

MEDIA RELEASE

12 Exemplary Professionals and 2 Outstanding Teams Recognised in 2026 Social Service Professional Awards

SINGAPORE, 11 SEPTEMBER 2026 – The National Council of Social Service recognised 12 exemplary professionals and two outstanding teams at this year's Social Service Professional Awards.

2 This year's recipients exemplify the very best of Singapore's social service sector. Through visionary leadership, innovation and an unwavering commitment to those they serve, they have expanded opportunities for children, youth, seniors, families and communities in need of support, while strengthening the systems that support them. From pioneering new models of care and rehabilitation to harnessing technology, advancing inclusion and empowering service users to shape solutions, their efforts have improved lives, transformed organisations and driven lasting impact across the sector.

3 Guest-of-Honour, President Tharman Shanmugaratnam, presented the President's Award, the sector's highest honour, to two recipients for their professional excellence, leadership and innovation:

- **Mr Lee Siang**, Chief Executive Officer, Dyslexia Association of Singapore (DAS)
- **Dr Roland Yeow**, Executive Director, Boys' Town

4 Minister Masagos Zulkifi presented the Excellence, Merit and Team awards to recipients who introduced first-of-its-kind programmes, digital tools and community-based models that bring help closer to individuals and families:

Excellence Awards

- **Ms Quek Pearl Ning**, Head (Practice & Services Development), TRANS Family Services
- **Dr Geetha D/O Shantha Ram**, Chief Operating Officer and Director, SpLD Assessment Services, Dyslexia Association of Singapore (DAS)
- **Ms See Toh Huixia**, Director, Family Services, AWWA Ltd
- **Ms Sylvia Liew**, Principal Physiotherapist, NTUC Health Co-Operative Ltd
- **Ms Cheryl Yeo**, Head of Rehabilitation Services, Singapore Association of the Visually Handicapped (SAVH)

Merit Awards

- **Ms Saleha Rashidi**, Head, Rise Above Halfway House, PPIS
- **Mr Gasper Tan**, Chief Executive Officer, New Hope Community Services.
Mr Tan was the Chief Executive Officer of Samaritans of Singapore Ltd (SOS) till March 2026
- **Mr Pramnath Vijaykumar**, Head of Legal Operations, Deputy Director (Community Legal Services), PRO BONO SG
- **Ms Ooi Yinn Shan**, Senior Medical Social Worker / Counsellor (Day Care Service Lead), Assisi Hospice
- **Ms Rachel Lim**, Therapy Head, TOUCH Elderly Group, TOUCH Community Services

Team Awards

- **AWWA Efficiency AI team**, used AI to capture key behavioural descriptors during Early Intervention sessions, freeing up time for direct child engagement.
- **NKF EMPower+ team** pioneered Singapore's first employment programme for dialysis patients, connecting participants with employment opportunities, providing skills training, and educating employers on their needs and capabilities. The programme facilitates about 250 job referrals annually.

5 Further details of the award recipients are outlined in the Annex.

6 "I congratulate all award recipients for illuminating excellence in social service. From combining professional expertise with innovation to better supporting people through increasingly complex challenges. Their exemplary example demonstrates that excellence is not only measured by the care they provide but also by their courage to innovate and commitment to transform service delivery and build stronger systems for the future," said Mr Gregory Vijayendran, Chairman, National Council of Social Service.

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About the National Council of Social Service (NCSS)

NCSS is the sector developer for social services in Singapore. Its mission is to develop a sustainable social service sector that improves quality of life by strengthening social service delivery, building social service sector capabilities and developing a robust social service ecosystem. The Community Chest and Social Service Institute (SSI) are part of NCSS. For more information visit www.ncss.gov.sg.

