

LCQ10: Enhancing employment and promotion opportunities of civil servants

Following is a question by Dr the Hon Wendy Hong and a written reply by the Secretary for the Civil Service, Mrs Ingrid Yeung, in the Legislative Council today (June 14):

Question:

It is learnt that the wastage rate of civil servants has increased in recent years. On the other hand, there are views that the large number of supernumerary staff employed by the Government has affected the promotion opportunities of civil servants. Regarding enhancing the employment and promotion opportunities of civil servants, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the respective numbers of staff employed by various government departments under the Post-retirement Service Contract (PRSC) Scheme who have served the same post for over five years, in each of the past three years;
- (2) of the respective numbers of staff employed by various government departments through outsourced service contracts in each of the past three years;
- (3) of the respective numbers of permanent and supernumerary directorate and non-directorate civil service posts in various government departments in each of the past three years, together with their respective strength;
- (4) of the number of civil servants who left the service and the wastage rate of the civil service in the past year, together with a breakdown by the reason for their departure;
- (5) as it is learnt that the Government has employed supernumerary officers under non-civil service contracts, PRSC Scheme and outsourced service contracts, and renewed their contracts repeatedly, resulting in the persistence of some supernumerary posts, and there are views that Government's prolonged employment of supernumerary officers, instead of including such posts in the civil service establishment, hinders the promotion of serving civil servants and affects their motivation, whether the Government has reviewed the situation concerned and whether it has considered creating permanent civil service posts to replace such supernumerary posts; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;
- (6) as there are views that some grades of the civil service have shorter progression pathways and the progression pathways of grades are not inter-accessible, resulting in a lack of promotion prospects for quite a number of

young and middle-aged civil servants who have attained the maximum pay points of their grades, whether the Government has studied how to broaden the promotion prospects of different grades, for example, opening up the application for transfer between different grades and enhancing the progression pathways of various grades, etc., so as to provide civil servants with better promotion prospect; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(7) whether it will consider employing long-serving supernumerary staff as permanent civil servants, so as to fill the vacancies arising from the wastage of civil servants, provide such supernumerary staff with better protection, improve the morale of the civil service as a whole, as well as avoid the situation of unequal pay for the same work?

Reply:

President,

Regarding the question raised by Dr the Hon Wendy Hong, our reply is as follows:

(1) The Civil Service Bureau (CSB) does not keep information on the length of service of Post-retirement Service Contract (PRSC) staff in individual positions. With a view to facilitating a healthy turnover of PRSC staff, the aggregate employment period of an employee serving in the same position/different positions under the PRSC Scheme should not exceed five years in general.

(2) The CSB does not keep information on the number of outsourced workers engaged by respective departments.

(3) Annex A and Annex B set out the breakdown by department on civil service directorate and non-directorate actual establishment and strength respectively in the past three years.

(4) The number of civil servants leaving the service in 2022-23 (up to December 31, 2022) was 8 178, representing a wastage rate of about 4.6 per cent. A breakdown of the figures by reason of wastage is set out below:

Reason of Wastage	Number of Civil Servants Leaving the Service in 2022-23 (up to December 31, 2022)
Retirement	4 815
Resignation	3 095
Completion of Agreement	55
Death	84
Dismissal	38

Termination of Service	33
Other Reasons	58
Total	8 178

(5) and (7) The engagement of contract staff (including Non-civil Service Contract (NCSC) and PRSC staff) will not affect the promotion prospects of civil servants.

The nature and purposes of engaging civil servants and contract staff are distinct. Allowing departments to employ contract staff enables them to flexibly deploy manpower resources to meet service needs. Under the NCSC Scheme, government departments may employ NCSC staff to flexibly adjust their staffing level and staff mix to cope with tasks that are time-limited, seasonal, subject to market fluctuation or under review. Under the PRSC Scheme, departments may have the flexibility to engage retired civil servants to undertake ad hoc, time-limited, seasonal or part-time tasks that require specific civil service expertise/experience. These contract staff do not occupy posts on the civil service establishment, and all civil service vacancies will only be filled by civil servants through promotion or recruitment. Hence, the engagement of such contract staff will not affect the promotion prospects of civil servants.

Government departments shall review, from time to time, the duration of employment required for their contract positions. If a department considers that a particular contract position has long-term operational needs and the work is suitable to be undertaken by a civil servant, the department may seek resources under the established mechanism to replace the contract position with a civil service post.

As regards the outsourced workers, they are not government employees. Outsourcing is one of the ways adopted by government departments to deliver public services. Individual departments shall decide whether to outsource their services having regard to their operational needs.

(6) There are hundreds of grades in the Government, covering a wide range of jobs of different professions and nature, and providing diverse career paths for officers who have joined the Government. It is not uncommon for serving civil servants to apply for other jobs within the civil service which better meet their aspirations and abilities and, after going through open recruitment or internal transfer, be appointed to another grade at the entry rank. The Government will adjust the terms of appointment for an officer on in-service transfer as appropriate, for example, by shortening the probationary period of the officer in the new post as appropriate, in order to retain talents in the Government.