

Social Empowerment towards a Flourishing Singapore

A White Paper response to
Forward Singapore

July 2024



A SHIFTING LANDSCAPE



Our nation is facing global challenges which include geopolitical upheavals, economic shifts and climate change. On the domestic front, we are grappling with a rapidly ageing population, resource limitations, and challenges in inequality and social mobility. As Singapore reaches an inflection point, the Government is cognisant that effective solutions to these issues will require more than policy changes or the efforts of any single organisation. Instead, it will require the collective efforts of our entire society, including employers, community groups, religious organisations, families and individuals to keep Singapore going.

On the back of these, the 4G leaders launched the Forward Singapore exercise in June 2022 to refresh our social compact and chart a roadmap for the next decade and beyond.

The initiative uncovered the concerns as well as aspirations of Singaporeans. Among the many insights revealed is the evolving perspective towards 'success' or what makes a 'good life', as well as a yearning for meaning and purpose beyond material possessions.

The picture that has emerged is a desire for a society that is vibrant and inclusive, fair and thriving, resilient and united.

FORWARD



**Future Singapore society:
Vibrant and inclusive, Fair and thriving, Resilient and united**

Seven Pillars

1. Embracing Learning Beyond Grades
2. Respecting and Rewarding Every Job
3. Supporting Families through Every Stage
4. Enabling Seniors to Age Well
5. Empowering Those in Need
6. Investing in Our Shared Tomorrow
7. Doing Our Part as One United People

Figure 1: What Singaporeans want our shared future to look like

A roadmap, comprising seven pillars, has been developed to guide the government and everyone in society towards this shared future.

With our roots in social concerns, informed and enriched by our faith, Methodist Welfare Services (MWS) stands ready to be counted in realising the Forward Singapore aspiration.

OUR COMMITMENT

MWS has over the years, served and reached out to the community at large. We set up our first centre in 1981 – an aged home that housed 24 elderly sick. Today, MWS serves over 11,000 families and individuals in need, across various spectrums of society – from the young to the elderly, across all ethnicities and religions, through an integrated range of social and healthcare services. We are committed to building on our capabilities to adapt to changing demands and be at the forefront of service to the people and communities in need.

