CHAPTER 12 - VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

INTRODUCTION

12.1 Vocational rehabilitation aims to enable people with disabilities to secure, retain and advance in suitable employment and thereby to further their integration into society. It is an integral part of the rehabilitation process and mainly includes the provision of vocational assessment, vocational guidance, vocational training, retraining programmes and other employment services.

POLICY OBJECTIVE

12.2 To meet the goals of full participation and equalisation of opportunities in the context of employment and vocational rehabilitation, the objective is to ensure that people with disabilities have an equal chance to participate in productive and gainful employment in the open market. This can be achieved by the following ways -

(a) creating an environment which provides equal employment opportunities for people with disabilities in so far as their disabilities will allow;

(b) identifying the vocational training and retraining needs of people with disabilities, matching these with the social and physical environment, and providing necessary facilities for training and retraining;

(c) providing selective placement service to assist people with disabilities in finding employment;

(d) providing sheltered work and supported employment for people with disabilities who are not ready to enter open employment;

(e) making available the expertise and resources to modify existing machinery and equipment and by improving the design and production of technical devices for promoting productivity and job prospects for people with disabilities;

(f) fostering amongst potential employers knowledge of the abilities and work skills of people with disabilities, and by encouraging and supporting those efforts made towards promoting employment opportunities for people with disabilities;

(g) promoting the working abilities and attitudes towards work of people with disabilities; and

(h) establishing interface between various organisations providing vocational rehabilitation and related support services.
VOCATIONAL ASSESSMENT

12.3 The vocational assessment service for people with disabilities provided by the Vocational Training Council is subvented by the Government through the Health and Welfare Bureau. The objectives of the service are -

(a) to test and assess physical, psychological and vocational capabilities, potential, interests and limitations of people with disabilities;
(b) to offer assistance and counselling on social and personal problems which may deter job placement;
(c) to arrange for vocational training, if necessary, in preparation for employment;
(d) to guide, help and encourage people with disabilities to formulate individual career goals and the means of achieving such goals; and
(e) to assess the individual’s need for special devices and adaptation of work situation.

12.4 The vocational assessment service follows the established international vocational assessment procedure in which a multi-disciplinary approach is used involving various rehabilitation professionals. People with disabilities are assessed on internationally recognised test batteries and work samples adapted to meet local requirements by a multi-disciplinary assessment team. Through the vocational assessment service, essential information facilitating the formulation of an individual’s placement plan, such as the potential for open employment, supported employment, sheltered employment and vocational training, can be obtained.

12.5 A comprehensive assessment programme has been in operation since 1982. This programme is essential for complex assessment cases where it is necessary to assess the employment potential of people with disabilities over a wide range of trades. Each comprehensive assessment takes six to eight weeks depending on the special needs of individuals with disabilities.

12.6 In addition, a specific assessment programme has been adopted since 1994 for all final year pupils in special schools. Under the programme, mentally handicapped pupils will attend a one-week assessment while physically handicapped, visually impaired and hearing impaired pupils will attend a two-week assessment. This programme provides for a quicker and more efficient placement service to special school leavers.

12.7 In view of the need to assess the potential for upward mobility of sheltered workers, the Vocational Training Council is given additional subvention to extend the one-week specific assessment programme to sheltered workers, accident victims and other people with disabilities applying for sheltered workshop or supported employment with effect from September 1996. A task group has been set up under the Social Welfare Department to conduct a review on this expanded vocational assessment programme and explore ways to better utilise the annual provision of 600 assessments in this programme.

12.8 The vocational assessment service previously provided only in the Kwun Tong Skills Centre was extended to the two skills centres in Tuen Mun and Pokfulam respectively.
in 1996. This arrangement helps alleviate the need for people with disabilities, in particular those with mobility difficulties, to travel a long distance for receiving vocational assessment.

