

New community initiative to support caregivers of persons with disabilities to be piloted in 2022

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SINGAPORE - A new community initiative to support caregivers of persons with disabilities will be piloted next year, as they spend time and energy caring for their loved ones but face stress and loneliness.

The new Community Circles initiative, by SG Enable, CaringSG and the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS), is one way the non-profit sector in Singapore innovates and experiments with new ways to achieve social impact, said Minister-in-charge of Social Services Integration Desmond Lee on Wednesday (Oct 20).

He was speaking at the IPS-Tote Board Transforming the Non-Profit Sector Conference, a two-day event held virtually from Wednesday.

The Community Circles pilot is inspired by a similar initiative in Britain, where an individual's community contacts are mobilised to share tasks that can help the individual achieve his own defined goal.

Members of the circle meet every few weeks with a volunteer facilitator to keep things on track and make sure that conversations turn into actions.

Mr Lee's speech at the conference provided an update on three key areas - efforts to tackle inequality, social service transformation and the Community Link (ComLink) initiative.

He noted that the Government has enhanced policy to tackle inequality, such as by extending the Progressive Wage Model to three new sectors - waste management, retail and food services - and creating more pathways for Institute of Technical Education students to succeed.

He said: "These policy enhancements are important. Putting in more resources is important. But what I want to focus on today are our efforts to transform the way we deliver these policies, programmes and social services."

Mr Lee, who is also National Development Minister, said that tackling inequality is not just about the Government doing more through redistribution and schemes.

"It is, importantly, about strengthening that spirit of mutual support and fellowship that are so vital for our society to thrive. That is why community involvement through the non-profit sector is so critical," said Mr Lee.

He also said that in helping families in need, instead of an agency or programme-centric approach, Singapore needs to put families at the centre and organise support around their needs and challenges, while at the same time building on their own strengths and resources.

He said: "This way, we can more effectively coordinate support across agencies and non-profit organisations to address deep-seated challenges, and empower families to unlock their potential."

He also noted the National Council of Social Services has developed a Sector Evaluation Framework to be rolled out in the coming months.

He said: "The framework will provide organisations and funders with a common language to frame and evaluate outcomes and gives us confidence that the time and resources that we invest will yield the desired social impact."