views and concerns expressed by members when the subject was discussed by the Panel on Public Service ("the Panel") at previous meetings.

Background

Policy on employment of PWDs and facilitating measures

2. The Government's policy and related facilitating measures on the employment of PWDs 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. The facilitating measures being implemented by the Administration for PWDs to apply for civil service posts are as follows –

- (a) Candidates with disabilities who meet the basic entry requirements for a post will not be subject to shortlisting criteria, if any. Once candidates with disabilities meet the basic entry requirements, they will be automatically invited to attend selection interview/test.
- (b) Where a candidate who has indicated that he/she has a disability is invited to a test/interview, the recruiting bureau/department ("B/D") is required to proactively ascertain from the candidate any assistance or accommodation needed,

and the test/interview process would be suitably adjusted to cater for his/her special needs.

- (c) If a candidate with disability is found suitable by the recruitment board to carry out the duties of certain posts in a specific rank, he/she may be recommended for appointment even though he/she may not be able to perform the full range of duties of every post in the concerned rank due to his/her disability.
- (d) 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.
- (e) If a candidate with disability who has satisfied the basic entry requirement is not recommended for appointment, the recruitment board's recommendation will be referred to an officer not below the rank of Assistant Director for consideration and decision so as to ensure that the merits of each candidate with disability would be duly assessed.

Assistance provided to PWDs working in the Government

3. The Administration provides on-the-job assistance and reasonable accommodation to PWDs working in the Government, such as modifying the work areas and facilities, providing necessary equipment and making appropriate changes to job design and work schedules. The Administration established a central fund in April 1996 to finance the purchase of technical aids for civil servants with disabilities. Disbursements from the fund were \$126,000 in 2011-2012, \$49,000 in 2012-2013 and \$101,000 in 2013-2014 (as at 13 March 2014) respectively¹.

Statistics on PWDs being employed in the civil service

4. The Administration compiles statistics on the number of PWDs being employed in the civil service each year². As at 31 March 2014, the number of PWDs employed in the civil service stood at 3 415, representing about 2% of the

¹ Controlling Officer's Reply on the Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2014-2015 (Reply Serial No. CSB064).

² There is no mandatory requirement for civil service job applicants and serving officers to declare their disability, if any. The statistics are compiled on the basis of information available to the management of B/Ds.

strength of the civil service³.

5. Further statistics on the employment of PWDs in the civil service are set out in **Appendices I to V** as follows -

Appendix I Number of PWDs in the civil service from 2009-2010 to 2013-2014 with breakdown by types of disabilities

Appendix II Number of new recruits with disabilities from 2002-2003 to 2011-2012 with breakdown by B/Ds

Appendix III Number of new recruits with disabilities from 2002-2003 to 2013-2014 with breakdown by types of disabilities

Appendix IV Number of PWDs serving in and leaving the civil service from 2002-2003 to 2011-2012

Appendix V Number of PWDs in the civil service in 2012 and 2013 with breakdown by lower/middle and upper ranks

Past discussions

6. The Panel discussed issues relating to the employment of PWDs in the civil service at its meetings on 16 May 2011, 17 June 2013, 15 July 2013 (with deputations attending) and 23 June 2014. The major issues discussed are summarized below.

Measures to promote and facilitate the employment of PWDs in the civil service

7. Members considered that the number of PWDs being employed in the civil service was 3 415 as at 31 March 2014, representing around 2% of the strength of the civil service, was too small. They pointed out that the number of PWDs serving in the civil service had merely increased by 190 since 2008 (i.e. 3 225 in 2008 vs 3 415 in 2014). Some members also queried that the figure of "2%" of PWDs in the civil service included some civil servants who became disabled after joining the civil service, and thus could not provide an accurate picture of the employment situation of PWDs in the civil service. To improve

³ Controlling Officer's Reply on the Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2015-2016 (Reply Serial No. CSB062).

the employment of PWDs in the civil service, the Administration was urged to devise measures to encourage B/Ds to employ more PWDs. Additional funding should also be allocated to B/Ds for them to employ more PWDs and to offer PWDs with long-term positions instead of engaging them under consecutive short-term contracts.