About the Social Service Professional Awards

Social Service Professional Awards recognise the contributions of dedicated social service professionals (SSPs) in Singapore, including those in the fields of social work, youth work, psychology, counselling, therapy, care work, and corporate services. They comprise four categories:

- **President's Award:** Conferred by the President of the Republic of Singapore. This Award recognises social service professionals, with more than 15 years of experience, who are committed to excellence and innovation, demonstrated outstanding leadership ability, and have made significant contributions to the social service sector. The awardee will receive \$10,000 cash prize, a certificate and a trophy.
- **Excellence Award:** Conferred by the Minister for Social and Family Development. This Award recognises social service professionals, with more than 8 years of experience, who have delivered excellent service, demonstrated strong leadership ability, and achieved notable positive outcomes and impact on the lives of clients and/or the community. The awardee will receive \$5,000 cash prize, a certificate and a trophy.
- **Merit Award:** Conferred by the Minister for Social and Family Development. This award recognises social service professionals, with more than 3 years of experience, who demonstrated potential for leadership development in the profession and have made a difference in the lives of clients and/or the community. The awardee will receive \$1,000 cash prize, a certificate and a trophy.
- **Team Award:** Conferred by the Minister for Social and Family Development. This award recognises team-based efforts that contribute to the improvement of service delivery in the social service sector, focusing on client-centric, cross-profession and cross-agency contributions.

There must be a minimum of 2 individuals per team across at least 2 professions and/or agencies. All nominees in the team must each have more than 3 years of experience in social service at the time of nomination deadline.

The awarded team will receive \$10,000 cash prize and a trophy per team and a certificate for each team member.

Annex

2026 Social Service Professional Award Recipients

President's Award for Social Service Professionals	
S/N	Name
1	Mr Lee Siang, Chief Executive Officer Dyslexia Association of Singapore (DAS) For more than two decades, Lee Siang has worked to reshape support for children with dyslexia and other learning differences. Under his leadership as CEO since 2014, DAS has grown from a small organisation of 20 staff serving 300 children to one serving over 4,000 enrolments across 12 centres today. When he joined DAS in 2001 as Head of Corporate Services, he brought leadership, business and financial experience rather than a traditional education background, later building deep expertise in dyslexia, teaching and specific learning differences, from a multidisciplinary foundation that continues to shape his approach to social service leadership. Beyond scale, Lee Siang has expanded DAS' services to reach students who struggle but do not qualify for a formal diagnosis, including children from care homes, fundamentally broadening who the organisation exists to serve. He has championed evidence-based interventions, ensuring specialist expertise and research remain central to DAS' programmes as needs evolve. Lee Siang's experience indicates there is significant organisational, professional and career growth potential and opportunities in the social service sector. His leadership reflects the diverse capabilities required of today's social service professionals, combining domain expertise, research, technology and collaboration. He believes that as AI creates new possibilities, innovation must ultimately translate into better outcomes for people. Through donor-supported bursaries, DAS also ensures children from lower-income families can access its programmes, reflecting his belief in education as a pathway to social mobility.
2	Dr Roland Yeow, Executive Director Boys' Town Roland's journey with Boys' Town Singapore has come full circle, from a former resident to the Executive Director leading the organisation that once gave him a second chance.

	After leaving Boys' Town, Roland pursued his education at ITE and university, earning an engineering degree before working in technical and training consultancy. He returned as a youth worker in 2004, rising through the ranks to become Executive Director in 2018. His commitment to continuous learning led him to earn a Doctorate in Management specialising in Organisational Learning, Development and Non-Profit Management, and to graduate from the Harvard Business School Executive Education Programme. Under his leadership, Boys' Town has transformed from a traditional residential care provider into a broader continuum of support, expanding into fostering, respite care, youth outreach, adventure therapy and clinical intervention. He introduced structured outcome tracking across 70% of programmes and championed Action/Practice Research to strengthen practice and impact. These efforts have contributed to more than 60% improvement in youth engagement and reintegration outcomes. Roland combines lived experience with professional expertise, research and leadership. Beyond Boys' Town, he mentors social service professionals, contributes to international committees and has supervised over 190 research dissertations. He was awarded the SkillsFuture Fellowship in 2022.
Excellence Award for Social Service Professionals	
3	Ms Quek Pearl Ning, Head (Practice & Services Development) TRANS Family Services Pearl Ning has built her career around a consistent belief: that the people closest to a challenge are best placed to shape its solution. As Practice Lead for Community Development at TRANS Family Services from 2017 to 2023, Pearl designed experiences that put service users and residents in the driver's seat. She founded Golden ConneXion, a senior-led group empowering older residents to improve their living environment and advocate for their own needs, and established the It's KU advisory panel, giving service users a direct channel to shape how Family Service Centre programmes are planned and delivered. She also co-developed a supervision framework for community development practice with fellow practitioners, helping formalise an emerging modality in social work. These same principles now shape how Pearl Ning approaches organisational development in her current role. She designs the processes, platforms and training that help practitioners think critically about their own practice, grow in line with their strengths, and align to a shared organisational direction, ensuring service development carries collective ownership and co-creation.

