

立法會

Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(1)1043/2025(06)

Ref: CB1/PL/MP

Panel on Manpower

Meeting on 23 June 2025

Background brief on employment support services of the Labour Department

Purpose

This paper provides background information on the employment support services of the Labour Department (“LD”) and summarizes the major concerns expressed by the Panel on Manpower in the Seventh Legislative Council (“LegCo”) on relevant issues.

Background

2. LD provides free employment and recruitment services through its 10 job centres, 3 recruitment centres for the catering, retail and construction industries, the Job Vacancy Processing Centre, the Telephone Employment Service Centre, the Interactive Employment Service website and its mobile application, etc.

3. To cater for the needs of different job seekers, LD administers various employment programmes¹ to encourage employers to hire the elderly and middle-aged, young people, new arrivals, ethnic minorities (“EMs”) and persons with disabilities (“PWDs”), and provide them with on-the-job training (“OJT”). LD also organizes different types of job fairs to provide job seekers and employers with more effective and convenient employment and recruitment services.

Members’ views and concerns

4. The major views and concerns of Members are summarized below.

¹ A list of the employment programmes administered by LD is available on its [website](#).

General employment and recruitment services of the Labour Department

5. Members expressed concern about **how LD evaluated the effectiveness of its employment support services and employment programmes**. Some Members considered that LD's employment support services and employment programmes had **failed to address**, in a targeted manner, **the situation where some workers were unemployed while many enterprises struggled to recruit sufficient manpower**. There was a suggestion that LD should analyse relevant data concerning the success rates and backgrounds of job seekers receiving its job matching services, with a view to enhancing the provision of targeted employment services to job seekers. Some Members also suggested that the Administration should consider introducing an "employment programme for shortage trades" under which financial incentives would be provided (such as a monthly allowance of \$3,000 for up to six months to employees participating in the programme) to entice local labour to join industries facing manpower shortages, with OJT to be provided by employers.

6. The Administration advised that while LD did gather certain data to monitor the effectiveness of its employment support services and employment programmes, a comprehensive analysis on the success rates and backgrounds of job seekers for all placement cases was not available. This was because job seekers could obtain information on LD's job vacancies and make direct applications to employers without first registering with LD and providing LD with their information. **LD had implemented various employment programmes to assist job seekers with special employment needs** (e.g. young people, as well as the elderly and middle-aged). The Administration would continue to actively consider various feasible measures to attract more people to join the workforce.

Support for job seekers with special employment needs or difficulties

Employment support for young people

7. Members were concerned that while the enterprises participating in the 2023 Greater Bay Area Youth Employment Scheme ("GBA YES") had provided more than 2 500 job vacancies, only some 700 graduates had reported for duty. **Members enquired about the reasons for the unsatisfactory response to GBA YES**. The Administration advised that the number of young people participating in GBA YES was affected by many factors, including the economic environment and other employment opportunities. As the implementation period of GBA YES since its regularization in 2023 was still short, the Administration considered that at this stage, the priority should be to review the implementation of GBA YES following its regularization.

8. As regards the Youth Employment and Training Programme (“YETP”), some Members suggested that **more training courses targeted at industries facing a lack of new blood** (e.g. the hotel industry) **should be provided** under YETP. There was also a suggestion that in order to make more effective use of government resources, consideration might be given to **suitably merging various vocational-oriented programmes targeted at the youth**. According to the Administration, YETP aimed to enable young people to better understand themselves and their work aptitude while enriching their job skills and experience so as to enhance their employability. A variety of job-specific pre-employment training courses, workplace attachment training and OJT were provided under YETP.

Employment support for the elderly and middle-aged

9. Expressing **concern about the effectiveness of the Employment Programme for the Elderly and Middle-aged (“EPEM”)**, Members urged the Administration to step up publicity and consider staging thematic job fairs regarding EPEM. The Administration advised that an enhancement to EPEM was introduced on 1 September 2020 to increase the amount of the OJT allowance for each eligible job seeker engaged. **After the enhancement, there had been a discernible increase in the number of participating employers**. In 2023, LD recorded a total of 3 873 placements eligible for joining EPEM, of which 1 436 placements involved employees aged 60 or above. To encourage employers to join EPEM, **LD would continue to step up its promotional efforts through different channels**, including (a) strengthening the promotion of EPEM to employers participating in LD’s job fairs or advertising job vacancies through LD; and (b) publicizing EPEM by placing advertisements in public transport carriers and newspapers.