12.9 In the school year 1997/98, the Vocational Training Council provided the vocational assessment service to 1 443 people with disabilities, of whom 138 persons received comprehensive assessments and 1 305 persons received specific assessments. The unit costs of comprehensive and specific assessments in the school year 1997/98 were $32,764 and $7,021 respectively. Based on the conversion formula of one comprehensive assessment equivalent to four specific assessments, there will be a projected shortfall of 178 comprehensive assessment equivalents by the school year 2002/03 as shown in Table 12.1 below. On the advice of the Health and Welfare Bureau, the Vocational Training Council will review the existing vocational assessment programmes with a view to improving their cost-effectiveness and reducing the inconvenience caused to the disabled persons under assessment.

Table 12.1 - Projected Demand and Provision of Vocational Assessment Service of Vocational Training Council for People with Disabilities (Expressed in terms of Comprehensive Assessment Equivalent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Year</th>
<th>98/99</th>
<th>99/00</th>
<th>00/01</th>
<th>01/02</th>
<th>02/03</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a) Projected demand</td>
<td>520</td>
<td>538</td>
<td>592</td>
<td>609</td>
<td>608</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Existing/Planned provision</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>430</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) Shortfall or (Surplus) (a - b)</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12.10 In addition, the Selective Placement Division of the Labour Department conducts brief assessment tests for job-seekers using work sample kits to assess their vocational capabilities, potential, interests and limitations. Some sheltered workshops and supported employment units also carry out vocational assessment for their clients with their own resources and methods.

**VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE**

12.11 Trainees in skills centres for people with disabilities are given vocational guidance throughout the training period and until they are settled in employment. The main objective is to prepare them to secure and retain open employment by strengthening their abilities to cope with various challenges arising from training and work. This objective is achieved through the provision of the following services by vocational counsellors or social workers -

(a) advice and counselling on the means of developing individual potential to meet occupational needs;
(b) detailed information on occupational or skills requirements of jobs;
(c) data on employment opportunities; and
(d) guidance on how and where to seek jobs and general advice on job retention and employer’s expectations.
12.12 For people with disabilities attending mainstream courses of the Vocational Training Council, they are provided with vocational guidance service carried out by inspectors of the Vocational Training for Disabled Section in collaboration with the training/teaching staff concerned.

12.13 The Selective Placement Division of the Labour Department and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) operating sheltered workshops, supported employment units and other employment programmes also provide vocational guidance to people with disabilities, including making arrangements for them to attend retraining courses as appropriate.

**VOCATIONAL TRAINING**

12.14 To promote the employability of people with disabilities, vocational training is provided according to the International Labour Organisation’s objectives and principles which are set out as follows -

(a) the principles, measures and methods applied in training able-bodied persons should apply to people with disabilities so far as medical and educational conditions permit;

(b) where possible, people with disabilities should receive training with and under the same conditions as able-bodied persons;

(c) special training arrangements should be made for those people with disabilities who, because of the nature of their disability, cannot be trained together with able-bodied persons;

(d) training should continue until the disabled persons have the necessary skills to work normally on an equal footing as far as possible with able-bodied persons; and

(e) training is wasted unless it leads to placement in the trade trained for or a similar trade.

12.15 Since 1991, the Vocational Training Council has taken over the responsibility for provision of vocational training for people with disabilities from the former Technical Education and Industrial Training Department. It provides a great variety of training programmes in skills centres for people with disabilities and mainstream courses in institutions under its purview. In addition, there are two NGOs operating skills centres for people with disabilities under government subvention.

**Mainstream Training**

12.16 Training institutions providing mainstream courses are encouraged to admit and integrate disabled students into their programmes as far as possible. The Vocational Training Council provides a great variety of training courses that cater for both able-bodied and disabled persons. To facilitate successful completion of study by disabled students, staff of the Vocational Training for Disabled Section visit and conduct counselling sessions for the disabled students regularly, and give advice on special teaching methods as well as special examination arrangements to the training/teaching staff concerned. In the school
year 1997/98, there were 83 people with disabilities attending mainstream courses of the Vocational Training Council.

**Skills Centres**

12.17 For people who, because of the nature of their disabilities and special needs, cannot follow mainstream vocational training, skills centres for people with disabilities provide special facilities and training programmes for them. Two levels of full-time courses, namely operative level and pre-craft level bridging courses, are offered to them. The aim of the former is to equip trainees with the necessary skills to secure open employment, and the latter is to provide training for either open employment or entry to mainstream vocational courses.