	At the East Region level, Pearl leads cross-agency work with Thye Hua Kwan Moral Charities, PPIS, Montfort Care, Social Service Office (SSO), Housing Development Board (HDB) and MSF Protective Service (PSV) to build collective wisdom on what needs to shift systemically to improve outcomes for families navigating multiple services at once.
4	Dr Geetha D/O Shantha Ram, Chief Operating Officer and Director, SpLD Assessment Services Dyslexia Association of Singapore (DAS) For over two decades, Geetha has worked at the intersection of education, research and practice, developing pioneering tools and approaches that have fundamentally strengthened how dyslexia intervention is delivered in Singapore. As Chief Operating Officer and Director of SpLD Assessment Services at DAS, Geetha established MAPTrack, Singapore's first curriculum-based assessment tool for dyslexia intervention. Designed to help over 760 educational therapists track student progress, refine teaching methods and build specialist skills, MAPTrack has made intervention at DAS more consistent and sustainable, benefiting over 3,000 students each year. Her innovations are grounded in research-informed practice. Geetha chairs the DAS Research Committee, leads initiatives that connect classroom practice with educational research. Beyond tools and systems, Geetha is a committed mentor, supporting educators to grow their specialist capabilities and championing inclusive education and equity for learners with specific learning differences.
5	Ms See Toh Huixia, Director, Family Services AWWA Ltd With over 20 years in the social service sector, Huixia has strengthened support for lower-income and vulnerable families through applied research, organisational leadership and sector-wide influence. One notable initiative was the Family Empowerment Programme (FEP), Singapore's first randomised controlled trial of unconditional cash transfers for lower-income families. As Director of Family Services, Huixia played a key role in the programme, which provided direct cash support to 75 households and generated evidence to inform social policy and practice, with participants reporting improved psychological well-being and job security compared with a control group. Within AWWA, she chaired the Holistic Care Taskforce, bringing together multidisciplinary professionals to articulate the organisation's holistic care philosophy and strengthen holistic practice across services. She also leads

	the Social Work Practitioners Group (SWPG), which supports capability-building within the social work profession. Recognising the importance of connections beyond individual disciplines, she spearheaded the inaugural Allied Professionals Day, bringing together social workers, therapists, psychologists and nurses to strengthen interdisciplinary learning and collaboration. Beyond AWWA, she co-chairs the Housing Support Network under the Singapore Association of Social Workers (SASW), bringing together practitioners from healthcare, housing, community and government sectors to strengthen responses to housing instability and elevate frontline perspectives in policy and service discussions. Across her career, Huixia has brought together research, practice and leadership to support better outcomes for vulnerable families and foster learning and collaboration across the social service sector.
6	Ms Sylvia Liew, Principal Physiotherapist NTUC Health Co-Operative Ltd With close to two decades of experience in neurological rehabilitation and community health, Sylvia has dedicated her career to bringing quality care closer to the communities that need it most. As the leader of clinical operations at NTUC Health, Sylvia oversees 23 Day Rehabilitation Centres and seven senior gyms, supporting more than 3,000 seniors and caregivers across Singapore. Recognising that access to consistent rehabilitation remains a barrier for many frail seniors, she pioneered a hybrid telerehabilitation pilot in 2025 that reimagined how care could be delivered beyond the clinic walls. By training domestic helpers as digital facilitators, the programme reduced appointment cancellation rates and brought rehabilitation support directly into seniors' homes, achieving a 34% improvement in mobility outcomes for frail seniors. Her commitment to keeping seniors active and independent in the community is also reflected in her establishment of 22 satellite Parkinson's gyms across Singapore, helping those living with the disease maintain their mobility and quality of life closer to home. Sylvia's work demonstrates how thoughtful innovation, when grounded in a genuine understanding of seniors' needs, can transform care delivery at scale. Her approach, combining clinical expertise with community-centred thinking, offers a model for how the sector can continue to strengthen outcomes for an ageing population.