10. To increase the incentive for the elderly and middle-aged to rejoin the workforce, LD launched a three-year Re-employment Allowance Pilot Scheme (“REA Scheme”) in July 2024, targeting persons aged 40 or above who had not been in paid employment for three consecutive months or more. Members took the view that **the eligibility criteria for the REA Scheme should be relaxed** to encourage more elderly and middle-aged people to join the employment market. Some Members suggested that the REA Scheme should be specifically targeted at industries facing labour shortages so as to channel individuals re-entering the workforce into sectors most in need of additional manpower. There was also a view that the Administration should extend the REA Scheme to young people.

11. In response, the Administration expressed its hope that the REA Scheme, which had **no restrictions on industries**, would help encourage different people (including women) to re-enter the workforce, thereby unleashing the labour force.

The Administration would be pleased to listen to stakeholders' views on the implementation of the REA Scheme.

Employment support for ethnic minorities

12. Members noted that LD had commissioned two non-governmental organizations (“NGOs”) to assist in implementing the Racial Diversity Employment Programme (“RDEP”) since November 2020 to provide one-stop employment services to EM job seekers under a case management approach. They were concerned that the unemployment rate of EMs was obviously higher than that of the overall population in Hong Kong, and **suggested that the Administration should step up its liaison with employers with recruitment needs** (such as those in the hotel industry and other service sectors) **to canvass more job vacancies suitable for EM job seekers.**

13. The Administration advised that under RDEP, social workers were assigned to act as EM participants' case managers and provide them with customized employment services. The feedback from EM participants about RDEP was generally positive. **The two commissioned NGOs would actively liaise with employers across industries to enhance their understanding of the work capabilities of EMs and share insights on EM cultures with a view to canvassing more job openings suitable for EMs.** Regularized in late 2023, RDEP had launched enhancement measures, including organizing vocational language workshops for the participants, to assist EMs in securing employment.

Employment support for women

14. Concern was raised by Members that the labour force participation rate for women was relatively low and consistently lower than that for men. Referring to the experience of Nordic countries, some Members opined that if more women could join the workforce, it would be conducive to the development of the economy and, in turn, enable the implementation of a better welfare system. Members called on the Administration to **strengthen its support for women employment.**

15. The Administration responded that **factors affecting the participation of women in the labour market were multifarious.** The provision of services to support women employment straddled across various bureaux/departments. On the part of LD, it had implemented a number of schemes and employment programmes to encourage and facilitate the employment of job seekers with special employment needs or difficulties (e.g. the elderly and middle-aged, EMs and PWDs). Eligible women within these vulnerable groups could also benefit from those schemes and employment programmes.

Employment support for people with special educational needs and persons with disabilities

16. Expressing concern as to whether the Administration had provided enough measures to assist people with special educational needs (“SEN”) in securing employment, Members took the view that **support for people with SEN should be strengthened at the secondary school level** to help them prepare for future employment, and that appropriate support should be provided for employers to **enhance employers’ understanding of the employability and needs of people with SEN**. According to the Administration, among the array of training and employment support services provided under YETP, the “Career Kick-start” project would **subsidize YETP service providers’ engagement of young people with special employment difficulties and offer 12-month paid OJT** to enhance the employability of young people in need. Meanwhile, the Selective Placement Division (“SPD”) of LD would also **provide personalized employment services** for eligible job seekers; in 2023, about 60-odd job seekers registered with SPD were people with SEN or attention deficit disorder.

17. Members were concerned about whether, **after the end of the nine-month subsidy period** under the Work Orientation and Placement Scheme (“WOPS”) implemented by LD to encourage and support the employment of job seekers with disabilities, some employers would **dismiss the PWDs concerned**. Members suggested that the Administration should, with reference to the practices in other jurisdictions, encourage employers to engage PWDs on a long-term basis through the provision of tax concessions to employers. The Administration responded that **LD had put in place a mechanism to prevent employers from abusing WOPS**, and would arrange for employment consultants to follow up on the working conditions of the employees with disabilities. Where an employer dismissed an employee with disabilities after the end of the subsidy period without reasonable grounds, LD would consider not granting further approval for the employer to participate in WOPS.

Relevant papers

18. A list of the relevant papers on the LegCo website is in the [Appendix](#).

Relevant papers on employment support services of the Labour Department

Committee	Date of meeting	Papers
Panel on Manpower	17 May 2022	Agenda Item IV: Employment support services Minutes
	18 April 2023	Agenda Item IV: Employment support services and measures Minutes Follow-up paper
	17 October 2023	Agenda Item III: Implementation of the Greater Bay Area Youth Employment Scheme Minutes
	26 February 2024	Agenda Item IV: Latest development in the employment services Minutes Follow-up paper