12.18 All skills training programmes, except for the pre-craft bridging courses which last for one year, are organised on a modular basis so that individualised training packages can be designed to enable each trainee to progress at his own pace and reach his full potential. These courses have no fixed duration but on average take three years for a disabled trainee to achieve the required competency. Apart from technical skills training, other subjects such as communication, calculation and work-related social skills are also provided to enrich and strengthen the trainees’ abilities to secure and retain gainful employment. The training courses are designed to meet the employment market needs. A Certificate of Competence will be awarded to trainees who have attained the required standard to enhance the graduates’ employment prospects.

12.19 Three skills centres in Pokfulam, Tuen Mun and Tai Po also provide boarding places with specific training programmes on independent living skills and social skills which are essential for the trainees’ successful integration into the community.

12.20 As at December 1998, there were five government-subvented skills centres, three operated by the Vocational Training Council and two operated by two NGOs. These skills centres provided a total of 1,001 full-time training places and 438 boarding places for people with disabilities with average utilisation rates of 94.3% and 64.6% respectively. These figures have taken into account the utilisation rates of the 156 full-time places and 120 boarding places in the re-provisioned Pokfulam Skills Centre which commenced operation in May 1998 (the Centre will expand to 300 full-time places and 150 boarding places in the school year 2000/01). The unit costs for the full-time and boarding places in skills centres in the school year 1997/98 were $7,848 and $3,872 per month respectively.

12.21 The projected demand and overall provision of full-time training places over the next five years are shown in Table 12.2 below. In view of the fact that the actual number of applications from Secondary Three graduates of special schools was lower than the projected demand in recent years and that the trend is likely to continue in coming years, the Administration decided in 1998 to merge two smaller skills centres in order to avoid wastage of resources. The newly completed skills centre premises in Central Kowloon were used to re-provision the existing 60-place Caritas - Lok Mo Vocational Training Centre in 1999. The re-provisioned centre, renamed Caritas - Lok Mo Skills Centre, has a capacity of 156 full-time training places as originally planned (the Centre can be expanded to a maximum capacity of 216 places if the projected shortfall in the school year 2001/02 materialises).
Table 12.2 - Projected Demand and Provision of Full-time Training Places in Skills Centres for People with Disabilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Year</th>
<th>98/99</th>
<th>99/00</th>
<th>00/01</th>
<th>01/02</th>
<th>02/03</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a) Projected demand</td>
<td>1 011</td>
<td>1 033</td>
<td>1 115</td>
<td>1 248</td>
<td>1 292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Existing/Planned provision</td>
<td>1 001</td>
<td>1 121</td>
<td>1 157*</td>
<td>1 217#</td>
<td>1 217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) Shortfall or (Surplus) (a - b)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>(88)</td>
<td>(42)</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:

* 1 157 places comprise -

- 233 places in the Kwun Tong Skills Centre
- 300 places in the Tuen Mun Skills Centre
- 300 places in the Pokfulam Skills Centre
- 168 places in the Hong Chi Pinehill Village Advanced Training Centre
- 156 places in the Caritas - Lok Mo Skills Centre

# With 216 places in the Caritas - Lok Mo Skills Centre

12.22 To facilitate trainees’ transition from vocational training to work, a trial work placement scheme is arranged for skills centre trainees so as to provide an opportunity for them to experience actual work environment in the industrial or commercial sectors. During the trial period, support service is provided by skills centre staff. On their return to the skills centre, trainees concerned will be given extra training/coaching on the identified weak points. This scheme will be continued in the existing centre-based mode and individual centres will be encouraged to initiate their own schemes by taking into account the needs of their trainees and the job opportunities in their districts.