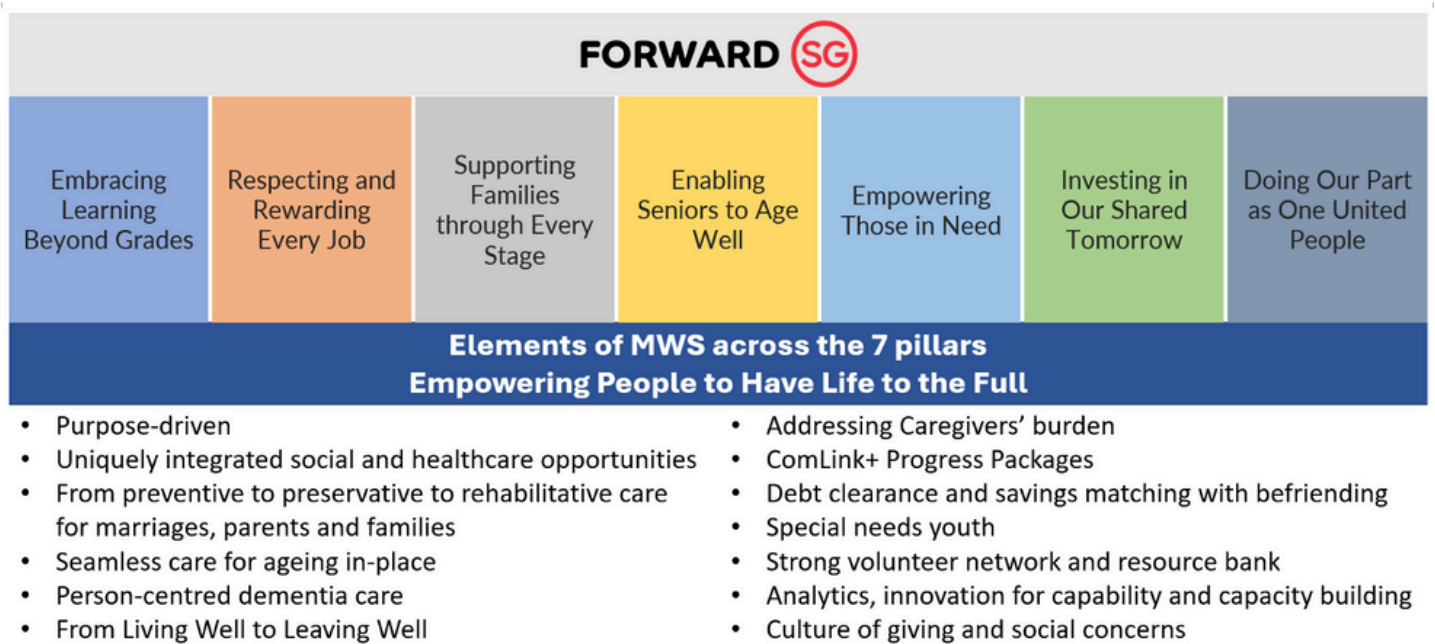


Figure 2: Shifting landscape has changed our aspiration



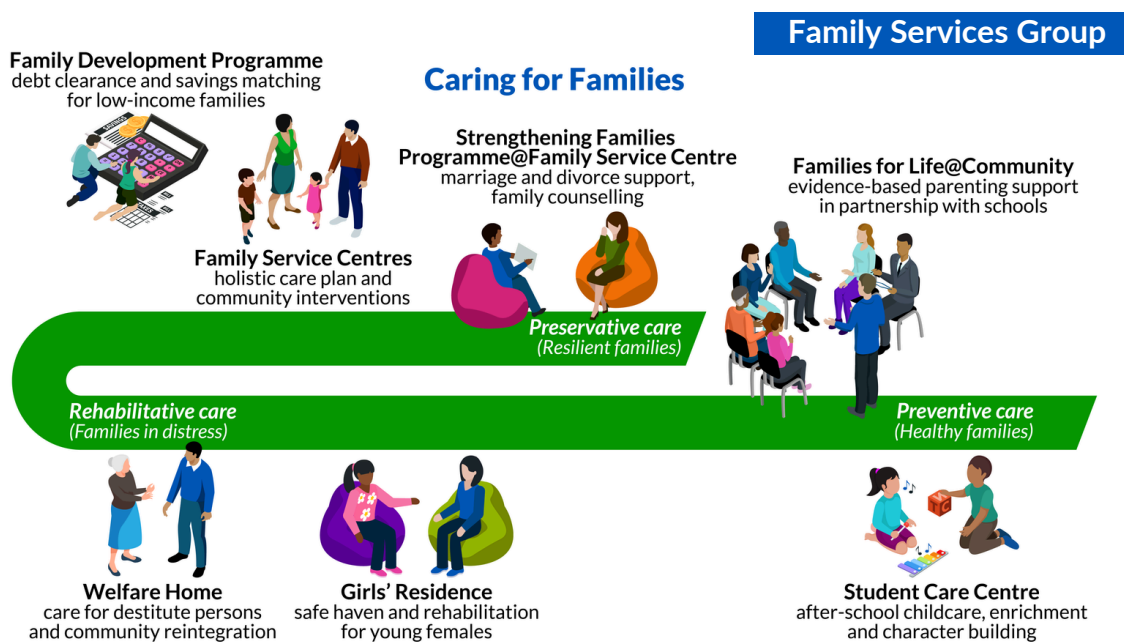
This commitment to build our capabilities and capacity will play out over the next few years in the form of three key thrusts:

1. **Strengthening our reach** in what we are already doing;
2. **Building new capabilities** to address selected needs; and
3. **Creating an ecosystem** of partners through sharing of resources that include talents, best practices and capability development

