

For information on
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Legislative Council Panel on Manpower

Latest Development in the Employment Services of the Labour Department

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on the latest development in the employment services of the Labour Department (LD).

Providing comprehensive and free employment and recruitment services

General employment and recruitment services

2. LD provides comprehensive and free employment and recruitment services to job seekers and employers through its 13 job centres, three recruitment centres for the catering, retail and construction industries, Telephone Employment Service Centre and Job Vacancy Processing Centre. In 2018, 38 567 job seekers registered with LD for the above employment services¹. At the same time, the number of private sector vacancies recorded by LD reached a historic high of 1 468 394. LD will enhance its efficiency in handling and disseminating job vacancy information with a view to providing more speedy and convenient recruitment and employment services for employers and job seekers.

3. LD's Interactive Employment Service (iES) website (www.jobs.gov.hk) provides job vacancy and employment information to job seekers while employers can submit and publicise job vacancy information

¹ Currently, the vast majority of employers using LD's recruitment services readily accept direct applications from job seekers. Job seekers can easily obtain the relevant job vacancy information and employers' contact means through LD's Interactive Employment Service website, its mobile application and vacancy search terminals. In applying for these vacancies, job seekers need not register with LD.

through the website. Various dedicated webpages have also been set up on the iES website to cater for the needs of different job seekers and employers. Concurrently, job seekers can make use of the iES mobile application running on smart phones or mobile devices to search for suitable job vacancies and receive notifications on newly posted vacancies which match their pre-set criteria as well as job fairs organised by LD. The iES website is one of the most popular government websites. In 2018, the iES website recorded about 202 million page views, or an average of around 0.55 million per day, whereas its mobile application registered about 145 million hits. LD will continue to enhance the functionality and design of the iES website to provide the public with better user experience.

Job fairs

4. To enhance efficiency of recruitment and facilitate placement of job seekers in the vicinity of their residences, job centres located across the territory worked closely with employers in their corresponding districts to organise 958 district-based job fairs in 2018, arranging 24 877 on-the-spot interviews for job seekers. In the same year, the three industry-based recruitment centres organised a total of 666 job fairs, arranging 18 033 on-the-spot interviews for job seekers. Moreover, LD organised 19 large-scale job fairs in 2018, offering 42 550 job vacancies and attracting 32 833 job seekers to the events.

5. The above 19 large-scale job fairs held in 2018 included, among others, two inclusive job fairs that were suitable for ethnic minority (EM) job seekers and four job fairs targeted at middle-aged and elderly job seekers. Besides, LD organised two large-scale job fairs featuring employment and vacancy information on the Mainland to enhance the understanding of local job seekers and young people on the relevant job opportunities and employment conditions. LD will continue to cooperate with employers from various sectors in staging large-scale job fairs of different themes regularly in 2019.

Higher Education Employment Information e-Platform (HEEIP)

6. LD's HEEIP (www.hee.gov.hk) provides employment support for job seekers with higher education, including Hong Kong students who are educated in tertiary institutions outside Hong Kong, the second generation of Hong Kong

emigrants who are interested in working in Hong Kong, as well as persons from overseas with higher academic/ professional qualifications. This e-platform seeks to enhance their understanding of the Hong Kong employment market and facilitate them to search and apply for suitable job openings. From its launch in late December 2016 up to December 2018, more than 53 000 job vacancies with an academic requirement of bachelor's degree or above were posted on HEEIP. During the same period, HEEIP recorded about 6 million page views, or an average of around 8 000 per day.

Support for job seekers with employment difficulties

7. Dovetailing with the Government's population policies and poverty alleviation measures, LD operates dedicated employment services and programmes for job seekers with special needs to promote their employment, which helps replenish our local workforce and build an inclusive society. To meet the employment needs of EMs, elderly persons, persons with disabilities and young people, LD will continue to implement a series of measures to support their employment as set out in paragraphs 8 to 20 below.

Employment support for EM job seekers

8. LD's job centres have been providing dedicated services for EM job seekers through special counters, resource corners, employment briefings, etc. EM job seekers in need may also meet employment officers to obtain personalised employment advisory service. In 2018, 1 173 EM job seekers registered for LD's employment services¹. Among them, 898 were job seekers of South Asian origins.

9. LD has also made arrangements with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to provide interpretation services for EM job seekers who speak neither Chinese nor English. In 2018, staff of job centres/ industry-based recruitment centres introduced interpretation services to 3 014 EM job seekers, and in the light of their needs, arranged interpretation services on 21 occasions.

10. Meanwhile, LD continues to canvass and disseminate information on vacancies suitable for EMs. Key information of all job vacancies is translated

and displayed in Chinese and English on the iES website, its mobile application and vacancy search terminals² to facilitate EMs to browse vacancy information. In 2018, LD organised two large-scale inclusive job fairs and 12 district-based inclusive job fairs to enhance the employment opportunities of EMs.

11. LD has also engaged two employment assistants who are proficient in EM languages at Kowloon West Job Centre in Sham Shui Po and Employment in One-stop in Tin Shui Wai on a pilot basis to provide employment services for EM job seekers since May 2017. Apart from partnering with experienced employment officers in providing personalised employment services for EM job seekers, these employment assistants conversant with EM languages and cultures also help LD proactively reach out to those with employment needs and encourage them to make use of LD's employment services.