12.23 In addition to regular full-time programmes, the Vocational Training Council provides part-time evening programmes in the Kwun Tong Skills Centre for adults with disabilities who want to acquire new or additional vocational skills. It also, in collaboration with NGOs, organizes tailor-made short training courses with flexible attendance mode for people with disabilities who are seeking or aim to seek open employment. In the school year 1997/98, the Vocational Training Council organised 33 short training programmes for 333 people with disabilities. It is estimated that about 300 short course places will be required every year. The Vocational Training Council will keep the short training courses under regular review.

12.24 In view of the fact that 300 short training course places are subvented by the Government for sheltered workers seeking supported or open employment, some NGOs requested for extending the subvention to cover also supported employment workers such that they could be exempted from paying the course fees. The Vocational Training Council will examine this request and make recommendations, as appropriate, to the Administration for consideration.
EMPLOYEES RETRAINING SCHEME

12.25 The Employees Retraining Board is an independent statutory body established in 1992 to administer the Employees Retraining Scheme. A comprehensive review of the Scheme in 1996 concluded that the Employees Retraining Board should continue to be a contracting and funding agency of the Scheme and would not provide retraining service direct. The major target group of the Employees Retraining Scheme would be those eligible persons who are the “hard core” of the unemployed and are aged 30 or above with lower secondary education or below.

12.26 The Employees Retraining Board provides funding support for retraining programmes on the basis of three guiding principles of being cost-effective, client-centred and market-driven. The programmes must be employment-led, i.e. the contents are designed to meet the specific requirements of the job market. This approach has enabled the retraining programmes to be practical, focused and capable of meeting the market needs.

12.27 Under the Employees Retraining Scheme, retraining programmes are delivered through a network of gazetted training bodies. These training bodies conduct a wide range of full-time and part-time retraining courses on different trades and industries, especially in the service sector. Of the current 53 active training bodies operating under the Employees Retraining Scheme, 22 of them offer tailor-made retraining courses for people with disabilities including industrial accident victims. As at December 1998, there were a cumulative total of 64 tailor-made job-specific/general skills training programmes provided for 2,982 people with disabilities.

12.28 Upon completion of retraining courses, retrainees will be offered placement assistance by the respective training bodies. The training bodies are encouraged to refer the retrainees to the Selective Placement Division of the Labour Department for seeking open employment. In addition, training bodies will offer follow-up services for disabled retrainees in the form of post-employment follow-up sessions, individual or group counselling, and visits to employers and retrainees at work. The Employees Retraining Board provides funding support for these services as an integral part of the retraining programmes for people with disabilities.

12.29 In 1997-98, the Employees Retraining Board provided some $6.5 million for 50 classes operated under 30 tailor-made retraining programmes for people with disabilities. The average placement rate of the 669 disabled graduates was 65%. The estimated amount of funding for 1998-99 is about $7.7 million, representing an increase of over 18% than 1997-98.

12.30 The Employees Retraining Board launched a new On-the-job Training Scheme in October 1997 to promote the employment opportunities of retrainees who lack practical experience to enter certain jobs at semi-skilled level. For specific retraining courses to which the On-the-job Training Scheme applies, the retraining course graduate will be paid an on-the-job training allowance, usually at the rate of $2,000 per month for a period of three months upon placement. It is expected that upon completion of the on-the-job training period, retrainees will be able to acquire the experience needed to earn the normal market rates. The On-the-Job Training Scheme thus supplements classroom training by practical training on skills specific to each job and has been proven to be very cost-effective in skills development of the retrainees.
EMPLOYMENT

Open Employment

12.31 The Selective Placement Division of the Labour Department provides free employment services for people with disabilities seeking open employment. Free recruitment service is also offered to employers who wish to employ employees with disabilities. The objective of the Selective Placement Division is to assist people with disabilities in securing open employment with the ultimate goal of integrating them into the community. A service brief on the Selective Placement Division is at Appendix 6.1.

12.32 Operating on the principle of placing the right person in the right job, the selective placement service provided by the Labour Department emphasises on the working abilities of the disabled job-seekers. To this end, an in-depth interview will be arranged for each disabled job-seeker so as to assess his abilities by taking into account his educational and skills attainment, past work experiences, aptitudes and aspirations. A VALPAR trade test will also be administered to help with the assessment.

