

Chapter 5

Employment Services

The Programme of Employment Services

www.labour.gov.hk/eng/service/content.htm

- 5.1** The objective of the Employment Services Programme is to provide a comprehensive range of free and efficient employment assistance and counselling services to help job seekers find suitable jobs and employers fill their vacancies. We achieve this by :
- providing user-friendly employment services to employers and job seekers;
 - offering intensive employment-related assistance and personalised service to vulnerable groups of unemployed people;
 - assisting young people to enhance their employability and advising them on careers choice;
 - regulating local employment agencies;
 - safeguarding the interests of local employees employed by employers outside Hong Kong to work in other territories; and
 - ensuring that employment opportunities for local workers are not adversely affected by abuse of the labour importation scheme.
- 5.2** The principal legislation administered by this programme area includes the Employment Agency Regulations made under the Employment Ordinance (EO) and the Contracts for Employment Outside Hong Kong Ordinance.
- 5.3** The Employment Agency Regulations, together with Part XII of EO, regulate the operation of employment agencies in Hong Kong through licensing, inspection, investigation and prosecution.
- 5.4** The Contracts for Employment Outside Hong Kong Ordinance safeguards the interests of local manual workers and those non-manual employees with monthly wages not exceeding \$20,000 who are recruited by employers outside Hong Kong to work in other territories through the attestation of employment contracts for these jobs.

Our Work and Achievements in 2014

Employment Situation in Hong Kong

- 5.5** The economy of Hong Kong remained on a modest expansion path and the local employment market remained stable in 2014, with the annual unemployment rate edging down by 0.1 percentage point over 2013 to 3.3 per cent. For updated statistics on the labour force, unemployment rate and underemployment rate, please visit the webpage:
www.censtatd.gov.hk/hkstat/sub/sp200.jsp?tableID=006&ID=0&productType=8
- 5.6** The Labour Department (LD) recorded a total of 1 220 405 vacancies offered by employers of the private sector for free recruitment service in 2014, a slight increase of 0.3 per cent when compared with 1 216 735 in 2013. In the year, a total of 151 536 placements were secured. ([Figures 5.1](#) and [5.2](#))

A Wider Service Choice

Services offered at Job Centres

- 5.7** Job seekers can select suitable vacancies and seek referral service at all job centres. Modern facilities such as digital display system, touchscreen vacancy search terminals, fax machines, toll-free telephones, computers connected to the Internet and a resource corner are available.

Telephone Employment Service

- 5.8** Job seekers registered at LD may call our Telephone Employment Service Centre on 2969 0888 for job referral service. Through conference calls, staff of the Centre can make arrangement for job seekers to talk to employers direct.

On-line Employment Service

- 5.9** Our Interactive Employment Service (iES) website (www.jobs.gov.hk) provides round-the-clock on-line employment service and comprehensive employment information. iES was one of the most popular government websites, recording 0.28 billion page views in 2014. It hosts a number of dedicated webpages for specific clientele. Job seekers can also use the iES smartphone application to look for suitable vacancies in the job vacancy database of LD anytime and anywhere.

Central Processing of Job Vacancies

- 5.10** Employers who need to recruit staff can send their vacancy information to our Job Vacancy Processing Centre by fax (2566 3331) or through the Internet (www.jobs.gov.hk). The vacancy information is then disseminated through a network of 13 job centres, two recruitment centres for the catering and retail industries, the iES website and vacancy search terminals located in various sites throughout the territory after vetting.

Special Recruitment and Promotional Activities

- 5.11** We organise a variety of activities to promote our employment services and appeal for vacancies from employers. Job fairs are held to facilitate job seekers and employers to meet and communicate direct. In 2014, we held large-scale job fairs to cater for various needs of job seekers and employers from different sectors, including large-scale job fairs in Tuen Mun, Tung Chung and Fanling to assist job seekers living in remote areas in securing employment, as well as thematic job fairs assisting ethnic minority job seekers to find suitable jobs and employers from retail industry to recruit employees. Moreover, to respond more promptly to the recruitment needs of employers and provide a more user-friendly service to job seekers of different districts, we held district-based job fairs at job centres to assist employers to recruit local staff and to enable job seekers to participate in job interviews without having to travel long distance. In the year, 19 large-scale job fairs and 959 district-based job fairs were held, attracting over 80 000 job seekers.



