

LCQ16: Measures to assist persons with disabilities in securing employment

Following is a question by the Hon Shiu Ka-chun and a written reply by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong, in the Legislative Council today (January 9):

Question:

The results of a number of studies conducted in recent years have shown that the underemployment situation of persons with disabilities (PWDs) has not improved over the years, and that PWDs often can only secure low-skilled jobs even if they are university degree holders. Regarding the various measures implemented by the Government to assist PWDs in securing employment, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the number of participants of the On the Job Training Programme for People with Disabilities in each of the past five years (with a breakdown by the age group to which the participants belonged, their type of disability, as well as the service operator providing training and counselling services), and among such participants, the respective numbers of those who participated in the Programme through referral and who successfully secured employment; the average number of months of post-placement service received by the participants who successfully secured employment;

(2) of the number of participants of the Sunnyway – On the Job Training Programme for Young People with Disabilities in each of the past five years (with a breakdown by the age group to which the participants belonged, type of mental illness they suffered, as well as the service operator providing employment training services), and among such participants, the respective numbers of those who participated in the Programme through referral and who successfully secured employment; the average number of months of post-placement service received by the participants who successfully secured employment;

(3) of the number of organisations participating in the Work Orientation and Placement Scheme and the number of PWDs who secured employment under the Scheme in the past five years (with a breakdown by type of disability of the employees), and their average employment period;

(4) of the number of applications received under the Support Programme for Employees with Disabilities, and a breakdown by uses of the amount of subsidy granted, as well as (i) the average subsidy amount of and (ii) the average processing time taken for each approved application, in the past five years;

(5) of the respective numbers of (i) existing and (ii) newly recruited government employees with disabilities, as well as their percentages in the total number of government employees, in each of the past five years, with a breakdown by recruiting government department, type of disability of the

employees and whether their disabilities were caused by work injuries;

(6) whether it knows the number of PWDs employed in the past five years by organisations participating in the Talent-Wise Employment Charter (Charter), and a breakdown of such number by employment period, as well as breakdowns by name of organisation, whether the organisation was a public or private one and type of disability of such employees; and

(7) given that the Government has in the past resolved to enact the Minimum Wage Ordinance (Cap. 608) on the basis that the Wage Protection Movement was ineffective, and that currently there are comments alleging that the Charter is ineffective, whether the Government will establish a mandatory quota system for employing PWDs in place of the non-binding Charter; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Having consulted the relevant bureaux and departments, I provide a consolidated reply to the Hon Shiu Ka-chun's question as follows:

(1) The number of participants of the On the Job Training Programme for People with Disabilities (OJT) and the number of participants who successfully secured employment after training in each of the past five years are set out in Table 1 in the Annex. The Social Welfare Department (SWD) does not have information from individual organisations on the age of participants, the type of disability involved, the operators providing the services, or the average number of months of post-placement service provided for OJT participants.

(2) The number of participants of the Sunnyway – On the Job Training Programme for Young People with Disabilities (Sunnyway) and the number of participants who successfully secured employment in each of the past five years are set out in Table 2 in the Annex. The SWD does not have information from individual organisations on the age of participants, the type of mental illness involved, the operators providing the services, or the average number of months of post-placement service provided for Sunnyway participants.

(3) The Labour Department (LD) implements the Work Orientation and Placement Scheme (WOPS) to encourage employers to hire job seekers with disabilities and provide them with coaching and support through the provision of an allowance. There were 396, 364, 383, 376 and 391 organisations participating in the WOPS and employing persons with disabilities in the past five years respectively. During the same period, the LD recorded 661, 805, 811, 816 and 802 placements under the WOPS respectively. Breakdowns of WOPS placements by type of disability suffered by job seekers and employment period are set out in Table 3 and Table 4 in the Annex.

(4) The Support Programme for Employees with Disabilities was launched in June 2013. The number of applications received and the total amount of funding granted in each of the past five years are set out in Table 5 in the

Annex. In the past five years, 91.3 per cent of the approved applications were for purchase of assistive devices, 7 per cent for workplace modification while 1.7 per cent involved both purchase of assistive devices and workplace modification. Normally, the applicant and referring organisations will be informed of the result of application in writing within three months after the application deadline.

(5) There is no requirement for applicants for government jobs and serving officers to declare their disabilities, if any. The situation of persons with disabilities employed in the civil service is known to the Civil Service Bureau on the basis of information available to bureaux/departments (e.g. through requests of applicants during the recruitment process for special arrangements for selection interview/test having regard to their disabilities, or applications from serving officers with disabilities for financial assistance to purchase technical aids to assist in their performance of duties). According to the relevant information, the number of civil servants who declared their disabilities to the Government and the number of new recruits who declared their disabilities to the Government during the recruitment process, as well as their percentages in the strength of the civil service in each of the past five years, broken down by type of disability (Note) and bureau/department, are set out in Table 6 to Table 9 in the Annex. The Government does not collect statistics on civil servants who became disabled due to injury on duty.

(6) The Talent-Wise Employment Charter and Inclusive Organisations Recognition Scheme is a publicity and public education programme aiming to encourage through awards the business sector, public bodies, subvented organisations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) as well as government departments to adopt various measures to promote internship and employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. These measures include not only directly employing persons with disabilities by employer organisations, but also using products or services provided by rehabilitation social enterprises, and setting aside shops or stalls for social enterprises or self-employed persons with disabilities to run business or sell their products. As at December 2018, 247 public and government-subvented organisations and 363 private organisations participated in the scheme. Given the nature of the scheme, the Labour Welfare Bureau does not require the participating organisations to provide information on the number of persons with disabilities employed by them.

(7) The Government's policy objectives are to provide skill training and support services for persons with disabilities to enable them to take up productive and gainful employment in the open market on the basis of their abilities rather than disabilities; provide assistance for employers; and strive to promote an inclusive society. Establishing a mandatory employment quota system for persons with disabilities to require enterprises to employ a certain number or percentage of persons with disabilities may create a negative labelling effect on these persons, which is not conducive to their integration into the community. At present, the Government has no plan to introduce such a system for persons with disabilities. The Government will continue to implement various measures to promote employment of persons with

disabilities, including providing vocational rehabilitation and training services for them, providing job matching services in the open market for them, offering financial incentives to encourage employers to hire them, enhancing their abilities, strengthening the support for them, and promoting an inclusive culture. The Government also offers grants for NGOs to set up social enterprises with a view to creating more employment and on-the-job training opportunities for persons with disabilities.

Note: Excluding persons with colour blindness or defective colour perception.