

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 two principal legislation administered by this programme area are 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 the EO, regulate the operation of employment agencies in Hong Kong through a licensing system, 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 2011

Employment Situation in Hong Kong

5.5 The department recorded a total of 900 564 vacancies from the private sector in 2011, an increase of about 19.7 per cent when compared with 752 323 in 2010. For updated statistics on the labour force, unemployment rate and underemployment rate, please visit the webpage:

www.censtatd.gov.hk/hong_kong_statistics/statistical_tables/index.jsp?charsetID=1&subjectID=2&tableID=006

5.6 The local employment market remained buoyant in 2011 and more job opportunities were available. In the year, the number of placements achieved increased to 177 047, up 18.3 per cent as compared to the corresponding figure in 2010. ([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, self-service touch-screen 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 the Labour Department 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. The iES is one of the most popular government websites, recording over 0.35 billion page views in 2011. It hosts a number of dedicated webpages for specific clientele.

Employment in One-stop

- 5.10** In December 2011, a pioneer one-stop employment and training centre called "Employment in One-stop" was set up in Tin Shui Wai to provide employment and training services to needy job seekers, including case management and employment support services to those having special employment difficulties.

Central Processing of Job Vacancies

- 5.11** 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 will be disseminated through a network of 11 Job Centres, the Employment in One-stop, two recruitment centres for the catering and retail industries, the Telephone Employment Service Centre, the Interactive Employment Service (iES) website and vacancy search terminals located in various sites throughout the territory after vetting.

Special Recruitment and Promotional Activities

5.12 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. To assist job seekers living in remote areas in securing employment, we held large-scale job fairs in Tuen Mun, Tung Chung and Fanling in 2011. 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, 12 large-scale job fairs and 334 district-based job fairs were held, attracting some 44 500 job seekers.



Secretary for Labour and Welfare Mr. Matthew Cheung Kin-chung visits the Tung Chung Job Fair and exchanges views with employers on the latest labour market situation



A job fair co-organised with the Airport Authority Hong Kong attracts over 10 400 visitors

5.13 To further strengthen the dissemination of local vacancy information and to promote Labour Department's employment services, we organise "Job Info Days" and other district-based employment promotional activities at various districts. In the year, we organised 10 such events which attracted about 8 000 visitors.

Intensified Services for the Needy

Middle-aged Job seekers

5.14 The Employment Programme for the middle-aged is launched to assist the unemployed aged 40 or above to secure employment. Employers who engage an eligible middle-aged job seeker in a full-time permanent job and offer him/her on-the-job training will receive a training allowance of \$2,000 per month, for three to a maximum of six months. In 2011, a total of 2 834 placements were secured through the programme.

Work Trial Scheme (WTS)

5.15 The Work Trial Scheme is 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, the Labour Department will pay each participant an allowance of \$5,500, while the participating organisation will contribute an additional allowance of \$500. In 2011, a total of 439 job seekers were placed into work trials.

Pilot Employment Navigator Programme

5.16 To encourage the unemployed to land on and sustain employment, we launched a two-year Pilot Employment Navigator Programme (ENP) in December 2010 to provide the unemployed with in-depth and personalised employment consultation. A cash incentive of up to \$5,000 will be paid to each unemployed who successfully secures and stays in employment after receiving the employment consultation service under the programme. As at the end of 2011, 4 494 job seekers have enrolled in ENP.

Transport Support Scheme

5.17 Commencing in June 2007 and with eligibility criteria relaxed in July 2008, the Transport Support Scheme is designed to provide time-limited allowances as an incentive for needy job seekers and low-income employees in the four designated remote districts of Yuen Long, Tuen Mun, the North and Islands with a view to encouraging them to “go out” to seek jobs and work across districts. Under the relaxed scheme, time-limited transport allowances, viz. Job Search Allowance of up to \$600 and On-the-job Transport Allowance of \$600 per month for up to 12 months are made available to eligible applicants. The scheme has ceased receiving applications since October 2011 and been replaced by the “Work Incentive Transport Subsidy (WITS) Scheme”. As at the end of 2011, a total of 43 578 applicants have been admitted to the Transport Support Scheme.

Work Incentive Transport Subsidy Scheme

5.18 Since October 2011, the territory-wide WITS Scheme has been open for application with a view to relieving the burden of work-related travelling expenses on low-income households with employed members so as to promote sustained employment. Applicants may apply for WITS for the previous six to 12 months in each application, with the monthly subsidy of \$600 (or \$300 at half-rate) counting from April 2011 the earliest. We have publicised the Scheme through a variety of promotional activities. As at year end, a total of 10 437 applicants received subsidies totalling \$35 million.

New Arrivals and Ethnic Minorities

5.19 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.

Workers affected by Large-scale Retrenchment

5.20 In major business closure or redundancy cases, the Labour Department sets up hotlines for enquiry and special counters at job centres and the Employment in One-stop 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 the department'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 2011, we offered special employment services to 2 044 affected employees.