12.33 In conducting the job matching work, placement officers will study the nature and requirements of the vacancies received and match them with the preference and abilities of job-seekers. Upon selection of suitable candidates for particular vacancies, placement officers will discuss details of the jobs and conditions of employment with job seekers and advise them on interviewing techniques. Placement officers will also accompany job-seekers to attend selection interviews. After placement, the Selective Placement Division will provide follow-up service which normally lasts three months to ensure successful job settlement. In discharging the above services, the Selective Placement Division collaborates closely with NGOs with a view to further enhancing the employment opportunities of people with disabilities.

12.34 Between 1994 and 1998, the Selective Placement Division recorded some 3,000 registrations and 1,400 placements of people with disabilities annually as shown in Table 12.3 below. The placement rate in each of the years was over 40%, with nearly 90% of them were employed as clerical and related workers, service workers, and production workers, transport equipment operators and labourers. Based on the 6.5% average annual growth rate of registration recorded between 1994 and 1998, it is projected that there will be approximately 4,600 people with disabilities registered with the Selective Placement Division for job placement by 2002 as shown in Table 12.4 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Registration</td>
<td>2,864</td>
<td>3,334</td>
<td>3,482</td>
<td>3,100</td>
<td>3,598</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placement</td>
<td>1,414</td>
<td>1,422</td>
<td>1,430</td>
<td>1,476</td>
<td>1,455</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placement Rate (%)</td>
<td>49.4</td>
<td>42.7</td>
<td>41.1</td>
<td>47.6</td>
<td>40.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 12.4 - Estimated Number of People with Disabilities Registered with the Selective Placement Division between 1998 and 2002

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1998</th>
<th>1999</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Registration</td>
<td>3 598</td>
<td>3 832</td>
<td>4 081</td>
<td>4 346</td>
<td>4 629</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12.35 To enhance employers’ understanding of the working abilities of mentally handicapped persons and to promote their employment opportunities, the Selective Placement Division has launched a “Trial Placement Scheme for the Mentally Handicapped” on a pilot project basis since April 1998. This pilot scheme is funded by the Queen Elizabeth Foundation for the Mentally Handicapped. Under the scheme, the Selective Placement Division refers suitable mentally handicapped job-seekers to fill vacancies offered by participating employers for a one-month trial placement period. Participating employers would receive a financial incentive, which equals half of the wages they paid to the employee in the trial period, subject to a ceiling of $3,000. In addition, a Certificate of Appreciation would be presented to the employers who continue to employ the mentally handicapped employees after the trial period. It is estimated that about 100 mentally handicapped persons will be able to participate in the scheme. The scheme would be reviewed upon its completion.

Supported Employment

12.36 Supported employment service is a kind of employment service for people with disabilities which allows them to work in an integrated open setting with necessary counselling and support services and to have access to all the usual benefits of having a job such as income at market rates and job security. It encompasses job finding and matching, job coaching, follow-through support and employment-related skills training. The ultimate goal is to prepare people with disabilities to work in an open and competitive setting independently. A service brief on the supported employment service provided by the Social Welfare Department and NGOs with details on the objective, programme, staffing level and admission criteria is at Appendix 4.25.

12.37 In subventing supported employment service provided by NGOs, the Social Welfare Department adopts the following criteria -

(a) the income level of the disabled workers are expected to be exceeding $1,500 per month (excluding incentive payments);

(b) workers with disabilities should be encouraged to work in an open and integrated setting where they have opportunities to work with their able-bodied colleagues; and

(c) the programme will allow flexibility to gear towards changing needs of the labour market to ensure that its support to workers with disabilities is matching with reality.

12.38 Since 1989, different models of service provision have been tried out by the Social Welfare Department and NGOs. Some NGOs have set up non-profit making “simulated business” for their clients aiming to equip them with the practical skills required for open employment in a similar business. Under the government-subvented supported
employment service, placement in a simulated business is provided as a kind of job-training placement with a certain duration rather than a real and long term employment for people with disabilities.