The “Mongkok Job Expo – Building a Multi-culture Workplace” organised in March

Intensified Services for the Needy

Middle-aged Job Seekers

5.12 The Employment Programme for the Middle-aged (EPM) was launched to assist the unemployed aged 40 or above to find work. Employers who engage an eligible middle-aged job seeker in a full-time permanent job and offer him/her on-the-job training are entitled to a maximum training allowance of \$3,000 per month, for a period of three to six months. In 2014, a total of 2 564 placements were secured through the programme.

Work Trial Scheme (WTS)

5.13 WTS was launched to enhance the employability of job seekers who have special difficulties in finding jobs. There is no age limit for applicants. During the one-month work-trial without employer-employee relationship, participants take up jobs offered by participating organisations. On satisfactory completion of the one-month work trial, each participant will receive an allowance of \$6,400, of which \$500 will be contributed by the participating organisation. In 2014, a total of 276 job seekers were placed into work trials.

Work Incentive Transport Subsidy (WITS) Scheme

5.14 LD administers the territory-wide WITS Scheme which aims at helping low-income earners reduce their cost of travelling to and from work and encouraging them to secure or stay in employment. Qualified applicants may choose to apply for WITS on an individual or household basis for the previous six to 12 months in each application, with the monthly subsidy of \$600 (or \$300 at half-rate). The income and asset limits for the subsidy had been raised since the claim month of February 2014 under the annual adjustment mechanism. As at year end, a total of 85 431 applicants received subsidies totalling \$861 million.

New Arrivals and Ethnic Minorities

5.15 We provide through our job centres a comprehensive range of employment services to new arrivals and ethnic minority job seekers. These include employment counselling, job referral, tailor-made employment briefing and employment information. Those who have difficulties finding jobs are encouraged to participate in various employment programmes to enhance their employability. We also proactively promote our recruitment activities to them so as to speed up their job search.

5.16 To strengthen the employment services for ethnic minority job seekers, LD launched a pilot "Employment Services Ambassador Programme for Ethnic Minorities" in September 2014. Ethnic minority trainees of the Youth Employment and Training Programme were employed by LD to work as Employment Services Ambassadors in our job centres and job fairs to provide employment services to job seekers, particularly the ethnic minorities.

Workers affected by Large-scale Retrenchment

5.17 In major business closure or redundancy cases, LD sets up hotlines for enquiry and special counters at job centres to provide special employment services to affected employees. We canvass suitable vacancies from employers to facilitate job search of the affected employees. In addition, under LD's iES website, we set up a dedicated webpage to display vacancies offered by employers interested in recruiting job seekers who lost their jobs in recent closure or redundancy exercises. In 2014, we offered such special employment services to some 500 affected employees.

Job Seekers with Disabilities

5.18 The Selective Placement Division (SPD) offers employment assistance to job seekers with disabilities looking for open employment. Placement officers provide personalised employment services, including employment counseling, job matching and referral and post placement follow-up services. In 2014, SPD registered 2 650 job seekers with disabilities and secured 2 464 placements. (Figure 5.3)

Work Orientation and Placement Scheme (WOPS)

5.19 WOPS was launched to facilitate open employment of persons with disabilities by encouraging employers to offer job vacancies to persons with disabilities through the provision of an allowance. An eligible employer who employs persons with disabilities having employment difficulties is entitled to an allowance equivalent to the amount of actual salary paid to an employee with disabilities less \$500 per month during the first two months of employment, subject to a monthly allowance ceiling of \$5,500. After the first two months, the employer is entitled to an allowance equivalent to two-thirds of the actual salary paid to the employee concerned, subject to an allowance ceiling of \$4,000 per month, and for a maximum payment period up to six months. WOPS also provides pre-employment training to persons with disabilities with a view to enhancing their employability. In 2014, 805 placements were secured through the scheme.

Self Help Integrated Placement Service (SHIPS)

5.20 SHIPS aims at improving the job-searching skills of job seekers with disabilities and encouraging them to be more proactive in search for jobs, thereby enhancing their employment opportunities. In 2014, 372 job seekers with disabilities participated in the programme.

