

For discussion on
19 June 2017

Legislative Council Panel on Public Service Employment of Persons with Disabilities in the Civil Service

Purpose

This paper provides an update on the implementation of the relevant measures to facilitate the employment of persons with disabilities in the civil service.

Overview

2. In line with our role as a strong advocate for equal opportunities, the Government is committed to eliminating disabilities and other forms of discrimination in employment. To this end, we have been implementing suitable measures to ensure that persons with disabilities, like other applicants, have equal access to job opportunities in the Government. We welcome persons with disabilities to apply for government jobs and have put in place appropriate measures to facilitate their participation in the recruitment process. These include suitable accommodation in the recruitment process and provision of technical aids and other assistance to facilitate applicants with disabilities in attending selection tests/interviews. Also, an appropriate degree of preference may be given to applicants with disabilities found suitable for appointment by placing them ahead of able-bodied applicants whose suitability for appointment is considered comparable to the former¹.

¹ In accordance with the existing guidelines, the recruiting B/D should categorise applicants who have attained the passing mark into three groups of suitability for appointment (i.e. very suitable, suitable and marginally suitable). The priority of an applicant with disability in a particular group will be advanced to the top of that group.

3. As at 31 March 2016² there were 3 230 civil servants with disabilities known to their bureaux/departments (B/Ds), representing around 2% of the strength of the civil service³. To gauge the latest position on the recruitment front, we have also gathered from B/Ds updated information on the number of new recruits with disabilities. Over the past five financial years, the number of new civil service recruits who had declared their disabilities ranged from 30 to over 80 a year, with 2015-16 recording a total number of 83 new recruits with disabilities. Going forward, sustained efforts will continue to be made to promote employment of persons with disabilities in the Government.

Promoting Awareness and Inclusive Culture in the Government

4. To refresh human resource (HR) managers' understanding of the policy and to ensure consistency in the application of the facilitating measures to ensure persons with disabilities have equal access to job opportunities in the Government, we have been organising briefing-cum-sharing sessions for them from time to time. HR personnel of private/social enterprises have also been invited to share their experience and useful points to note on working with persons with disabilities. Also, the Civil Service Bureau (CSB) has continued to send representatives to observe recruitment exercises involving a greater number of applicants who have declared disabilities to ensure that the selection boards follow vigilantly the prevailing policy and guidelines.

5. To increase awareness on prevailing policies, we have published a booklet entitled "Employ People Based on Their Abilities – Application for Government Jobs by Persons with Disabilities", setting out the facilitating measures in place for job applicants with disabilities, as well as the assistance available from the Selective Placement Division of Labour Department (LD).

² Statistics as at 31 March 2017 are being compiled and will be available in the third quarter of 2017.

³ There is no requirement for applicants for government jobs and serving officers to declare their disabilities, if any. The statistics in question are compiled on an anonymous basis by using the information available to the management of B/Ds (e.g. through requests of applicants who have declared disabilities for special arrangements for selection tests/interviews, or applications from serving officers with disabilities for fund to purchase technical aids to assist in their performance of duties). They serve only the purpose of providing general reference rather than indicating the exact number of persons with disabilities in the civil service.

6. To complement our recruitment efforts, special arrangements have been made, where appropriate, to match suitable postings to appointees with disabilities having regard to their different nature and degree of disabilities. As an essential part of the policy to integrate officers with disabilities into the workplace, we are committed to providing on-the-job assistance and suitable accommodation for government employees with disabilities. These assistance and accommodation include modification of work areas and facilities, appropriate adjustments to job design and work schedules, and provision of necessary equipment. In this connection, CSB has reserved funding for B/Ds to purchase technical aids for officers with disabilities so as to help them perform their duties.

Internship Scheme for Students with Disabilities

7. As an additional drive to promote the employment of persons with disabilities in the Government, CSB has launched an internship scheme since 2016 for full-time undergraduate students with disabilities studying in local universities and students of the Shine Skills Centre (“Shine”) of VTC⁴. The scheme aims to unleash the potential of persons with disabilities and allow students with disabilities to acquire hands-on work experience in the Government, thereby strengthening their competitiveness in seeking to enter the labour market. On the other hand, it also provides opportunities for B/Ds to better appreciate the talent of persons with disabilities.

8. A total of 43 students, including 20 full-time undergraduate students from seven local universities and 23 students from Shine, participated in an eight-week internship scheme in 2016. They were assigned to 22 B/Ds⁵ to perform administrative or clerical duties. Upon completion of the internship, a “Certificate of Internship” was awarded subject to satisfactory attendance, conduct and performance. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive. The

⁴ Shine offers vocational training programmes and support service for development of students with special education needs who are aged 15 or above.

⁵ These B/Ds are: Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department, Chief Secretary for Administration’s Office, Civil Engineering and Development Department, CSB, Department of Justice, Drainage Services Department, Electrical and Mechanical Services Department, Food and Environmental Hygiene Department, Government Logistics Department, Home Affairs Department, Hong Kong Police Force, Housing Department, Highways Department, Information Services Department, Labour and Welfare Bureau, LD, Land Registry, Lands Department, Legal Aid Department, Leisure and Cultural Services Department, Marine Department and Social Welfare Department.

interns found the scheme useful in helping them gain valuable exposure in an office setting.

9. Building on the experience gained last year, we have decided to expand the breadth and depth of the programme. For undergraduate students, the total number of placements is increased by 60% from 20 to 32, with job contents broadened from conventional administration duties to stimulating tasks such as statistical data analysis; translation of documents; development or revamping of web pages, mobile applications or social media platforms; graphics design; preparation of publicity materials; and conducting promotional activities. For students from Shine, the interns may be assigned non-clerical work based on individual aptitude and strengths. Discussion is also underway to increase the number of placements to be offered.

10. With the Government leading by example, we hope that the internship scheme could encourage other employers to provide more opportunities for persons with disabilities, and will actively explore the scope for non-government organisations and private enterprises to launch similar initiatives.

Advice Sought

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

Civil Service Bureau
June 2017