12. Moreover, LD will continue to implement the Employment Services Ambassador (ESA) Programme for EMs to engage trainees of the Youth Employment and Training Programme (YETP) who can communicate in EM languages as ESAs in LD's job centres, industry-based recruitment centres and job fairs to undergo on-the-job training. The programme not only can help LD serve EM job seekers more effectively but also enrich ESAs' own working experience and resume, benefiting their job search in the open market. To strengthen the training for the trainees, LD has extended the on-the-job training period for those ESAs engaged since September 2018 from six months to one year. Launched in September 2014, the programme has so far engaged a total of 127 ESAs.

13. To further strengthen the employment support for EM job seekers, LD will launch a pilot programme in conjunction with NGOs to provide employment services for EM job seekers through a case management approach so as to utilise NGOs' community network, expertise in case management and experiences in serving EMs.

² LD has installed vacancy search terminals in six Home Affairs Department-funded Support Services Centres/Sub-centres for EMs.

Employment support for elderly job seekers

14. On the basis of LD's Employment Programme for the Middle-aged, in order to further encourage employers to hire job seekers aged 60 or above and provide them with on-the-job training at the initial stage of employment, LD has enhanced the programme and renamed it as the Employment Programme for the Elderly and Middle-aged (EPEM) on 1 September 2018. Employers engaging job seekers aged 60 or above who are unemployed or have left the workforce are offered a monthly on-the-job training allowance up to \$4,000 per employee for a period of six to 12 months under EPEM. As for employers engaging each unemployed job seeker aged 40 to 59, the maximum amount of on-the-job training allowance remains \$3,000 per month for a period of three to six months. EPEM covers both full-time and part-time jobs.

15. At the same time, LD implements various measures to support the employment of elderly and middle-aged job seekers such as staging large-scale job fairs for the elderly and middle-aged, setting up special counters and organising district-based job fairs on part-time employment as well as employment briefings for them in its job centres, establishing a dedicated webpage for them on the iES website, etc. to facilitate their access to updated employment information and search for suitable job vacancies. LD will also continue to strengthen its liaison with NGOs and encourage them to refer elderly and middle-aged job seekers to LD for employment services.

Employment support for job seekers with disabilities

16. LD provides personalised employment services to job seekers with disabilities fit for open employment and helps them find suitable jobs. In 2018, two measures were launched to enhance the employment support for job seekers with disabilities.

Raising the financial incentive for employers under the Work Orientation and Placement Scheme (WOPS)

17. LD implements WOPS which encourages employers to engage job seekers with disabilities and provide them with coaching and support through the provision of an allowance. To further encourage employers to hire persons

with disabilities who have employment difficulties and assist them in settling in new posts, WOPS has been enhanced since 1 September 2018 with the work adaptation period (WAP) extended from two months to three months. The ceiling of monthly allowance has also been raised from \$5,500 to \$7,000 during the three-month WAP and from \$4,000 to \$5,000 for the ensuing six months. With this enhancement, the maximum period within which allowance is payable has been extended from eight to nine months, with maximum allowance payable to employers increased by \$16,000 to a total of \$51,000 for each person with disabilities having employment difficulties.

Regularising the emotional counselling service for persons with disabilities

18. To strengthen the employment support for job seekers with disabilities, LD launched a two-year Pilot Scheme on Counselling Service for job seekers with disabilities on 1 September 2016 by engaging an NGO to help job seekers in need of emotional counselling service. Within the two-year pilot period, there were 120 cases where job seekers with disabilities received the service. The concerned job seekers considered that the service could effectively help them deal with emotional distress, relieve their pressure and enhance their self-confidence which was beneficial to their job search.

19. In view of the positive response, upon the completion of the two-year pilot, the counselling service has been regularised and named “Counselling Scheme for People with Disabilities” with effect from 1 September 2018. LD continues to engage an NGO to offer professional psychological and emotional counselling to needy job seekers with disabilities by registered social workers. It will serve to alleviate the emotional problems of job seekers with disabilities arising from the state of their disabilities or personal or family matters, so as to help them concentrate on job search and settle in their new jobs, thereby realising their potentials in employment.

Employment support for young people

20. LD’s YETP has all along been providing 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. To strengthen the employment support to young people, LD has raised the training allowance under YETP with

effect from 1 September 2018 to encourage employers to hire young people and provide them with quality on-the-job training. The maximum amount of monthly allowance payable to employers who engage young people and provide them with on-the-job training has been increased from \$3,000 to \$4,000 for a period of six to 12 months. Furthermore, to meet the needs of some youth, the scope of YETP has also been expanded to cover part-time on-the-job training.

Conclusion

21. LD strives to provide effective and convenient employment and recruitment services to meet the needs of different job seekers and employers. LD will continue to provide dedicated employment support services for various groups with special needs to enhance their employability and employment opportunities. Its services will be reviewed from time to time and enhancement measures will be carried out in a timely manner.

22. Members are invited to note the contents of this paper and give their advice.

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