

# LCQ1: Supporting employment of youth with special educational needs

Following is a question by the Dr the Hon Ngan Man-yu and a reply by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Mr Chris Sun, in the Legislative Council today (January 22):

Question:

It has been reported that many youth with special educational needs (SEN youth) are facing employment difficulties. Regarding supporting the employment of SEN youth, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it has compiled statistics on data relating to the employment of SEN youth of various age groups in the past three years, including the employment rates, salary levels, job categories, academic backgrounds and time taken for seeking employment, and analysed the comparison between such data and the corresponding data for youth as a whole during the same period;

(2) of the measures in place to support the employment of SEN youth, together with a breakdown of such measures by the government department concerned and stage of life development (i.e. studying, job seeking, early stage of employment and career development); whether it has assessed and reviewed the effectiveness of such measures, including the division of work among different government departments and the relevant collaborations facilitating interfaces; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) whether it has considered joining hands with enterprises and different sectors of the community to establish a platform supporting the employment of SEN youth, so as to encourage enterprises to create employment and internship positions suitable for SEN youth, thereby enabling them to learn and apply their skills in the actual working environment and lay a solid foundation for their smooth integration into the employment market in the future; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

In response to the Dr the Hon Ngan Man-yu's question, having consulted the Education Bureau (EDB) and the Home and Youth Affairs Bureau (HYAB), our reply is as follows:

(1) The Government does not compile statistics on the numbers of youth with special educational needs (SEN) in employment of different age groups.

As regards the numbers of school leavers with SEN, from 2021/22 to 2023/24 school years, the numbers of Secondary Six school leavers with SEN were approximately 3 700, 4 200 and 4 200 respectively. Among them, the

number of those being employed by November of the next school year was approximately 200 per year. The majority of the rest continued to study locally.

From 2021/22 to 2023/24 school years, there were 513, 548 and 572 Secondary Six graduates in special schools respectively. Among them, 14, 25 and 38 were employed in September of the next school year; 175, 152 and 164 pursued further studies (including vocational training); 148, 200 and 213 received vocational rehabilitation or day training services.

Based on the information provided by students from individual post-secondary institutions, from 2021/22 to 2023/24 school years, there were approximately 2 900, 3 600 and 4 200 students with SEN enrolled in the University Grants Committee (UGC)-funded and non-UGC-funded full-time locally-accredited sub-degree and undergraduate programmes respectively.

As regards the numbers of employed youth with disabilities, from 2022 to 2024, the Selective Placement Division (SPD) of the Labour Department (LD) recorded 2 412, 2 406 and 2 300 placements respectively. Among them, 874, 794 and 762 placements involved youth with disabilities aged 29 or below respectively.

(2) As regards support at schools, the EDB requires ordinary secondary schools to assist students with SEN in choosing suitable pathways for further studies and careers through life planning education, and to provide students who will soon graduate and their parents with guidance in further studies and careers. A website is also set up to provide relevant information. The EDB also collaborates with different business corporations through the Business-School Partnership Programme to provide students, including those with SEN, with diversified career exploration activities.

Special schools design school-based curricula such as community training, workplace practicum and pre-vocational training for students to nurture their independent living skills, and provide additional training such as interviewing skills, vocational skills assessments, social etiquette, work attitude, etc, based on students' individual abilities.

The HYAB and the Youth Development Commission implement the Funding Scheme for Youth Life Planning Activities to subsidise non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in collaboration with secondary schools, in organising life planning projects such as thematic talks, workplace visits and job attachments. The Scheme gives priority to projects that are designed based on the needs of designated groups of students, for example students with SEN. In school years 2022-25, the HYAB has sponsored 26 NGOs in collaboration with over 400 secondary schools, including 13 special schools and five schools for social development.

As regards post-secondary institutions, the UGC has provided additional funding of \$67.5 million through the Special Grant for Enhancing Support for Students with SEN for universities to take forward three key objectives: (i) improving the educational experiences of students with SEN; (ii) enhancing

staff training; and (iii) promoting an inclusive campus. They cover activities that help students join the community and develop their careers in the future, as well as to make early preparations for their way forward upon graduation.

With respect to vocational and professional education and training, the Vocational Training Council (VTC) adopts a whole-school approach to assist students with SEN, including providing additional teaching staff to conduct academic guidance, tutorial groups, and individual coaching to enhance their learning skills more effectively.

The Labour and Welfare Bureau (LWB) subsidises the Shine Skills Centres under the VTC to offer vocational training programmes and ancillary services to persons with disabilities (including youth with SEN) aged 15 or above who are assessed as having potential for open employment.

For persons with disabilities who are not able to take up open employment (including youth with SEN), the Social Welfare Department (SWD) subvents NGOs to operate sheltered workshops, integrated vocational rehabilitation services centres, integrated vocational training centres, etc, for providing vocational rehabilitation and training services.

As regards support for job-seeking, the SPD of the LD provides employment services, including employment counselling, job matching and referral, to job seekers with disabilities (including youth with SEN) who are fit for open employment. The SPD also implements the Work Orientation and Placement Scheme, under which eligible employers engaging each job seeker with disabilities is eligible for a maximum allowance of \$60,000 during the nine-month subsidy period.

The SWD also subvents NGOs to provide supported employment training. The relevant Funding and Service Agreement states that organisations are required to provide services such as job attachment, job training and counselling, etc.

In addition, the Employees Retraining Board provides around 70 dedicated courses that assist persons with disabilities (including youth with SEN) in entering or re-entering the employment market. Trainees who complete placement-tied courses will be arranged with placement follow-up services for six months.

(3) Since 2013, the LWB has launched the Talent-Wise Employment Charter and Inclusive Organisations Recognition Scheme to encourage organisations of different sectors to adopt measures to promote internship and employment of persons with disabilities. The Chief Executive announced in the 2024 Policy Address the introduction of the Caring Employer medal, commending employers who actively engage persons with disabilities.

In addition, the SWD implements the Enhancing Employment of People with Disabilities through Small Enterprise Project (3E Project) that subsidises NGOs to set up small enterprises/businesses, thereby directly creating more

employment opportunities for persons with disabilities (including youth with SEN).

The LD will also continue to liaise with employers from different industries to enhance their understanding of the work capabilities of persons with disabilities and the ways to get along with them, as well as to provide suitable job vacancies for persons with disabilities (including youth with SEN).