

For information

Legislative Council Panel on Welfare Services

Provision and Promotion of Sign Language

Purpose

This paper provides information on the major measures for the provision and promotion of sign language, in response to Members' proposal.

Provision of Sign Language

2. The Rehabilitation Advisory Committee, in collaboration with the Hong Kong Council of Social Service and relevant organisations, published the "List of Sign Language Interpreters in Hong Kong" (the List) in 2016. The List sets out information of sign language interpreters, including their professional qualifications, work experience and means of contact, etc. to facilitate selection of sign language interpretation services. Application for inclusion on the List is voluntary. Sign language interpreters have to meet the following two criteria: (i) having provided not less than 200 hours of sign language interpretation services for two consecutive years immediately preceding the date of application; and (ii) possessing valid proof of the aforesaid sign language interpretation experience issued by the employing organisation(s). As of end August 2021, there are 56 sign language interpreters on the List.

3. Many non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are offering sign language courses of various levels for those interested. Since September 2015, sign language courses have been included as language courses under the Continuing Education Fund. Those having completed the courses may apply for reimbursement of part of the course fee.

Promotion of Sign Language

4. The Government has been promoting sign language to facilitate public understanding of the culture of the deaf community and to foster disability inclusion. Relevant measures are outlined below:

Dissemination of public information

- (a) Since mid-2019, the Information Services Department (ISD) has been providing simultaneous sign language interpretation for the press conferences held at the Chief Executive's Office, the Central Government Offices and ISD, such as the press briefings on the COVID-19 situation jointly held by the Centre for Health Protection and the Hospital Authority. Subtitled videos with sign language interpretation are uploaded onto the website news.gov.hk, and ISD's webpage provides live broadcast of press conferences with sign language interpretation;
- (b) All Government TV Announcements of Public Interest (APIs) have Chinese and English subtitles. New TV APIs of the Labour and Welfare Bureau and its departments are provided with sign language interpretation. ISD has also suggested to other government bureaux and departments that sign language interpretation should be provided in their TV APIs where practicable;
- (c) Since April 2016, the Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK) has been providing a TV current affairs programme "This Morning" with sign language interpretation. Since July 2018, the Television Broadcasts Ltd has been providing sign language interpretation in the relevant news programme according to license requirements;

Promotion of sign language learning

- (d) The Civil Service Training and Development Institute organises sign language training workshops for government frontline staff with relevant work needs to assist them in communicating with persons with hearing impairment during service provision;
- (e) The Social and Recreational Centres for the Disabled and the Multi-service Centres for the Hearing Impaired Persons subvented by the Government

organise sign language training courses and provide sign language interpretation services to facilitate communication between persons with hearing impairment and others;

- (f) The Government provides funding support to NGOs for launching various programmes to promote sign language learning and disability inclusion, including establishing a sign language database of lexical variations of commonly used sign language vocabulary for public reference; developing mobile applications for sign language learning and daily communication with persons with hearing impairment; implementing sign language-assisted teaching projects for integrating and developing new sign language vocabulary needed by teachers; developing a visual sign language dictionary and sign language teaching resources centre; and organising inter-school sign-a-song contest to promote knowledge and application of sign language for primary and secondary school teachers and students; and
- (g) The Government in collaboration with RTHK have launched a TV programme “Sign Language Capriccios” to teach simple sign language in an interesting way and show the interaction between persons with hearing impairment and others with the use of sign language.

Advice Sought

- 5. Members are invited to note the content of this paper.

Labour and Welfare Bureau
October 2021