Interactive Selective Placement Service (iSPS) Website

5.21 The iSPS website (www.jobs.gov.hk/isps) provides employment services for job seekers with disabilities and employers through the Internet. The website enables persons with disabilities to register with SPD, browse job vacancy information and perform preliminary job-matching. It also enables employers to place vacancy orders, identify suitable job seekers with disabilities to fill their vacancies and request SPD to refer candidates to them for selection interview. The website facilitates employers to browse information on the work capacity of persons with disabilities more readily. At the same time, it helps persons with disabilities to access various on-line employment services and other related support services. In January 2014, a newly designed iSPS website was launched to lucidly provide more useful information for employers and persons with disabilities.

Promotional Activities

5.22 To enhance public understanding of the working abilities of persons with disabilities as well as to publicise the services of SPD and WOPS, SPD conducted a series of promotional activities, such as exhibitions, production of publications and advertisements, broadcast of promotional videos, promotional visits, promotional messages through newspapers, radio channels, public transport vehicles, and publications of employers' associations, etc. during the year. In addition, a large-scale seminar was held for employers and human resources practitioners. Visits were paid and publicity materials were sent to employers of different trades with a view to canvassing job vacancies for persons with disabilities.

Services for Young People

Youth Employment and Training Programme (YETP)

- 5.23** To enhance the employability of young people, LD administers YETP, a "through-train" programme providing seamless and comprehensive training and employment support to young school leavers aged 15 to 24 with educational attainment at sub-degree level or below.
- 5.24** Trainees can enrol on a year-round basis and are entitled to a full range of coordinated and customised training and employment support services, including pre-employment training, one-month workplace attachment training, on-the-job training of six to 12 months, reimbursement of off-the-job course and examination fees up to \$4,000 per trainee, as well as case management services rendered by registered social workers. Employers who engage trainees under YETP and provide them with on-the-job training are entitled to a maximum training allowance of \$3,000 per month per employee for six to 12 months.
- 5.25** In the 2013/14 programme year running from September 2013 to August 2014, 3 310 young people attended pre-employment training and 3 112 trainees were placed into on-the-job training vacancies under YETP.
- 5.26** YETP also closely collaborates with training bodies and individual employers or employers of specific sectors to launch special employment projects. These well-received special employment projects provide custom-made pre-employment training and on-the-job training for young people. In the 2013/14 programme year, 65 special employment projects were launched involving employers in the retail, catering, tourism, education, engineering, information technology, logistics and personal services industries etc.

5.27 In 2014, LD furthered its collaboration with employers and various organisations to launch six pilot employment projects under YETP making available about 760 on-the-job training places to enhance the employability of young people and promote their employment. These pilot projects were to address the employment needs of specific groups of young people such as those younger and less-experienced, sub-degree holders, ethnic minorities, or to cater for industries with recruitment needs such as retail, customer service, information technology and banking.

5.28 In August, we co-organised the Award Ceremony of Most Improved Trainees of YETP cum Concert with Radio 2 of Radio Television Hong Kong. The event named “Solar Project 2014 – Dream Journey with YETP” showcased the creditable improvements of trainees after joining YETP and commended the caring efforts of training bodies and employers. Trainees’ striving experience for improvement constituted the best encouragement to their peers. It was also a sterling testimony to the achievements of trainees, training bodies, employers and the Government in nurturing the development of the younger generation.



Awardees of “the Most Improved Trainees of Youth Employment and Training Programme 2014” are full of vitality. Let's give them our “LIKE”

Programme for Youths with Acute Employment Difficulties

5.29 To strengthen the employment support for vulnerable youths, LD in July 2010 launched a special employment project, “Action S5”, targeting young people aged 15 to 24 with acute employment difficulties. Under this project, non-governmental organisations are commissioned to nominate vulnerable youths and provide on-the-job training opportunities to them for 12 months. Through intensive and customised training and employment support, the project aims at nurturing the work knowledge and skills of participants for their personal and career development. A total of 336 trainees were enrolled in the first three phases of the project. LD launched the fourth phase in 2014 and a total of 93 trainees started on-the-job training in May.

Youth Employment Support

5.30 LD operates two youth employment resource centres named Youth Employment Start (Y.E.S.). The two centres provide personalised advisory and support services on employment and self-employment to young people aged between 15 and 29 to facilitate them to map out their career path, enhance their employability and support them to pursue self-employment. Services provided include career assessment, career guidance, professional counselling, value-adding training, self-employment support as well as up-to-date labour market information. In 2014, the two centres provided services to 74 288 young people.

