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**Panel on Manpower**

**Updated background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat  
for the meeting on 16 January 2018**

**Employment services of the Labour Department**

**Purpose**

This paper provides background information and summarizes the past discussions by the Panel on Manpower ("the Panel") on the employment services provided by the Labour Department ("LD") since the Fourth Legislative Council ("LegCo").

**Background**

2. According to the Administration, LD provides free recruitment assistance to employers and employment services to job seekers through a network of 13 job centres throughout the territory, three recruitment centres for the catering, retail and construction industries, the Job Vacancy Processing Centre and the Telephone Employment Service Centre. Apart from paying visits to job centres, job seekers may obtain the latest vacancy information through the Interactive Employment Service ("iES") website as well as the various vacancy search terminals located throughout the territory.

3. To cater for the needs of different job seekers, LD administers various specialized employment programmes, including the Youth Employment and Training Programme ("YETP") (formerly known as the Youth Pre-employment Training Programme and the Youth Work Experience and Training Scheme), the Employment Programme for the Middle-aged ("EPM"), the Work Trial Scheme and the Work Orientation and Placement Scheme. Under these programmes, job seekers are provided with tailor-made employment support services such as the provision of work trials in actual working environment and

on-the-job training, etc. Both large-scale and district-based job fairs are organized to facilitate job seekers to apply for jobs and attend interviews with employers on the spot.

## **Deliberations of the Panel**

### Employment support for mature persons

4. According to the Administration, EPM aimed at encouraging employers to engage unemployed job seekers aged 40 or above with employment difficulties in full-time jobs through the provision of on-the-job training allowance of up to \$3,000 per month for employers of mature job seekers for a period of three to six months. To encourage employers to offer more openings to these job seekers, EPM has been extended to cover part-time permanent jobs (i.e. working 18 hours to less than 30 hours per week) with effect from 1 September 2015.

5. Some members considered that the Administration should collaborate with employers of the emerging industries in providing appropriate training and retraining to the middle-aged and the retirees so as to help them enter or re-join the labour market. The Administration advised that the Employees Retraining Board ("ERB") had widely consulted employer associations and the relevant Industry Consultative Network as well as other parties concerned in the development of the training and retraining courses for the service targets, including the middle-aged, and the courses were offered in response to the needs of the market.

6. Some members expressed the view that the support measures taken by the Administration should focus on the retirees when promoting employment of mature persons. According to the Administration, some of the mature persons were reluctant to re-join the labour market simply because of long working hours and some of them would prefer part-time jobs. To encourage employers to provide more part-time posts to mature job seekers, LD had been encouraging employers to provide the mature employees with a family-friendly working environment with flexible and various work arrangements and support. It also regularly organized employment briefings for mature persons and experience sharing sessions for employers. In addition, LD had set up a dedicated webpage on part-time vacancies at iES website to facilitate job seekers interested in part-time employment. LD would also continue organizing district-based job fairs on part-time employment at job centres to meet the needs of mature persons who were more interested in taking up part-time jobs.

### Employment assistance to young people

7. Members expressed concern that the unemployment rate of young people was relatively higher than the overall unemployment rate in Hong Kong. Concern was raised about the employment support and training services to young people. The Administration advised that YETP launched by LD provided one-stop pre-employment and on-the-job training for young school leavers aged 15 to 24 with educational attainment at sub-degree level or below. It was expected that the trainees could secure employment with better remuneration in the labour market upon completion of the training and acquiring relevant working experience.

8. Some members considered that, in order to facilitate students to better understand the labour market and their own career aspirations at an early stage, the Administration should place more emphasis on students rather than school leavers and young job seekers when promoting youth employment. The Administration acknowledged that it was crucial to help young people start life planning at an early stage and understand the manpower requirements, career prospects and progression pathways in different trades and industries. To this end, LD had operated two Youth Employment Resource Centres, i.e. Youth Employment Start ("YES") at Mongkok and Kwai Fong, which offered personalized career advisory services, including career planning to young people aged between 15 and 29. LD had also promoted the services of YES in schools.