8. The Administration advised that it would continue its efforts in promoting the employment of PWDs in the civil service. Apart from reminding B/Ds of the policy and guidelines on the employment of PWDs when conducting recruitment exercises, Civil Service Bureau ("CSB") would work closely with Labour Department ("LD") to encourage more job seekers with disabilities to apply for government jobs, and liaise with Social Welfare Department ("SWD") to explore further room to provide more job attachments in B/Ds for trainees with disabilities. Under the Non-Civil Service Contract Staff Scheme, B/Ds had the discretion to determine the contract duration having regard to operational needs. Disability of individual employees was not a pertinent factor in determining the duration of the contract.

9. The Administration also advised that the number of appointments offered to applicants with disabilities depended on a number of factors, including the number of qualified applicants with disabilities as well as their suitability for employment. For the civil service recruitment exercises concluded in 2012-2013 and 2013-2014, all 2 222 qualified applicants who had declared their disabilities were invited to selection tests/interviews, 118 (or 5.3%) of them were subsequently offered appointment, whereas the corresponding figure for recruitment exercises concluded in 2010-2011 and 2011-2012 was 94 (or 3% of the 3 152 qualified applicants with disabilities). The figures showed the steady progress made by the Government in implementing the measures in facilitating the employment of PWDs in the civil service.

10. On the suggestion of setting a benchmark for employing PWDs, the Administration advised that as revealed by overseas experience, a mandatory employment quota for PWDs no longer represented the most appropriate means to promote the employment of PWDs. The prevailing trend had moved away from employment quota system to anti-discrimination legislation, enhanced support measures and promotion of equal opportunities for PWDs. Therefore, the Administration did not consider it appropriate to set any numeric target of PWDs working in the Government. Instead, the Administration had implemented suitable measures to ensure that applicants with disabilities could compete with able-bodied applicants on an equal footing.

Disclosure of disability by civil service job applicants and serving employees

11. Some members enquired whether the Administration's practice of not requiring government job applicants and serving employees to declare their

disability status on a mandatory basis was in line with international practices.

12. The Administration advised that the existing arrangement under which job applicants and serving civil servants with disability could choose to disclose their disability was considered appropriate, as it struck a balance between the need to protect the privacy of individual job applicants and serving officers and the desire of the Administration to monitor the general employment situation of PWDs in the civil service.

Referrals by LD for PWDs to apply for civil service posts

13. Some members expressed concern over the decrease in both the number and success rate of referrals made by the Selective Placement Division ("SPD") of LD for PWDs applying for civil service posts. The Administration explained that the number of referrals made by SPD hinged on a number of factors, including the number of government vacancies available and preference of job seekers with disability to apply government jobs through SPD or by other means. LD would step up promotional efforts to encourage more PWDs to apply for government jobs.

Promotion prospects of civil servants with disabilities

14. On the promotion prospects of civil servants with disabilities, the Administration advised that in a promotion exercise, all eligible civil servants in a lower rank would be considered according to the same selection criteria. The disability status, if any, of individual officers, would not be a factor to be considered.

Effectiveness of the Sunnyway Programme

15. Members noted that CSB, in collaboration with SWD, had been implementing a job attachment scheme in B/Ds under the Sunnyway Programme since 2006. On the effectiveness of the Sunnyway Programme, the Administration advised that about 20 B/Ds participated in the Programme offering about 30 job placements each year. Under the Programme, trainees with disabilities would gain employment skills in a real working environment and such experience would be beneficial to the participants who wished to apply for government jobs in future. CSB would continue to work closely with B/Ds to provide more placement opportunities and liaise with SWD to see if more matching could be made.

Barrier-free working environment

16. Some members enquired whether the Administration would enhance the accessibility of Government office buildings and upgrade the barrier-free

facilities in Government offices, in order to facilitate PWDs to work in the Government. The Administration responded that the Government was actively following up the recommendations made in an investigation report published by the Equal Opportunities Commission in June 2010⁴ on the provision of a barrier-free working environment, and the matter was presently overseen by the Chief Secretary for Administration. A timetable for retrofitting and upgrading barrier-free facilities in Government premises and facilities had been in place.

Provision of adequate rebus service for PWDs to go to work

17. Concern was raised that the inadequate supply of rebus service and the high cost of similar service provided by the private sector might discourage PWDs to take up employment. The Administration advised that special arrangements would be made to post appointees with disabilities to an office near their place of residence, where possible. Furthermore, PWDs would be accorded with priority in using rebus service for travelling to and from their place of work on regular basis.