12.39 As at December 1998, there were 1,070 supported employment places with 60 places provided in 1998-99. There was no established waiting list for the service. The average utilisation rates in 1997-98 for the 60 places operated by the Social Welfare Department was 93.3% and for the 950 places operated by subvented NGOs was 93.0%. The average unit costs of the places operated by the Social Welfare Department and NGOs in 1997-98 were $3,058 and $2,000 per month respectively. A Working Group comprising representatives from the Social Welfare Department, NGO operators and the Hong Kong Council of Social Service conducted a review on the mode of operation and other important areas of the supported employment service including the level of staffing input in 1998.

12.40 Apart from the Social Welfare Department and NGOs, the Hospital Authority also provide supported employment service in some hospitals as part of their occupational therapy services. For example, the Kwai Chung Hospital has been providing the service for ex-mentally ill patients waiting for halfway house placements or receiving day hospital’s occupational therapy services since 1995. Four training workshops have been set up by the hospital for this service. Besides, hospital occupational therapists render on-the-job training to patients at employment organisations for continuous patients care to help minimise re-admission rate. They also provide support and advice to employers so as to enhance their confidence and willingness to offer jobs to ex-mentally ill patients. In 1997-98, a total of 171 people with disabilities received supported employment service from the Hospital Authority and 106 of them have entered into open employment. As the Hospital Authority provides supported employment service as an integral part of its hospital services, the unit cost figure for the service in 1997-98 is not available.

Sheltered Work

12.41 Sheltered work is an integral part of the vocational rehabilitation process and contains elements of productive, remunerative work and social rehabilitation. It is provided in a planned and controlled environment, i.e. sheltered workshop, for people with disabilities. It helps them establish and develop social and economic potential. It also provides opportunities for work adjustment and advancement with the ultimate objective of enabling them to move on to supported and open employment as far as possible. People with disabilities satisfying the agreed admission criteria and passing the job test administered by sheltered workshops are eligible for admission. The Social Welfare Department, in making referrals, will take into account the persons’ preference of geographic areas, the type and extent of their disabilities, and sheltered workshops’ expertise. A service brief with details on the objective, programme, staffing level and admission criteria of sheltered workshops is at Appendix 4.26.

12.42 The majority of work in sheltered workshops relies on sub-contract jobs in the form of simple packaging, processing, finishing, assembly or sub-assembly work. To meet the changing market needs, some sheltered workshops have diverted to take on service orders, such as mailing, delivery, car washing, laundry, etc. The assignment of work process is arranged by workshop instructors after careful assessment of the capabilities and work skills of individual sheltered workers. Normally the type of work assigned would accommodate the disabilities of the workers. The income of sheltered workers varies
according to their capabilities and the nature and amount of job contracts available. In 1997-98, their income varied from $6.6 to $46.2 per man-day for sheltered workers in a sheltered workshop for severely physically handicapped persons and those in a sheltered workshop with mixed disability groups. The average daily income of sheltered workers was about $21. To encourage attendance, sheltered workers are given an incentive payment which is increased to $20 per day with effect from October 1998.

12.43 As at December 1998, there were 6,215 sheltered workshop places with average utilisation rates of 107.3% for the 685 places operated by the Social Welfare Department and 99.7% for the 5,530 places operated by subvented NGOs in 1997-98, and 2,179 people with disabilities were on the waiting list. The average unit costs for the places operated by the Social Welfare Department and NGOs in 1997-98 were $3,079 and $3,347 respectively per month. The Administration has earmarked funding for the provision of an additional 2,020 places by 2002-03. Based on the demand formula, there will be a projected shortfall of 3,711 places by 2002-03 as shown in Table 12.5 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 12.5 - Projected Demand and Provision of Sheltered Workshop Places</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Financial Year</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) Projected demand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Existing/Planned provision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) Projected annual discharge at a rate of 4.4% of the enrollment at the beginning of the year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(d) Shortfall or (Surplus) (a - b - c)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12.44 It is recognised that, for most sheltered workers, placement in a sheltered workshop may become a long-term arrangement because of the limitation arising from their disabilities. However, through appropriate training, some sheltered workers are able to secure open employment. Sheltered workshop managers are encouraged to make use of the vocational assessment service of the Vocational Training Council so as to identify workers with potential for vocational training, supported employment or open employment.