9. Given the low participation rate of YETP in recent years, some members called on the Administration to consider commissioning an independent consultant to conduct a comprehensive review of the programme. The Administration responded that LD had reviewed YETP from time to time. Under YETP, LD had been working closely with training organizations to tailor-make training-cum-employment projects for employers of various industries. Members were also advised that the lower participation rate of YETP in recent years was partly attributed to the decrease in population of the target age group of 15-24 and the increasing opportunities for these young people to pursue further studies. In addition, as a result of the vibrant economy in the past few years, young job seekers could find jobs in the employment market more easily and fewer of them sought employment assistance from LD under YETP.

### Women employment

10. Members had all along called for the provision of adequate child care services so as to release the female homemakers to join the labour force. In addition, more resources should be provided by ERB to equip the female homemakers for entering the labour market. The Administration advised that ERB had since 2009 rebranded the "Integrated Scheme for Local Domestic Helpers" as the "Smart Living Scheme", which was a one-stop job matching and referral platform for household services, elderly care and support to increase the employment opportunities for graduates of relevant ERB training courses.

11. The Administration further advised that to remove the barriers for women to stay in employment and to further respond to the community demand for child care services, it had been launching a series of measures to strengthen the existing child care services. These included the provision of, by phases, about 5 000 additional places of Extended Hours Service at aided child care centres and kindergarten-cum-child care centres from 2015-2016 onwards and the enhancement of the after-school care services. Moreover, the Administration would commission a consultancy study to advise on strategies for the long-term development of child care services with a view to providing services that would meet the needs of the families in Hong Kong.

### Employment support for persons with disabilities

12. Noting that a considerable number of persons with disabilities remained unemployed after having repeatedly sought employment, some members asked whether the Government, as the largest employer in Hong Kong, would consider giving priority in engaging job seekers with disabilities who had registered at LD to fill vacancies in the civil service. Concern was raised about the Administration's efforts in promoting the employment of persons with disabilities and whether it would consider requiring large enterprises to employ a specified percentage or a specific number of employees with disabilities.

13. The Administration advised that it had all along been committed to promoting the employment of persons with disabilities through various publicity channels. The Administration had also been approaching employers in various trades and industries and working with the Human Resources Managers Clubs to enhance the employment prospect of job seekers with disabilities and would continue to work in such direction. In respect of helping job seekers with disabilities registered with LD to apply for government posts, LD had been keeping watch for recruitment notices posted at the website of the Civil Service

Bureau and would disseminate such information to both able-bodied job seekers and those with disabilities.

14. Having regard to the diverse needs for various categories of job seekers with disabilities, including those with intellectual disabilities, behavioural or emotional problems and physical disabilities, some members were concerned about the employment support for them. According to the Administration, LD launched a two-year pilot project in September 2016 to engage a non-governmental welfare organization to provide in-depth psychological and emotional counselling service to needy job seekers. The scheme served to alleviate emotional problems of job seekers with disabilities arising from the state of their disabilities or their personal or family matters, so as to help them concentrate on job search and settle in their new jobs, thereby releasing their potentials in employment. Out of 67 job seekers with disabilities making use of the counselling service during the first year of the pilot scheme from September 2016 to August 2017, 44 jobs seekers concluded their cases. LD would review the pilot scheme upon its completion and map out the way forward in light of the review findings.

#### Employment assistance to ethnic minorities

15. Members expressed concern about the unemployment rate of the ethnic minorities ("EMs") job seekers and sought information on the specific measures in place to address the employment difficulties of EM job seekers, such as language barrier and cultural difference. Members were of the view that LD's staff should enhance their understanding and sensitivity of the specific needs of EM job seekers and called on the Administration to provide dedicated employment support for EM job seekers.

16. According to the Administration, LD's job centres had been maintaining close contact with non-governmental organizations serving EMs, EM religious bodies and schools with EM students in disseminating updated employment information to EMs regularly and encouraging them to refer EMs with employment needs to LD for employment services. To help EMs better understand the latest labour market situation and facilitate them to browse vacancy information, key information of all job vacancies was translated and displayed bilingually on iES website, its mobile application and vacancy search terminals of LD equipped with touch-screen interface. In addition, leaflets on LD's employment services for EMs were printed in various ethnic languages and posters regarding the provision of interpretation services to job seekers were displayed in all LD's job centres in which interpretation service would be arranged as necessary. Moreover, to strengthen employment support for EM

job seekers, especially those of South Asian origins, LD has engaged two employment assistants who are proficient in EM languages to provide employment services at Kowloon West Job Centre in Sham Shui Po and Employment in One-stop in Tin Shui Wai on a pilot basis since May 2017.

