

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
PANEL ON WELFARE SERVICES**

Support Services for Adults with Disabilities

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on the provision of vocational rehabilitation and training services and further learning opportunities for persons with disabilities (PWDs), including adults with mental and/or physical disabilities.

Vocational Rehabilitation and Training Services for PWDs

2. The Government strives to provide a wide range of vocational rehabilitation and training services for PWDs so as to equip them with job skills that meet market requirements and assist them in securing suitable employment commensurate with their abilities. These services are detailed in the ensuing paragraphs.

Skills Centres of the Vocational Training Council (“VTC”)

3. The three Skills Centres of VTC offer a variety of market-driven training courses/programmes for PWDs aged 15 or above, who have been assessed as having the ability to work in the open market, with a view to enhancing their employment prospects and equipping them for open employment. These include courses in commercial and retail service, basic catering service, computer and network practice, design and desktop publishing, printing, packaging service, office practice, logistics service, massage service, etc.. The Skills Centres offer a total of 660 full-time training places, of which 120 are provided with boarding facilities.

4. Apart from full-time courses, the Skills Centres also offer part-time evening courses and tailor-made short courses of flexible attendance mode to meet the specific needs of PWDs. Sixty part-time evening course training places and 300 tailor-made short course training places are provided annually. Currently, most applicants can be

admitted to the Skills Centres' training programmes within a short time after the completion of the application and vocational assessment process. In 2009, the average waiting time was about two weeks¹.

5. The training courses/programmes of the Skills Centres are subject to regular reviews and moderation by the Course Sub-committee under the purview of VTC's Committee on Vocational Training for People with Disabilities. Members of the Committee and the Sub-committee include representatives from the Special Schools Council, Integrated Vocational Training Centres, employers' associations, relevant government departments and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). They provide valuable input for the design of the training programmes to ensure that these programmes would match the local occupational skills requirements and meet the needs of the PWDs and the employment market.

Day Training and Vocational Rehabilitation Services provided by Social Welfare Department (SWD)

6. To assist PWDs to improve their social adjustment capabilities and enhance their social and vocational skills, SWD provides them with various day training and vocational rehabilitation services. At present, there are a total of 16 384 places for these services. In 2010-11, there will be an additional provision of 137 places of Day Activity Centres (DACs) and 420 places of Integrated Vocational Rehabilitation Services Centres (IVRSCs). Details of these services are as follows –

(a) Integrated Vocational Training Centres (IVTCs)

IVTCs provide comprehensive and systematic vocational training for PWDs to assist them in achieving open employment and developing their potential. At present, there are two IVTCs operated by NGOs with government subvention, providing a total of 453 training places.

(b) Sheltered Workshops (SWs)

SWs provide PWDs, who are not yet able to take up open employment, with appropriate vocational training in a specially designed work environment, in which they can learn to adjust to normal work requirements, develop social

¹ The average time for completing Specific Vocational Assessment Programme and Comprehensive Vocational Assessment Programme is 3 to 5 days and 2 to 3 weeks respectively.

skills and relationships, and prepare for potential advancement to supported and open employment. As at March 2010, there were 35 SWs providing 5 133 places.

(c) Supported Employment (SE)

SE provides PWDs with vocational training, job matching, on-the-job coaching, follow-through guidance services and employment-related skills, etc.. It serves as an avenue for upward mobility of SW trainees and a necessary step towards social integration for those PWDs who otherwise cannot take up open employment. As at March 2010, there were 27 NGOs providing 1 645 places.

(d) IVRSCs

SWD has implemented the new service delivery model of IVRSC since 2004 through re-engineering the SW and SE services. IVRSCs provide a series of one-stop and integrated vocational rehabilitation services including work skills training and development of their social and interpersonal skills with a view to preparing them for potential advancement to open employment. As at March 2010, there were 23 IVRSCs providing a total of 3 685 places.

(e) On the Job Training Programme for PWDs and Sunnyway -
On the Job Training Programme for Young PWDs

These two programmes provide wage subsidy to employers to encourage them to provide job opportunities for PWDs. Under these programmes, services including job attachment, job matching, on-the-job training, job related counselling and post-placement support, etc. are provided to PWDs. As at March 2010, a total of 743 places were offered under these programmes.

(f) DACs

For persons with severe intellectual disability who are unable to receive vocational training or sheltered workshop services, DACs provide them with day care and training in daily living skills and simple work skills. As at March 2010, there were 78 DACs providing 4 495 places.