12.45 To help sheltered workshop managers better manage the workshop and develop the working abilities of the sheltered workers, the Social Welfare Department has implemented a dual system to provide allied health services for sheltered workers. Details are discussed in the chapter on rehabilitation personnel.

**Employment Opportunities in the Civil Service**

12.46 The Government’s policy is to place people with disabilities in appropriate jobs in the civil service whenever possible. People with disabilities who meet the entry or examination requirements will be selected for interview. If they are found suitable for employment, they will be given an appropriate degree of preference for appointment over other applicants. People with disabilities found suitable to carry out the duties of specific
posts may be recommended for appointment even though he may not be able, on account of his disability, to perform the duties of every post in the same rank.

12.47 The Civil Service Bureau has also adopted a proactive approach to promote employment of people with disabilities by identifying target departments, conducting sensitive job matching, preparing applicants with disabilities for recruitment exercises and conducting seminars on the subject for civil servants. To further enhance government departments’ understanding of the Government’s policy and working abilities of people with disabilities as well as to exchange views on the management of disabled officers, the Civil Service Bureau conducts, jointly with the Labour Department and NGOs, promotional visits to government departments every year. In addition, the Government will continue to feature employment of people with disabilities in human resource management training in the civil service. Towards this end, a training video has been produced. Furthermore, a central fund has been established since 1 April 1996 to finance purchase of technical aids for civil servants with disabilities to assist them to perform their duties and a total amount of $1.77 million has been allocated by December 1998.

12.48 Government departments have been advised to actively identify jobs which could be filled by people with disabilities and consider more positively the appointment of them. Under the existing vacancy advertisement procedures, people with disabilities should as a rule be allowed to apply for civil service posts. Special arrangements are made to ensure that people with disabilities are made aware of the availability of civil service vacancies. Copies of the recruitment advertisement are sent in advance to the Selective Placement Division of the Labour Department.

12.49 As at 1 April 1998, there were 3 646 people with disabilities, excluding people with colour-blindness or defective colour perception, working in the civil service. They represented 1.96% of the total number of civil servants. The Administration will continue its promotional efforts on employment of people with disabilities in the civil service.

**Enhancing Employment Opportunities of People with Disabilities in the Open Market**

12.50 The Government is firmly committed to strengthening employment opportunities for people with disabilities. It organised three summit meetings on open employment of people with disabilities between 1994 and 1996 to provide the opportunities for frank discussion among employers, disability groups, rehabilitation organisations and government officials. In view of the fact that there are other channels such as the Rehabilitation Advisory Committee and its sub-committees to closely monitor the development and phased implementation of employment-related services for people with disabilities, the Chief Executive has decided to cease organising similar meetings. Nevertheless, the Government will continue to take the lead in employment of people with disabilities so as to set a good example for the private sector. It will also continue to liaise with employers’ associations, disability groups and other organisations concerned to further enhance employment prospects of people with disabilities.
SUPPORT SERVICES

Publicity Efforts

12.51 Public education is essential to promote employment opportunities of people with disabilities. The Publicity and Promotion Unit of the Selective Placement Division was set up in 1992. The Unit is actively engaged in promotion and public education programmes to foster understanding of the working abilities of people with disabilities and to enhance their employment opportunities. The Information Services Department, Social Welfare Department, Hospital Authority and NGOs also organise various publicity activities for the same purposes. In addition, some major employers’ associations have issued guidelines on equal opportunities on employment of people with disabilities to their members.

