

LCQ21: Employment of persons with disabilities

Following is a question by Dr the Hon Ngan Man-yu and a written reply by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Mr Chris Sun, in the Legislative Council today (January 10):

Question:

Under the Minimum Wage Ordinance (Cap. 608), the Statutory Minimum Wage (SMW) applies to employees with disabilities as it applies to able-bodied employees. Cap. 608 also provides for a special arrangement under which employees with disabilities whose productivity may be impaired by their disabilities have the right to choose to undergo a productivity assessment, so as to determine whether they should be remunerated at a level not lower than the SMW or at a rate commensurate with their assessed productivity. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the following statistics related to the employment of persons with disabilities (PWDs) in each of the past three years: the number of persons of working age (i.e. 15 to 64 years old), the number of persons who took up paid employment or were economically active (broken down by the industry in which they were engaged and their salary group), the unemployment rate and the poverty rate;

(2) of the numbers of employees and employers who participated in the productivity assessment for employees with disabilities and the assessment results (including the percentage of employees with disabilities who, as assessed, should be remunerated at a level not lower than SMW), in each of the past three years;

(3) of the measures in place to encourage enterprises and public organisations to hire PWDs; and

(4) of the measures in place to encourage PWDs to participate in employment or vocational skills training?

Reply:

President,

Having consulted the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD), the Labour Department (LD) and the Social Welfare Department (SWD) on the Member's question, I set out below a consolidated reply:

(1) According to a territory-wide survey conducted by C&SD on persons with disabilities and chronic diseases from 2019 to 2020, it was estimated that there were 215 300 persons aged 15 to 64 with disabilities in 2020, of whom some 91 500 persons were economically active. Among those 91 500 persons,

some 81 400 persons were employed at the time of enumeration (with breakdowns by industry and by monthly employment earnings set out in Annex) while the remaining were unemployed persons. The unemployment rate of persons aged 15 to 64 with disabilities was about 11 per cent. As for the poverty rate of persons with disabilities, such figures are not available for the past three years.

As the prevalence rate of persons with disabilities will not change drastically over a short period of time, there is currently no plan to conduct annually the related survey. The C&SD will conduct the survey on persons with disabilities in a timely manner as and when necessary to update the figures.

(2) According to the Minimum Wage Ordinance (MWO), employees with disabilities are entitled to the same protection of Statutory Minimum Wage (SMW) as able-bodied employees. At the same time, the MWO provides a special arrangement for employees with disabilities to opt to undergo productivity assessment to determine their wages commensurate with their productivity assessed. Employees with disabilities who do not opt to undergo productivity assessment shall be remunerated at no less than SMW.

The number of employees with disabilities who completed productivity assessment under the SMW regime and employers involved, as well as the number of assessments conducted in the past three years (i.e. from 2021 to 2023) are provided as follows:

	2021	2022	2023
Number of employees with disabilities	20	9	2
Number of employers*	4	4	2
Number of assessments	20	9	2

* Some employers were involved in more than one assessment.

A breakdown of the above number of assessments by degree of productivity in the assessment results is provided as follows:

Degree of productivity	Number of assessments		
	2021	2022	2023
50% or below	—	6	1
Above 50% – 60%	1	—	—
Above 60% – 70%	3	—	—
Above 70% – 80%	5	1	—
Above 80% – 90%	6	—	1
Above 90% – 100% (Note)	5	2	—

Total	20	9	2
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Note: In the past three years, no employee with disabilities had a degree of productivity assessed to be 100 per cent. The rate derived by the assessed degree of productivity provides a wage floor for the employee with disabilities. Employers may pay a higher wage to the employees with disabilities.

(3) The Selective Placement Division of the LD implements the Work Orientation and Placement Scheme (WOPS) to encourage employers to hire persons with disabilities. Under the WOPS, eligible employers will be granted an allowance at a maximum of \$60,000 for engaging each person with disabilities during the nine-month subsidy period. At the same time, the LD has been promoting the employment of persons with disabilities to enhance the public's acceptance and support to them. The LD also actively liaises with employers of different sectors to enhance their understanding of the work capabilities of persons with disabilities and encourages them to provide more job vacancies for persons with disabilities.

Moreover, the SWD has been providing financial support to non-governmental organisations (NGOs) under the Enhancing Employment of People with Disabilities through Small Enterprise Project (the Project) to establish small enterprises/businesses to engage employees with disabilities, with a view to creating employment and on-the-job training opportunities for persons with disabilities. Under the Project, funding support is given in the form of a one-off grant to assist the grantee to pay the necessary set-up costs such as equipment and fitting-out works and/or the anticipated operating loss for the initial period up to three years. The maximum amount of the grant is \$3 million.

The SWD has also launched the Support Programme for Employees with Disabilities (SPED) to support persons with disabilities to take up employment. Through the SPED, employers can apply for a one-off subsidy, up to \$40,000 per employee with disabilities, for procurement of assistive devices and/or workplace modifications, to assist employees with disabilities in discharging their duties in the workplace and enhance their work efficiency.

(4) The Labour and Welfare Bureau subsidises the Shine Skills Centres under the Vocational Training Council to offer a range of vocational training programmes and ancillary services to persons with disabilities aged 15 or above who are being assessed as having potential for open employment.

The LD also provides personalised employment services to job seekers with disabilities who are fit for open employment, including employment counselling, job matching and post-placement follow-up service.

For persons with disabilities not yet able to take up open employment, the SWD subsidises NGOs to provide persons with disabilities with vocational rehabilitation and training services, including Sheltered Workshops (SWs), Supported Employment (SE), Integrated Vocational Rehabilitation Services

Centres (IVRSCs), Integrated Vocational Training Centres, so as to cater for persons with different levels of disabilities and needs to receive appropriate vocational rehabilitation services in a specially designed training environment, with a view to learning to meet basic job requirements.

The SWD has also implemented the On the Job Training Programme for People with Disabilities (OJT) and Sunnyway – On the Job Training Programme for Young People with Disabilities to provide related training and counselling services to address participants' employment needs and assist participants to find suitable jobs after completing the job attachments.

Besides, the SWD implemented a pilot project on Enhancing Vocational Rehabilitation Services in July 2023 to provide trainees of SWs/IVRSCs with diversified training modules according to their abilities and talents so as to increase their employment opportunities, including SE, OJT, social enterprises and even open employment.

In October 2023, the Government has put in place a new measure as announced in the 2022 Policy Address to regularise the Pilot Scheme on Providing Subsidy for Higher Disability Allowance Recipients in Paid Employment to Hire Carers under the Community Care Fund. A monthly allowance of \$5,000 is provided for eligible persons with disabilities to hire carers, with a view to encouraging them to sustain employment.

The Chief Executive announced in the 2023 Policy Address that the Government would implement a three-year pilot scheme from the third quarter of 2024 to provide an additional subsidy of \$500 per month to employed disabled recipients of Comprehensive Social Security Assistance. This will benefit some 6 800 persons.