

Panel on Manpower
Legislative Council

Urge the government to strengthen the support on autistic youth employment

In recent years, there are more and more people diagnosed as autism and Asperger's syndrome, the society is beginning to address the autism-related issues. However, adults with autistic are facing employment difficulties due to lack of concern and support by the government.

Asperger's syndrome is defined by an Austrian doctor. The Asperger sufferers hardly know the social norms, perceive others' needs and people's emotions, giving rise to incapability on communication and association. With their special interest on specific aspect and weird behaviour, hardly do the autistics get into the social circles.

Under the integrated education policy, students with autism can get into the mainstream schools studying and acquiring counseling and support services from social workers or school-based speech therapists; but the graduates, hardly they can acquire the timely support or on-the-job counseling services.

Up to now, there are too few non-government organizations providing supported employment programme for adults challenged by Autism Spectrum Disorders. Although the programme provides training sessions on social skills, job matching and on-the-job support, due to restrictions on inadequate manpower and subsidies with time limit, the adults challenged by ASD need to queue up and wait for months, wasting their youth-hood. It is unreasonable for them to wait any longer.

In the consultation papers on Hong Kong population policy, there is nothing being mentioned on supporting the autistic. According to the figure from National Autistic Society, UK, only 15% of people with autism are in full time employment, despite the fact that 79% of people with autism on out-of-work benefits want to work. For many, all they need is a combination of the right support and the opportunity to make ambitions a reality.

People with autism have some valuable skills and unique characteristic which can be applied in the workplace. They might have very good attention to detail, good at sticking to routines and timetables, which is reliable. After appropriate training, their employability can be enhanced, which is a way to unleash the potential of existing population. With on-the-job training and adequate support, people with autism can find their right places in vocation.

Here are the suggestions to our government:

1. Increase the subsidies to social welfare institutions which supporting the autistics, so that they can hire enough professions to train up the autistic youth and provide on-to-job counseling.
2. Initiate the public sectors and private sectors to hire the autistic through tax concessions.

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