Working Holiday Scheme (WHS)

5.31 Since 2001, Hong Kong has established bilateral WHS arrangements with a number of economies to provide an opportunity to our youths aged between 18 and 30 to enrich their global exposure and broaden their horizon, by experiencing foreign culture through living and working temporarily overseas while holidaymaking. At the same time, WHS allows youths of our partner economies to learn more about Hong Kong. As of end-2014, Hong Kong has established bilateral WHS arrangements with a total of nine economies, viz. New Zealand, Australia, Ireland, Germany, Japan, Canada, Republic of Korea, France and the United Kingdom (UK).

5.32 Save for the UK which allows our youths to stay for up to 24 months, the remaining eight partners issue working holiday visas to eligible Hong Kong youths to stay in their economies for up to 12 months for holidaying and taking up short-term employment to subsidise their expenses, and/or attending short-term courses (except for Ireland).

5.33 These WHSs have been well received. As of end-2014, over 50 000 Hong Kong youths participated in WHS. LD will continue to explore with potential economies to establish new WHS arrangements and seek to expand our existing bilateral arrangements.

Regulating Local Employment Agencies and Employment Outside Hong Kong

5.34 We monitor the operation of employment agencies through licensing, inspection and investigation of complaints. In 2014, we issued 2 843 employment agency licences and revoked/refused to renew five. As at end of 2014, there were 2 715 licensed employment agencies in Hong Kong. A total of 1 806 inspections were made to employment agencies in the year.

- 5.35** We regulate employment outside the territory to safeguard the interests of local employees engaged by employers outside Hong Kong to work in other territories by attesting all employment contracts entered into in Hong Kong involving manual employees and non-manual employees with monthly wages not exceeding \$20,000.

Regulating Labour Importation

Supplementary Labour Scheme (SLS)

- 5.36** To cater for the genuine needs of employers, LD administers SLS that allows the entry of imported workers to take up jobs at technician level or below which cannot be filled locally. SLS operates on the principles of ensuring the priority of local workers in employment while allowing employers with proven local recruitment difficulties to import labour.
- 5.37** We provide active job matching and referral services for local job seekers to ensure their employment priority. Vacancies under SLS are widely publicised. Local workers can attend tailor-made retraining courses, if appropriate, to better equip themselves to fill the vacancies. Applications from employers who have set restrictive and unreasonable job requirements or who have no sincerity in employing local workers will be rejected.
- 5.38** As at the end of 2014, there were 2 990 imported workers working in Hong Kong under SLS.

Policy on Foreign Domestic Helpers (FDHs)

- 5.39** FDHs have been admitted to work in Hong Kong since the 1970's. Apart from enjoying the same statutory rights and benefits as all employees in Hong Kong, FDHs are further protected by a written Standard Employment Contract, which prescribes that the employer has to provide to the FDH free accommodation with reasonable privacy, free food (or food allowance in lieu), free passage to and from the FDH's place of origin and free medical treatment, etc. FDHs also enjoy wage protection through the Government-prescribed Minimum Allowable Wage (MAW), where employers have to pay FDHs a salary no less than the prevailing MAW when the contracts are signed. The Government attaches great importance to safeguarding their statutory and contractual rights. We spare no efforts in investigating the suspected offence cases and prosecution action will be taken out if there is sufficient evidence.

5.40 In the year, LD widely publicised the rights and benefits of FDHs by conducting various publicity activities, including producing related publications in mother languages of FDHs for distribution, staging roving exhibitions on relevant provisions, placing advertisements in local newspapers in FDHs' mother languages, organising talks and seminars with the consulates concerned, staging information kiosks at FDHs' popular gathering places to distribute the publicity materials and screen publicity videos. We have also broadcasted television and radio Announcements in the Public Interest to raise the public's awareness of FDHs' rights and to appeal to employers to treat their FDHs well. LD also maintains close liaison with consulates of the FDH-exporting countries, non-governmental organisations serving FDHs and FDH employer groups to discuss matters relating to further protection of FDHs.

5.41 As at the end of 2014, there were 330 650 FDHs in Hong Kong, an increase of 3 per cent compared with 320 988 in 2013. About 52.2 per cent of the FDHs in Hong Kong were from the Philippines and 45.3 per cent from Indonesia.