Latest development

18. The Administration will brief the Panel on the employment of PWDs in the civil service at the Panel meeting scheduled for 22 June 2015.

Relevant papers

19. A list of the relevant papers is in **Appendix VI**.

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16 June 2015

⁴ Formal Investigation Report: Accessibility in Publicly Accessible Premises published by Equal Opportunities Commission in June 2010.

Appendix I

Number of persons with disabilities in the civil service with breakdown by types of disabilities from 2009-10 to 2013-14

	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Physical handicap	1 768	1 739	1 750	1 729	1 696
Visceral disability	455	481	494	511	546
With history of mental illness	300	309	330	348	366
Intellectual disability	20	18	19	19	17
Visual impairment	465	456	462	456	439
Hearing impairment	295	302	320	320	335
Others (e.g. autism, speech impairment, specific learning difficulties, etc.)	13	12	16	18	16
Total	3 316	3 317	3 391	3 401	3 415

* Position as at 31 March of the relevant year.

(Source: Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2015-2016 by the Finance Committee - Reply Serial No. CSB062)

Appendix II

Number of new recruits to the Civil Service who declared their disabilities, with breakdown by B/Ds, in the past ten years

(Source: Annex C to LC Papers No. CB(4)902/12-13(03))

	2002-03 Note 1	2003-04 Note 1	2004-05 Note 1	2005-06 Note 1	2006-07 Note 1	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department								1	3	1
Census and Statistics Department								2		
Civil Aviation Department						1		1		
Civil Engineering and Development Department							1	1		1
Companies Registry									1	
Correctional Services Department							3	2		1
Department of Health					1			2	1	
Drainage Services Department							1		1	1
Electrical and Mechanical Services Department							1			
Environment Protection Department								1		
Fire Services Department							7		1	
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department								1	9	17
Government Logistics Department								1	1	2
GS: Commerce and Economic Development Bureau (including Innovation and Technology Commission)									1	
GS: Education Bureau									3	1
GS: Health, Welfare and Food Bureau ^{Note 2}			1							
Highways Department								1	1	
Home Affairs Department						1	1	3		2
Hong Kong Police Force	1									
Housing Department								5	1	4
Inland Revenue Department						2	3	1	6	7
Intellectual Property Department								1		
Labour Department										1
Land Registry										1
Lands Department							1	1	1	
Leisure and Cultural Services Department						5	1	6	2	4
Marine Department										1
Post Office						2		3	3	

	2002-03 Note 1	2003-04 Note 1	2004-05 Note 1	2005-06 Note 1	2006-07 Note 1	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
Social Welfare Department					2	2	4	4	3	2
Student Financial Assistance Agency									1	
Trade and Industry Department								1		
Transport Department									1	1
Treasury	1							1		
Water Supplies Department							5	2		3
Total number of new recruits who declared their disabilities	2	0	1	0	3	13	28	41	40	50

Note 1 Implementation of enhanced efficiency drives in the period, particularly the six years of open recruitment freeze which ended in March 2007 (namely from 1999-2000 to 2006-07, save for 2001-02 and 2002-03 when exceptional approval was given for a limited number of grades to conduct open recruitment to meet special operational needs).

Note 2 Upon the re-organisation of the Government Secretariat in July 2007, the former Health, Welfare and Food Bureau was renamed as Food and Health Bureau with change in the policy portfolios.

Appendix III

Number of new recruits to the Civil Service who declared their disabilities, with breakdown by types of disability, from 2002-03 to 2013-14

(Source: Annex B to LC Papers No. CB(4)902/12-13(03) & the reply from the Secretary for the Civil Service to the written question raised by Hon LEE Cheuk-yan at the Council meeting on 4 February 2015)

	2002-03 Note 1	2003-04 Note 1	2004-05 Note 1	2005-06 Note 1	2006-07 Note 1	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Visual impairment ^{Note 2}	0	0	1	0	0	0	7	7	8	12	7	7
Hearing impairment	0	0	0	0	1	4	6	16	10	15	8	28
Physical disability	0	0	0	0	2	5	1	9	12	8	5	14
Intellectual disability	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Ex-mentally ill persons	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	4	1	3	7
Visceral disability	0	0	0	0	0	3	13	8	6	12	5	21
Others, e.g. autism, speech impairment, specific learning difficulties, etc.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	2
Total number of new recruits who declared their disabilities	2	0	1	0	3	13	28	41	40	50	30	80
Total number of new recruits	1 917	173	558	1 404	2 780	4 202	6 112	6 027	5 465	7 877	7 316	8 460

Note 1 There was significant drop in the recruitment figures due to the implementation of enhanced efficiency drives in the period, particularly the six years of open recruitment freeze which ended in March 2007 (namely from 1999-2000 to 2006-07, save for 2001-02 and 2002-03 when exceptional approval was given for a limited number of grades to conduct open recruitment to meet special operational needs).