7. When students with disabilities reach the age of 15, they can apply for these services and be put on the waiting lists when they are still studying at school. Referrals/applications can be made by school social workers, medical social workers, family caseworkers and staff of rehabilitation service units to SWD's Central Referral System for Rehabilitation Services.

Training Courses provided for PWDs by the Employees Retraining Board (ERB)

8. The service targets of the ERB have been expanded since 1 December 2007 to cover those Hong Kong residents at age 15 or above and with education at sub-degree level or below. Programmes for PWDs can be grouped under two major categories, namely full-time placement-tied job-specific skills training courses and part-time generic skills training courses. Placement-tied courses provided the unemployed PWDs with training on vocational skills free of charge. A Training Allowance is also granted to course attendees. To help trainees enter the labour market, training bodies are required to provide trainees with 6-month placement follow-up service. Non-placement-tied generic skills training courses conducted in part-time mode cover IT applications and vocational languages. These courses are designed to enhance the competitiveness of the employed or unemployed PWDs. Unemployed PWDs or those with monthly income of \$7,000 or below may apply for course fee waiver whilst those with monthly income between \$7,001 and \$15,000 can enjoy 70% course fee subsidy.

9. At present, placement-tied courses designed for PWDs including telemarketing, desktop publishing, homepage design, customer service, cleaning service, retail and warehouse operation, courier service, clerical work, etc. are offered through the district networks of 15 appointed training bodies. The ERB offers 3 placement-tied training courses, namely, "Certificate in Cleaning Assistant Training", "Certificate in Sales and Store Management" and "Certificate in Courier Training" which are also suitable for adults with mental disability. In 2009-10, around 1 350 PWDs enrolled in the above-mentioned courses. In order to serve more PWDs, the ERB has reserved a total of 2 000 training places for this target group in 2010-11, and provides in total 47 training courses, including 40 placement-tied courses and 7 generic skills training courses.

Further Learning Opportunities for PWDs

Admission of applicants with disabilities

10. Higher education institutions are committed to offering equal opportunities to all applicants. The admission decisions of institutions are based on holistic assessment of the academic merit of the applicants. Applicants with disabilities would not be discriminated against. Applicants who fail to meet some of the entrance requirements (e.g. languages) but demonstrate outstanding performance in other aspects (including interviews) will be considered on a case-by-case basis. As with admission of other students, such admission decision falls within institutional autonomy.

11. To maximise opportunities for students with disabilities, the Joint University Programmes Admissions System maintains a Sub-system for the admission of students with disabilities. At present, the sub-system covers the following types of disabilities: physical handicap, hearing impairment, visual impairment, visceral disability, speech impairment, autism, mental illness, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, and specific learning difficulties.

Support services and special arrangements for students with disabilities

12. Institutions have in place special arrangements and support services for accommodating students with special needs with regard to their particular disability and their field of study. The support services provided by institutions include –

- (a) flexibility in course registration;
- (b) guidance in academic study and career counselling;
- (c) special study aids and examination arrangements;
- (d) suitable on-campus accommodation, facilities and library services;

- (e) financial assistance and scholarship, in particular special disability grants and awards; and
- (f) orientation programmes for the newly admitted students with disabilities and their family members and communication of students' learning difficulties to relevant departments and programme leaders for early planning and necessary assistance.

Special Admission Scheme (SAS)

13. VTC offers a wide range of vocational education and training programmes, through its member institutions, for school leavers at different levels and adult learners to acquire skills and knowledge to enhance their employability.

14. VTC administers a SAS for students with special educational needs. Under SAS, students applying for VTC's courses will be given an offer if they are able to meet the minimum entry requirements for the course concerned and have passed an interview. VTC organises a briefing session on the Scheme for interested students, their parents and teachers to provide necessary information and assistance before the recruitment commences.

15. Upon admission under SAS, students and their parents will be invited to attend tailor-made orientation programmes which introduce the services and support measures available at VTC for them. These include the provision of essential technical aids, counselling service and additional coaching. Depending on the nature of their disabilities, students may apply for and be given exemption from completing some specific modules. In some cases, more time is allowed and other special arrangements are arranged for these students when they undergo assessments where necessary.

Advice Sought

16. Members are invited to note the contents of this paper.

**Labour and Welfare Bureau
Education Bureau
Social Welfare Department
Vocational Training Council
Employees Retraining Board**

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