1/STRENGTHENING OUR REACH

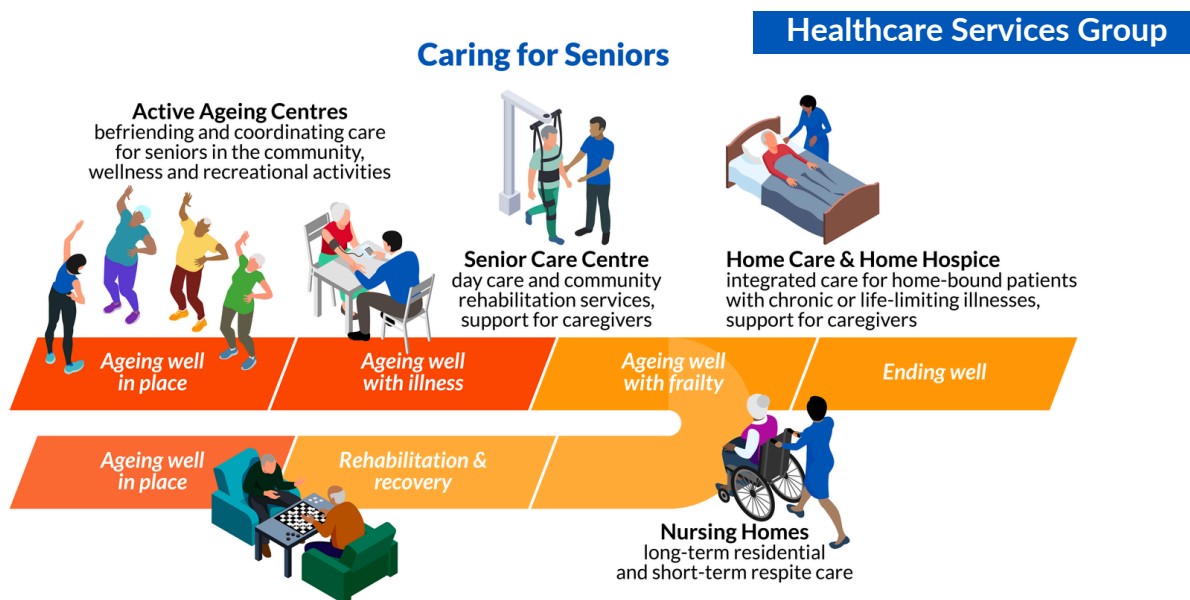
Over the years, MWS has gained experience and cultivated expertise in several of the seven pillars. Today, we are connecting more than 11,000 families and individuals who may be experiencing poverty in different ways, with resources to live fuller lives. Among these, we engaged 5,520 seniors so that they may age well with purpose and dignity, and add quality of life to the best of their years. In addition, MWS journeyed with 5,864 individuals and families in need, to equip them with skills and resources so that they may gain resilience and build strong relationships to live fuller lives. We also provided 115 children and youths with a safe and nurturing community to learn positive values and to develop skills so that they may realise their fullest potential and lead their best lives before them.

More specifically, our **Family Services** support families through every stage – from those seeking an enriching after-school community for their children, to resilient families who are nonetheless experiencing early signs of stress, to those grappling with multiple complex issues.



Among these, a major segment of clients we serve are families and individuals embattled by challenges such as domestic violence, mental health issues or financial distress. We are thankful though, that among the ones we supported with counselling and casework at our Family Service Centres, 97% experienced reduced risk by the time they were discharged from our service.

Over the years, our **Healthcare Services** have expanded beyond nursing homes to include senior day care and rehabilitation, preventive care through active ageing, and an integrated care and hospice service for home-bound patients. We will continue to seek opportunities to set up Active Ageing Hubs and Senior Care Centres. These services enable seniors to age well by catering to ageing needs across the spectrum of frailty.



In addition, MWS’ decades-old tradition of providing pastoral care enables us to attend to client’s needs holistically, regardless of race and religion.

Going Beyond Known Needs



More than meeting identified needs, we have never shied away from supporting people who may have fallen through the cracks of available support systems.

MWS pioneered a financial assistance scheme in 2010 that subsequently evolved into the MWS Family Development Programme in 2016, which helps families accelerate the clearing of debt accumulated from daily living expenses and save towards asset-building. Backed solely by donations without public funding, MWS has been running this with a network of volunteer befrienders who provide emotional support to families grappling with the anxiety and marginalisation of chronic debt. We are thankful that the programme has demonstrated some impact as the government’s recent ComLink+ Progress Packages echoed similar programme principles and elements.

In 2018, we initiated the integration of our home care and home hospice services so that home-bound patients' total physical, emotional and psychosocial needs are facilitated by a single point of contact, and managed by a multi-disciplinary team. We subsequently introduced this service into the neighbourhood of some of our active ageing centres (then senior activity centres) as a means of outreach and care for those who may have fallen off the radar due to senior isolation.

Deepening Impact

Armed with client insights and sector experience and cognisant of the community's growing needs, we will be helping a **new Family Service Centre** in Sengkang West and a **new Nursing Home** in Eunos in 2025.