Note 2 New recruits with colour blindness or defective colour perception are not included in the statistics.

**Number of persons with disabilities
serving in and leaving the Civil Service in the past ten years**

(Source: Annex A to LC Papers No. CB(4)902/12-13(03))

Year ^{Note 1}	Total number of persons with disabilities ^{Note 2} serving in the Civil Service	Total number of persons with disabilities leaving the Civil Service ^{Note 3}	Total Strength in the Civil Service
2002-03 ^{Note 4}	3 398	176	169 100
2003-04 ^{Note 4}	3 319	198	163 039
2004-05 ^{Note 4}	3 241	168	157 300
2005-06 ^{Note 4}	3 256	103	155 019
2006-07 ^{Note 4}	3 263	126	153 805
2007-08	3 225	168	153 477
2008-09	3 238	179	155 128
2009-10	3 316	166	156 573
2010-11	3 317	204	156 886
2011-12	3 391	206	159 195

Note 1 Position as at the end of the financial year (i.e. as at 31 March).

Note 2 Persons with colour blindness or defective colour perception are not included in the statistics.

Note 3 Reasons for leaving the Civil Service include retirement, resignation, death, etc.

Note 4 Implementation of enhanced efficiency drives in the period, particularly the six years of open recruitment freeze which ended in March 2007 (namely from 1999-2000 to 2006-07, save for 2001-02 and 2002-03 when exceptional approval was given for a limited number of grades to conduct open recruitment to meet special operational needs).

**Number of persons with disabilities^{Note 1} in the Civil Service with
breakdown by the lower and middle ranks and the upper ranks as
at 31 March for the years of 2012 and 2013**

Group	As at 31 March 2012		As at 31 March 2013	
	No. of persons with disabilities in the Civil Service	% of strength in that group	No. of persons with disabilities in the Civil Service	% of strength in that group
Lower and middle ranks ^{Note 2} (Covers ranks with maximum salary below Master Pay Scale (MPS) Point 34 or equivalent)	3 230	2.32%	3 232	2.30%
Upper ranks (Covers ranks with maximum salary between MPS Point 34 to 49 and on Directorate Pay Scale or equivalent)	161	0.81%	169	0.83%
Total	3 391	2.13%	3 401	2.12%

Note 1 Persons with colour blindness or defective colour perception in the Civil Service are not included in the statistics.

Note 2 We do not collect breakdown figures specifically for the lower ranks.

(Source: Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2014-15 by the Finance Committee - Reply Serial No. CSB064.)

Employment of persons with disabilities in the civil service

List of relevant papers

Meeting	Date of meeting	Paper
Panel on Public Service	16.5.2011 (item IV)	Administration's paper Press Release Minutes Administration's follow-up paper
	17.6.2013 (item V)	Agenda Administration's paper Minutes Administration's follow-up response to issues raised at the Panel meeting
	15.7.2013 (item V)	Agenda Administration's paper Minutes
	23.6.2014 (item V)	Agenda Administration's paper Minutes Administration's follow-up response to issues raised at the Panel meeting

Meeting	Date of meeting	Paper
Council Meeting	24.10.2012	Official Record of Proceedings Pages 88 - 94 (Written question raised by Hon TAM Yiu-chung)
	5.6.2013	Official Record of Proceedings Pages 138-141 (Written question raised by Hon Emily LAU)
	26.3.2014	Official Record of Proceedings Pages 72-88 (Written question raised by Hon Fernando CHEUNG)
	4.2.2015	Official Record of Proceedings Pages 107-112 (Written question raised by Hon LEE Chuek-yan)
Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2014-15	31.3.2014	Controlling Officer's Reply (Reply Serial No. CSB064)
Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2015-16	27.3.2015	Controlling Officer's Reply (Reply Serial No. CSB062)

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