Job Seekers with Disabilities

5.21 The Selective Placement Division (SPD) offers employment assistance to job seekers with disabilities looking for open employment. Placement officers will provide personalised employment services, including employment counseling, job matching and referral and post placement follow-up services. In 2011, the SPD registered 2 672 job seekers with disabilities and achieved 2 403 placements. ([Figure 5.3](#))

Work Orientation and Placement Scheme

5.22 The Labour Department launches the Work Orientation and Placement Scheme (WOPS) to facilitate open employment of persons with disabilities by encouraging employers to offer job vacancies and providing work trial opportunities to persons with disabilities so that the former will have better understanding of the working capacity of the latter. The scheme also provides pre-employment training to persons with disabilities with a view to enhancing their employability. Eligible employers participating in the scheme receive financial incentive from the Labour Department, equal to two-thirds of the actual salary paid to the employee with disabilities (subject to a ceiling of \$4,000 per month) for up to a maximum of six months. In 2011, the scheme achieved 479 placements.

Self Help Integrated Placement Service

5.23 The Self Help Integrated Placement Service (SHIPS) aims at improving the job-searching skills of job seekers with disabilities and encouraging them to be more proactive in the search for jobs, thereby enhancing their employment opportunities. In 2011, 423 job seekers with disabilities participated in the programme.

Interactive Selective Placement Service (iSPS) Website

5.24 The Interactive Selective Placement Service (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 the 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 the 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 to various on-line employment services and other related support services.

Promotional Activities

5.25 To enhance public understanding of the working abilities of persons with disabilities as well as to publicise the services of SPD and WOPS, the division conducted a series of promotional activities, such as exhibitions, production of publications and advertisements, broadcast of promotional videos, etc during the year. In addition, a large-scale seminar was held for employers and human resources practitioners. Promotional 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 Pre-employment Training Programme and Youth Work Experience and Training Scheme

5.26 To enhance the employability of young people, the Labour Department administers the Youth Pre-employment Training Programme and Youth Work Experience and Training Scheme (YPTP&YWETS), a “through-train” programme providing seamless and comprehensive youth training and employment support to young school leavers aged 15 to 24 with educational attainment at sub-degree level or below.

5.27 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. Participating employers are entitled to a monthly training subsidy of \$2,000 per trainee during the period of on-the-job training.

5.28 In the 2010/11 programme year running from September 2010 to August 2011, some 5 600 young people attended pre-employment training and around 4 200 trainees were placed into training vacancies under YPTP&YWETS. In addition, some 700 trainees found employment in the open market with the assistance of case managers.

5.29 YPTP&YWETS also closely collaborates with training bodies to launch well-received special employment projects for industries and individual establishments. These projects include “tailor-made employment projects” and “tailor-made training-cum-employment projects”. The former refers to projects co-organised with establishments offering large number of on-the-job training vacancies while the latter provides pre-employment job skills training custom-made for a particular establishment which is immediately followed by on-the-job training. In the 2010/11 Programme, 59 special employment projects were run for employers in the retail, catering, tourism, education, construction and engineering, business services and transport industries.

5.30 In August, we organised the Award Ceremony of Most Improved Trainees of YPTP&YWETS to showcase the creditable improvements of trainees after joining the programme, as well as to commend 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.



Special Programme for Youths with Acute Employment Difficulties

5.31 To strengthen the employment support for vulnerable youths, the Labour Department 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. Phase One of the project ran from July 2010 to November 2011 with 109 trainees enrolled. The nomination for Phase Two was conducted in the end of 2011.

Youth Employment Support

5.32 The Labour Department operates two youth employment resource centres named Youth Employment Start (Y.E.S.). The two centres provide one-stop service 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 young people to pursue self-employment. Services provided include career assessment, career guidance, professional counselling, value-adding training, support services on employment and self-employment as well as up-to-date labour market information. In 2011, the two centres provided services to 74 136 young people.

Regulating Local Employment Agencies and Employment Outside Hong Kong

5.33 We monitor the operation of employment agencies through licensing, inspection and investigation of complaints. In 2011, we issued 2 334 employment agency licences and revoked three. As at year-end, there were 2 295 licensed employment agencies in Hong Kong. A total of 1 330 inspections were made to employment agencies in the year.

5.34 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

- 5.35** To cater for the genuine needs of employers, the department administers the Supplementary Labour Scheme that allows the entry of imported workers to take up jobs at technician level or below which cannot be filled locally. The scheme operates on the principles of ensuring the priority of local workers in employment while allowing employers with proven local recruitment difficulties to import labour.
- 5.36** We provide active job matching and referral services for local job seekers to ensure their employment priority. Vacancies under the scheme 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.
- 5.37** As at the end of 2011, there were 2 003 imported workers working in Hong Kong under the Supplementary Labour Scheme.

Policy on Foreign Domestic Helpers (FDHs)

5.38 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. The Standard Employment Contract prescribes that, *inter alia*, 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. Furthermore, the Government has since the 1970s prescribed a Minimum Allowable Wage for FDHs as an additional safeguard against exploitation. The Government attaches great importance to safeguarding their statutory and contractual rights. Claims of breach of statutory rights are promptly investigated and prosecution action will be taken out if there is sufficient evidence. In the year, the department also widely publicised the rights and benefits of FDHs by, for instance, staging four information kiosks for FDHs at places they frequently gather on their rest days in January and September. The event attracted over 24 000 visitors. The department also maintains close liaison with consulates of the FDH-exporting countries, non-governmental organisations serving FDHs and FDH employer groups to better address issues relating to importation of FDHs.

5.39 As at the end of 2011, there were 299 961 FDHs in Hong Kong, an increase of 5 per cent compared with 285 681 in 2010. About 49 per cent of the FDHs in Hong Kong were from Indonesia and 48 per cent from the Philippines.