

## **Family Council**

### **Implementation of Family-Friendly Policies in the Civil Service**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

This paper aims to brief Members on the family-friendly policies that have been implemented in the civil service.

#### **FIVE-DAY WEEK**

2. The Government introduced the five-day week initiative into the civil service in three phases starting from 2006<sup>1</sup>, with the objective of improving the quality of civil servants' family life without affecting the overall level and efficiency of public services or incurring additional costs to the taxpayer. Bureaux and departments (B/Ds) have to abide by the following four basic principles in their implementation of the initiative –

- (a) no additional staffing resources;
- (b) no reduction in the conditioned hours of service of individual staff;
- (c) no reduction in emergency services; and

---

<sup>1</sup> The three phases started from 1 July 2006, 1 January 2007 and 1 July 2007 respectively.

(d) continued provision of some essential counter services on Saturdays/Sundays.

3. Five-day week work patterns include working on a “Monday-to-Friday basis”, a “five days on, two days off roster in every seven days”, or “fewer than five days/shifts in every seven days”.

4. To monitor the progress of migration to five-day week in B/Ds, the Civil Service Bureau has been conducting biennial surveys since 2008. The latest biennial survey, which captured the position as at 30 September 2014, illustrates that the number of civil servants working on a five-day week work pattern stood at 112 600<sup>2</sup> (or around 72.4% of the civil service strength). There were some 42 900 civil servants who were not yet able to work on a five-day week work pattern as at 30 September 2014, mainly because of the need of B/Ds to maintain the overall level and efficiency of public services without compromising the four basic principles. There are services that continue to be necessary on Saturdays/Sundays such as social welfare services, some immigration counter services, cultural services, postal services, environmental hygiene services, law enforcement, passenger/cargo clearance, and management of penal institutions, etc. B/Ds concerned are not able to further introduce a five-day week roster for the staff concerned.

5. After the third phase implementation in mid 2007, B/Ds are still from time to time implementing new trial schemes to further migrate staff to a five-day week pattern when and where considered feasible and appropriate. Some 700 staff, from the Customs and Excise Department, the Civil Engineering and Development Department and the Social Welfare Department, were under five-day week trial schemes at the time of the survey.

---

<sup>2</sup> Following the approach adopted in previous surveys, this figure included staff who were on FDW trial schemes, but excluded civil servants working in government schools, the Judiciary, the Independent Commission Against Corruption, the Hospital Authority, the Vocational Training Council and the Hong Kong Monetary Authority.

6. Whether five-day week can be fully implemented is subject to the operational needs of different B/Ds, the job nature of different posts, and occupational safety considerations, etc. We will continue to encourage B/Ds to explore possible ways to migrate more staff to five-day week, subject to the four basic principles and after staff consultation. We will also continue to encourage B/Ds to arrange staff to work in five-day week posts by rotation, where operational and other circumstances permit.

## **PATERNITY LEAVE**

7. The provision of five working days of paternity leave to eligible government employees took effect from 1 April 2012. Paternity leave is a family-friendly measure which enables a working father/father-to-be to have some time off to take care of the newborn and the mother of the newborn before/after her confinement. In considering the provision of paternity leave to Government employees, the Government strives to strike a balance between the benefits of paternity leave on the one hand and the prudent use of public funds on the other.

8. The main features of paternity leave scheme for Government employees are as follows -

- (a) five working days of paternity leave on full-pay basis will be provided to eligible employees on the occasion of each childbirth irrespective of their marital status;
- (b) paternity leave will be provided to eligible employees irrespective of the number or place of childbirth;
- (c) male government employees (including civil servants,

non-civil service contract (NCSC) staff and political appointees) who are employed on a “continuous contract<sup>3</sup>” as defined in the Employment Ordinance (Cap. 57) and with not less than 40 weeks’ continuous service immediately before any day of paternity leave will be eligible for full-pay for that paternity leave day. Employees with less than 40 weeks’ continuous service immediately before any day of paternity leave will be eligible for unpaid paternity leave for that particular day of paternity leave;

- (d) paternity leave may be taken during the period from four weeks before the expected date of delivery of the newborn child to 10 weeks beginning on the actual date of childbirth;
- (e) an eligible employee may take paternity leave in one stretch or in splits. The relevant Bureau/Department may specify the mode of taking paternity leave with a view to striking an appropriate balance between operational considerations and the needs of individual officer; and
- (f) any untaken paternity leave cannot be encashed or carried forward to a future childbirth.

9. During the three-year period from 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2015, there are a total of 8,606 cases of government employees (including 8,248 cases of civil servants and 358 cases of non-civil servants) having taken paternity leave in the said period.

---

<sup>3</sup> An employee who works continuously for the same employer for four weeks or more, with at least 18 hours in each week.

## **ADVICE SOUGHT**

10. Members are invited to note the contents of this paper.

**Civil Service Bureau**  
**August 2015**