

For information

Legislative Council Panel on Public Service Implementation of Five-day Week in the Government

Purpose

This paper updates Members on the latest position of the implementation of five-day week (FDW) in the Government.

Policy on FDW

2. The Government has implemented the FDW initiative in three phases starting from 2006¹. The policy objective is to improve the quality of civil servants' family life without compromising the level and efficiency of public services or incurring additional costs to taxpayers. To achieve this policy objective, bureaux and departments (B/Ds) are encouraged to migrate staff to FDW following the four basic principles below –

- (a) no additional staffing resources;
- (b) no reduction in the conditioned hours of work of individual staff;
- (c) no reduction in emergency services; and
- (d) continued provision of essential counter services on Saturdays/Sundays.

Implementation of FDW in the Government

3. The FDW work pattern includes working on a “Monday-to-Friday” basis, a “five-day-on, two-day-off roster in every seven days”, or “fewer than five days/shifts in every seven days”. Upon the third phase of implementation in July 2007, a total of some 94 300 out of around 145 500 civil servants (i.e. around 65% of the then civil service strength) were working on a FDW work pattern.

4. The Government conducts biennial surveys to keep in view the implementation of FDW for staff in B/Ds. The latest round of survey which reflected the implementation of FDW in the Government as at 30 September 2020 has been completed. The major findings are set out in the ensuing paragraphs.

¹ The three phases started from 1 July 2006, 1 January 2007 and 1 July 2007 respectively.

5. As at 30 September 2020, the strength of the civil service stood at around 169 200². Among them, around 132 600 civil servants (i.e. around 78% of the then civil service strength) were working on a FDW pattern. The relevant figures, in terms of both the number and percentage of civil servants working on FDW, were the highest since the implementation of FDW in July 2006. Compared to the position as at 30 September 2018 when around 123 500 civil servants (i.e. around 75% of the then civil service strength) were working on a FDW pattern, around 9 100 (or around 3%) more civil servants worked on FDW. A breakdown of the number of civil servants on FDW by work pattern is set out in the table below –

	Number of civil servants³ (as at 30 September 2018)	Number of civil servants³ (as at 30 September 2020)
Civil servants working on a “Monday-to-Friday” basis	92 000	96 600
Civil servants working on a “five-day-on, two-day-off roster in every seven days” or “fewer than five days/shifts in every seven days”	30 800	35 700
Civil servants on FDW trial schemes	700	300 ⁴
<i>Sub-total</i>	123 500 (around 75%)	132 600 (around 78%)
Civil servants on a non-FDW work pattern	41 300 (around 25%)	36 600 (around 22%)
<i>Total</i>	164 800 (100%)	169 200 (100%)

² Following the approach adopted in previous surveys, this figure included staff who were on FDW trial schemes, but excluded civil servants working in government schools, the Judiciary, the Hospital Authority, the Vocation Training Council, the Hong Kong Monetary Authority, the Independent Commission Against Corruption and the Legal Aid Services Council.

³ Figures rounded off to the nearest hundred.

⁴ The civil servants concerned are working under three departments, namely the Correctional Services Department (CSD), the Hong Kong Police Force (HKPF) and the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD).

6. To avoid compromising the level and efficiency of public services, and to ensure continued provision of essential services on Saturdays/Sundays, as at 30 September 2020, around 36 600 civil servants (i.e. around 22% of the then civil service strength) delivering social welfare services, immigration counter services, cultural and leisure services, postal services, environmental hygiene services, or engaged in law enforcement, passenger/cargo clearance, management of penal institutions, etc. were still working on a non-FDW work pattern. This represents a reduction of about 4 700 (or about 3%) civil servants when compared to the position as at 30 September 2018 when around 41 300 civil servants (i.e. about 25% of the then civil service strength) were working on a non-FDW pattern.

Latest Development

7. All along, the Civil Service Bureau (CSB) encourages departments which have not fully implemented FDW to explore the feasibility of migrating more staff to FDW in a pragmatic manner. About 20 staff of the civilian grades working in LCSD have been taking part in trial schemes starting from November 2020. HKPF has also started a one-year trial scheme for the Patrol Sub-units of Land Region and Patrol Sub-units of Enforcement & Control Division, Regional Traffic involving some 2 000 police officers since end of November 2020.

8. The examples above demonstrate that although the scale of trial schemes varies, individual departments are still able to explore and further implement FDW through various arrangements without compromising the four basic principles. Despite some posts or jobs will have to remain in a non-FDW pattern, the Government has the responsibility to balance all relevant factors, including the expectation of civil servants towards FDW, the need for proper use of public funds, the maintenance of the quality of public services and the effective management of the civil service establishment, as well as to continue upholding the four basic principles.

Leave Deduction Arrangement for Non-FDW Officers

9. As regards those departments which have not fully implemented FDW, CSB has since 2013 invited them to explore the feasibility of revising the existing leave deduction arrangements (LDA) for their non-FDW civil servants on a pilot basis, provided that the relevant basic principles⁵ can be complied with. Under

⁵ These basic principles include no reduction in the conditioned hours of work of individual staff; no additional manpower and maintenance of the level of service to public; and other existing leave rules applicable to individual civil servants should remain intact.

the pilot schemes, only 10 days (instead of 10.5 days, 11 days or 12 days)⁶ of vacation leave would be deducted for a continuous absence of 14 calendar days. Apart from HKPF, the Customs and Excise Department, the CSD and the Immigration Department, approval has also been given for the Department of Health to conduct a pilot scheme for civil servants working in the Hospital Authority commencing on 1 July 2021. The five pilot schemes, covering more than 15 000 non-FDW civil servants in total, are operating smoothly in general. The aforementioned departments carry out regular reviews during the course of the pilot schemes and will consider in due course the possibility of implementing the revised LDA on a long-term basis. CSB will also continue to encourage departments which have not fully implemented FDW to consider implementing revised LDA as far as practicable.

Way Forward

10. CSB will continue to encourage those departments which have not fully implemented FDW to enable more civil servants to work under a FDW pattern in compliance with the four basic principles or to explore the feasibility of conducting a pilot scheme on revised LDA for non-FDW civil servants, and where possible, arrange staff to rotate to FDW or to reduce instances of non-five-day work required each month. CSB also welcomes continued dialogue between the staff side and their departmental management with a view to putting forth proposals to implement FDW.

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

Civil Service Bureau
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⁶ In general, leave deduction is made on a “one-to-one” basis, i.e. one day of vacation leave to be deducted for absence of one day. The number of days of vacation leave to be deducted to cover the same duration of absence for civil servants on different work patterns may be different. For instance, for leave absence of two weeks, 10.5 days of vacation leave will be deducted for officers working on alternate Saturday-off duty pattern while 10 days of vacation leave will be deducted for civil servants working on a Monday to Friday pattern.