Marketing Consultancy Support

12.52 The Marketing Consultancy Office (Rehabilitation) [MCO(R)] was set up under the Social Welfare Department in January 1997 as a pilot project. The MCO(R) is staffed by experienced marketing personnel recruited from the commercial sector. Its mission is to enhance the productivity and employment opportunities for people with disabilities in sheltered workshops and supported employment so that they can lead a more independent life. In addition, at NGOs’ request, a Task Group on Job Procurement, which comprises representatives of the Social Welfare Department and NGOs, has been set up under the MCO(R) to help NGOs explore job/contract opportunities. There is an Advisory Committee to monitor and guide the work of the MCO(R). It will take note of the recommendation of the Joint Council for the Physically and Mentally Disabled (Rehabilitation Division, Hong Kong Council of Social Service) in respect of continuous procurement of sizeable contracts for NGOs. A mid-term evaluation on the performance of MCO(R) is being conducted with a view to deciding on its future development.

Computer Training

12.53 Recognising the significance of modern technology to people with disabilities, the Social Welfare Department set up a Central Fund for Personal Computers in 1997. This Fund provides financial assistance to people with disabilities who possess appropriate level of computer knowledge and skill but encounter difficulties in securing open employment due to their limited mobility to purchase computer facilities for securing supported employment or self-employment. Application for the Fund was invited in October 1997, March 1998 and September 1998 through supported employment service units operated by the Department and NGOs. As at December 1998, the Fund granted over $380,000 to 24 people with disabilities.

12.54 In addition, the Social Welfare Department has undertaken to further examine the following suggestions arising from the discussion of the Sub-committee on Information Technology (dissolved in 1998) of the Rehabilitation Advisory Committee -

(a) to provide computers in day activity centres and sheltered workshops for training and retaining the clients’ learning in special schools through the software developed by the Education Department;
(b) in pursuance of (a), to provide appropriate training in the use of computers for instructors of day activity centres and sheltered workshops; and

c) to provide computers in other rehabilitation service units, including halfway houses, for social rehabilitation of people with disabilities through the Internet.

12.55 NGOs interested in procuring computers for training their clients in rehabilitation service units may seek financial support from various non-governmental funds. In 1998, the Queen Elizabeth Foundation for the Mentally Handicapped approved a grant of one million dollars for the procurement of computers and accessories for day activity centres.

Technical Aids and Resource Centre

12.56 The Technical Aids and Resource Centre of the Vocational Training Council designs and produces special aids and learning resources to assist its disabled trainees to pursue vocational training. It also gives advice on application of technical aids and modification of machinery to employers and disabled workers so as to improve disabled workers’ productivity and job prospects in the open market.

Technical and Funding Support in the Community

12.57 With the support from charitable funds and their own resources, some NGOs have set up funding schemes, for examples, the Employaid Scheme and the Independent Living Fund, to provide technical advice, support and grants/loans to people with disabilities for the purchase of equipment and devices as well as for the adaptation of premises and machinery so as to enable them to make full use of their working abilities. Individuals with disabilities may approach these NGOs for technical aids, and seek advice from supported employment units and assistance from various charitable funds or private donations for implementation of their business plans. The Administration will consider offering further assistance as necessary and appropriate.

ISSUES OF CONCERN

12.58 There is a concern over the employment relationship between welfare organisations and their clients under supported employment and sheltered workshop programmes. Some clients may become “employees” of welfare organisations if they work with wages in service contracts or retail outlets operated directly by welfare organisations. Welfare organisations are advised to take reasonable care and safety precautions in providing the services, and be fully aware that legislative provisions on employment will apply when an employer-employee relationship exists between them and their clients. The Social Welfare Department will examine the issues with relevant service operators.

12.59 In view of the difficulties in identifying and securing suitable premises in public housing estates for setting up new sheltered workshops, the Review Committee suggested exploring the possibility of running sheltered workshops in private premises or by private companies, for example, in vacant workshops of an industrial company.

12.60 There have been repeated requests from NGOs for the provision of tax concession, a quota system and a trust fund for people with disabilities to set up business
projects so as to promote their employment opportunities. The Administration is of the view that employment of people with disabilities should be promoted on the basis of their abilities. The primary goal of community acceptance could be easily defeated if they were to be given employment only because of the tax benefits accruing to employers or because of certain statutory requirements. To ensure fairness, all these requests should also be considered by taking into account similar needs of other vulnerable groups in the community.