Extending from our desire to empower all to flourish, MWS, together with Anglo-Chinese School, will also be setting up a **Special Education (SPED) school** in 2026. We will explore granting scholarships to eligible graduates to further their education and enhance their prospects of landing meaningful work, perhaps even contributing back to the social services sector.

2/BUILDING NEW CAPABILITIES

The needs of the society are plenty and will evolve over time. Being positioned to address needs that traverse health and social care enables MWS to deploy best practices and domain expertise across our services.

Centres of Excellence

As Singapore reaches 'super-aged' status in 2026, there will be yet greater need for active ageing support and home palliative care. We will be strengthening our allied health and home-based care and hospice programmes further, including enhancing the protocol on assessing client impact. MWS will work with Institutes of Higher Learning to ensure the programmes are backed by evidence of efficacy. Together with trained professionals, we aim to establish Centres of Excellence that will contribute to growing the sector's capability and providing quality of life for our ageing population.



Data & Analytics for Innovation

Given that resources are limited and finite, it is imperative to prioritise the most critical needs and make sustainable impact. Harvesting data insights through analytics will help us better understand trends and needs, and plug service gaps. We have begun investing towards this with the recent setup of a research, innovation and training unit that leverages data science and analytics to assess and enhance our programmes, as well as pilot new initiatives for better client care. This initiative is part of our drive to build capability and capacity, not just for MWS but to support the sector's growing need for talent.

Indeed, as we have for the last 43 years, MWS is committed to investing our own resources where necessary, partnering the government and community, to strengthen existing safety nets. We look to the public agencies and community partners for support and guidance to realise this, together.

3/CREATING AN ECOSYSTEM

“Many hands make the load lighter”. MWS believes that everyone plays a different role in society, but as a team, we can achieve more together.

As an ecosystem comprising just 600 over staff and under 5,000 volunteers, MWS will continue to actively reach out to like-minded and like-hearted collaborators who wish to advance the goals of Forward Singapore together.



Bank of Volunteer Hours

Leveraging on MWS’ volunteer base and the wider Methodist community, we are exploring raising 1.4 million volunteering hours together over a period of time that can be channelled to other organisations, including smaller charities, matched to volunteers’ desires. With the

additional skills and expertise, and through the facilitation and sharing of best practices, know-how, resources like professional services and facilities, as well as training, we hope to build a stronger social services sector in Singapore.

Resources for Community / Sector Sharing

With the government’s expansion of Families for Life@Community into more towns by end 2024, MWS hopes to support families even more holistically in their marriages and parenting journey. We have developed resources that help children cope with negative emotions or parents’ relationship breakdowns that are now available on MSF Assist and public libraries. In addition, our Befriending Toolkits guide volunteers on engaging with persons struggling with different challenges, such as mental health or chronic illness. Beyond developing more resources for sharing, we welcome partnerships to strengthen our families more holistically in every phase, together.

LOOKING AHEAD: SUMMARY OF INITIATIVES MWS IS COMMITTED TO

As we embark on refreshing the social compact of Singapore, MWS is committed to playing a vital role in realising the Forward Singapore aspiration by initiating the following:

1/ Strengthening Our Reach	2/ Building New Capabilities	3/ Creating an Ecosystem
<p>Set up</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a new Family Service Centre and a third Nursing Home, both slated to open in 2025 a SPED school in 2026 <p>Raise support for programmes that do not yet exist</p>	<p>Establish Centre of Excellence around our allied health and home-based care and hospice programmes</p> <p>Share resources and expertise, backed by evidence of efficacy, with other charities including training of volunteers</p> <p>Contribute to sector capability and capacity development through our Research, Innovation and Training unit</p>	<p>Encourage volunteerism and collaboration, self-sustaining ecosystem</p> <p>Mobilise 1.4 million volunteer hours over a period of time, with Methodist and also the wider Singapore community</p> <p>Create platform to match the charities' needs with volunteers' desires</p>

In embarking on these, we seek guidance from government agencies to ensure our efforts are targeted and effective. We also look forward to collaborating with the various ministries and agencies to strengthen the sector as well as raising the volunteerism rate in Singapore.

As we celebrate SG60 and the 140th founding of The Methodist Church in Singapore in 2025, we look forward to launching these initiatives and being a valuable partner of the Government of Singapore, serving all Singaporeans, regardless of race, language or religion, in a meaningful and distinct manner. Because in Forward Singapore where everyone counts, no one does it alone. Together, let us build a fairer, more inclusive, and thriving society for all.