

**WELCOME ADDRESS BY MR GREGORY VIJAYENDRAN, CHAIRMAN,
NATIONAL COUNCIL OF SOCIAL SERVICE AT THE SOCIAL SERVICE
PROFESSIONAL AWARDS CEREMONY AND DINNER
ON 11 SEPTEMBER 2026, 6.55PM
AT PARKROYAL COLLECTION MARINA BAY**

Introduction

1. Good evening. His Excellency President Tharman Shanmugaratnam, Minister Masagos Zulkifli, distinguished guests, social service professionals, sector partners, ladies and gentlemen.
2. Welcome to the Social Service Professional Awards Ceremony and Dinner 2026. Tonight, we gather to celebrate our secret source: the people behind our social service sector.
3. Every day, across our agencies, communities and institutions, social service professionals walk together with individuals and families through their most vulnerable and trying moments in life. Their work, in love and humility, often happens quietly and away from public attention. Yet through their compassion, dedication and expertise, lives are changed, solutions are shared, communities are strengthened and hope is restored.
4. Tonight, we honour 12 individuals and 2 teams whose contributions exemplify the very best of our sector. In the interests of preserving some suspense for the evening, I shall keep all names strictly under wraps for now.

What Does "Better" Look Like: Unlocking Potential, Driving Innovation, and Building Collaboration

5. On this occasion, let me reflect on what 'better' truly means for our sector.
6. We often speak about creating better outcomes, building better services, strengthening communities and envisioning and enabling a better future for those we serve. But what does "better" really look like? Let me suggest three answers.

Unlocking Potential

7. First, better begins with seeing potential where others may only see need.
8. Among those we honour this evening is someone whose journey reflects the transformative impact of social service itself. As a young person, he once benefited from the sector's support. Years later, in a virtuous cycle, he returned to serve the very community that supported him. He leads an organisation serving vulnerable children and youths.
9. His story reminds us that social service is not only about addressing immediate needs. It is also about investing in future possibilities so they pay it forward. The support extended to one individual can, over time, be multiplied through leadership, service and opportunities to create and catalyse opportunities for many others. That, too, is what better looks like.

Driving Innovation

10. Secondly, better means continually finding new ways to serve people more effectively, efficiently, and sustainably.
11. Among this year's recipients is a team that harnessed AI to reduce administrative demands on practitioners working with children and families, creating more time for meaningful engagement and care.
12. Their work reminds us that innovation in social service is invaluable not merely because it is new, but because it helps strengthen human connection, expand access to support, and allow professionals to focus on what truly matters: the individuals and families they serve.

Building Collaboration

13. And finally, better is often achieved together. The challenges facing families today are complex and interconnected. Addressing them calls for a collective effort. Social workers, counsellors, psychologists, educators, employers and community partners bring different perspectives and skillsets. Together, they can make an impactful difference in the lives of those they serve.

14. The strongest outcomes are often the direct result of the strongest collaboration. This spirit of partnership can be seen across the spread of stories of this year's recipients, and across our sector as a whole.
15. It is a reminder that the most meaningful progress happens not within the boundaries of any single role or organisation, but in the intersectional spaces where we choose to work together.

Strengthening Professional Excellence

16. Across all these stories, one truth stands out. Excellence does not happen by chance. It is intentional. It grows in environments that invest in people, encourage learning, support leadership and create opportunities for innovation and collaboration.
17. At NCSS, our role as sector developer is anchored in a deep conviction. That the quality of support experienced by individuals and families depends greatly on the capabilities, resilience, and leadership of the professionals serving them.
18. We work alongside social service agencies and partners to strengthen capabilities, support professional development, nurture leadership, and build a sector that can respond confidently to evolving needs.
19. So, the awards we present this evening are part and parcel of that commitment. They signal that excellence matters. They recognise those who raise standards and inspire others through their example. To our awardees, you may be shy to receive these awards for doing good. But by doing good well, you are shining a brilliant light to illuminate the paths for others in the sector to do good well.

Conclusion

20. The stories we celebrate tonight are different in many ways — different professions, different communities, different challenges. We cherish and respect them all. Yet these stories are bound by a common thread.
21. Someone chose to step forward. Someone chose to care. Someone chose to serve. And because they did, lives are irrevocably changed for the better.
22. As we honour our award recipients tonight, let us also celebrate the wider community of social service professionals across Singapore. This is also about you. Your dedication, compassion and professionalism uplift numerous lives every day. We sincerely appreciate all your collective efforts.

23. Indeed, better starts with us. “We together”. It starts with the choices we make each day — our commitment to learn, improve, and collaborate, and our willingness to place people at the heart of everything we do. To our award winners, thank you for showing us the way.

24. And through our collective efforts, it lives on in the lives we touch, the communities we strengthen, and the more caring and inclusive Singapore we are building together for the future.

25. Thank you, and I wish everyone a meaningful and enjoyable evening.