17. Some members were of the view that the Administration should consider recruiting EMs as placement officers at LD's job centres to enhance communication with EM job seekers. Members were advised that LD launched a pilot project "Employment Services Ambassador ("ESA") Programme for Ethnic Minorities" in September 2014 to engage trainees of YETP who could communicate in EM languages as Employment Services Ambassadors at LD's job centres, industry-based recruitment centres and job fairs to undergo six-month on-the-job training. The programme not only helped LD better serve EM job seekers but also enriched the ESAs' own working experience and resume, benefiting their job search in the open market. The programme has so far engaged a total of 110 ESAs.

18. At its meeting on 15 March 2016, the Panel passed a motion requesting the Government to establish an Ethnic Minorities Employment Division in one of LD's job centres, at which fluent English-speaking EM staff were engaged to provide employment support services for non-Chinese-speaking job seekers.

#### Industry-based employment support

19. Noting that the Construction Industry Recruitment Centre ("CIRC") opened in January 2016, members sought information on the distinct function of CIRC as compared with other LD job centres. Some members were of the view that job matching service should be provided at CIRC for job seekers to fill vacancies as appropriate.

20. The Administration advised that for some traditional construction jobs, job search or recruitment relied on personal connections which might limit the choices of job seekers and employers. CIRC provided employers and job seekers of the construction industry a free and user-friendly employment service platform. Employers, contractors and sub-contractors could organize job fairs and conduct on-the-spot interviews with job seekers. LD had been appealing to the trade associations, contractors and sub-contractors to actively place job vacancies and organize job fairs in CIRC and urging trade unions and the Construction Industry Council to encourage workers and trainees to search for jobs through CIRC. It was hoped that CIRC could bring about a cultural change by offering an additional recruitment channel for the construction industry.

**Relevant papers**

21. A list of the relevant papers on the LegCo website is in the **Appendix**.

Council Business Division 2  
Legislative Council Secretariat  
10 January 2018

## Appendix

### Relevant papers on the employment services of the Labour Department

<b>Committee</b>	<b>Date of meeting</b>	<b>Paper</b>
Panel on Manpower	21.1.2010 (Item IV)	<a href="#"><u>Agenda</u></a> <a href="#"><u>Minutes</u></a>
	20.10.2011 (Item II)	<a href="#"><u>Agenda</u></a> <a href="#"><u>Minutes</u></a>
	25.1.2013 (Item V)	<a href="#"><u>Agenda</u></a> <a href="#"><u>Minutes</u></a>
	18.6.2013 (Item V)	<a href="#"><u>Agenda</u></a> <a href="#"><u>Minutes</u></a>
	17.12.2013 (Item III)	<a href="#"><u>Agenda</u></a> <a href="#"><u>Minutes</u></a>
	18.2.2014 (Item IV)	<a href="#"><u>Agenda</u></a> <a href="#"><u>Minutes</u></a>
	17.7.2014 (Item III)	<a href="#"><u>Agenda</u></a> <a href="#"><u>Minutes</u></a>
	16.12.2014 (Item IV)	<a href="#"><u>Agenda</u></a> <a href="#"><u>Minutes</u></a>
	20.1.2015 (Item IV)	<a href="#"><u>Agenda</u></a> <a href="#"><u>Minutes</u></a>
	17.11.2015 (Item V)	<a href="#"><u>Agenda</u></a> <a href="#"><u>Minutes</u></a>
16.2.2016 (Items III and IV)	<a href="#"><u>Agenda</u></a> <a href="#"><u>Minutes</u></a>	



<b>Committee</b>	<b>Date of meeting</b>	<b>Paper</b>
	15.3.2016 (Item IV)	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>
	15.11.2016 (Item IV)	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>
Panel on Manpower and Panel on Welfare Services (Joint meeting)	9.12.2013 (Item II)	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>

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