

Social service hubs coming to your hood

They will boost coordination, data-sharing between ministry, agencies



Mr Desmond Lee speaking to NTU social sciences graduates. PHOTO: NANYANG TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY

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Help for families living in rental homes and facing complex social needs will soon be literally just round the corner, with the setting up of social service hubs in HDB neighbourhoods.

Initially, these hubs will be rolled out in two to three precincts and expanded eventually across Singapore.

The move is part of the Social and Family Development Ministry's efforts to boost coordination and data-sharing between the ministry and agencies in the social service sector to help needy families more effectively.

Its Minister, Mr Desmond Lee, announced the plan yesterday to about 400 social sciences graduates of Nanyang Technological University at their convocation ceremony.

Mr Lee did not mention where the hubs will be set up or the time frame for their establishment.

But he stressed that local communities and neighbours will play an important role in providing support to families and individuals in crisis. And the hub will be central to the drawing up of an action plan for them.

It is where "social workers will partner government agencies and the local community to get a better understanding of the complexities of the problems that beset families who live in these rental housing precincts, and work in partnership with them on a joint plan

of action", he said.

Amid Singapore's ageing population, shrinking family size and economic disruption, the problems the families face include unemployment, money and health issues.

With the hub, the different groups can "proactively coordinate and tackle some of the complex challenges", Mr Lee said.

Also, volunteers, civic organisations and companies can come in, establish and run services and programmes that can supplement and enhance the proactive intervention, he added.

These impending hubs will be akin to those already set up specially for the elderly and disabled in places such as Toa Payoh and Tiong Bahru.

They will help facilitate social support from the community to close the last-mile gap – one of the of the four approaches Mr Lee highlighted for tackling social challenges. The other three are: integrating social services, going upstream to prevent potential problems, and encouraging honest conversations on how Singapore can do better in future.

Integrating and transforming the way social service agencies work is important, said Mr Lee, citing problems that had arisen from having different government agencies provide support services for housing, financial aid, job matching and others.

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