7	Ms Cheryl Yeo, Head of Rehabilitation Services Singapore Association of the Visually Handicapped (SAVH) Cheryl has spent her career expanding access to vision rehabilitation in Singapore, building the infrastructure, partnerships and expertise the sector needs to serve people with visual impairments more effectively. Recognising a critical gap in local specialist training, Cheryl designed and built Singapore's first structured training pathway for orientation and mobility specialists, a discipline that helps individuals with visual impairments navigate their environments safely and independently. She developed the curriculum from the ground up and personally supervised five trainees through the programme, laying the foundation for a sustainable local pipeline of specialists. Her work extends well beyond her own organisation. Cheryl has forged partnerships with healthcare, disability and senior care organisations including the Singapore National Eye Centre, Guide Dogs Singapore and senior care homes, strengthening a coordinated continuum of vision rehabilitation support across sectors. These collaborations reflect her belief that lasting impact requires the whole ecosystem to move together. In 2025, Cheryl convened Singapore's first Vision Rehabilitation Conference, bringing together 30 organisations from four countries and raising \$500,000 to advance the field. The conference signalled Singapore's growing role as a regional reference point for vision rehabilitation practice. Her contributions demonstrate how one practitioner, combining clinical expertise with systems thinking and a drive to build what does not yet exist, can shape an entire field.
Merit Award for Social Service Professionals	
8	Ms Saleha Rashidi, Head, Rise Above Halfway House PPIS Guided by the belief that “mistakes do not define a person”, Saleha’s current phase in her career is dedicated to supporting women with incarceration histories in rebuilding their lives. Saleha leads Rise Above Halfway House, Singapore's first secular female halfway house, which she established from the ground up alongside a seven-member team. The programme provides trauma-informed, gender-responsive care, recognising that women returning from incarceration face distinct challenges that require specialised expertise, sound professional judgement and close collaboration with families and community partners. To date, it has supported over 130 women and their families, achieving a 65% completion rate, and has become a reference point for international learning visits.

	At the heart of her approach is empowerment. Saleha champions practices that help women take ownership of their rehabilitation, rebuild confidence, strengthen family relationships and create pathways towards lasting change. Beyond their own rehabilitation, she hopes to see former residents become advocates, inspiring other women to believe that a better future is possible. Saleha’s work reflects the diverse capabilities required of today's social service professionals, bringing together compassion, professional judgement and evidence-informed practice to provide person-centred support. Her journey demonstrates how skilled practitioners can support individual change while strengthening families, communities and the wider social service sector.
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9	Mr Gasper Tan, Chief Executive Officer New Hope Community Services <i>Gasper was the Chief Executive Officer of Samaritans of Singapore Ltd (SOS) up till March 2026 before taking on his current appointment in New Hope Community Services.</i> Gasper transformed Samaritans of Singapore (SOS) from a traditional 24-hour hotline into a multi-platform crisis support and intervention ecosystem, offering various ways people can seek help. In 2020, Gasper led the launch of CareText, providing crisis support through text messaging alongside SOS's hotline. The move proved transformative. CareText now handles over 19,000 chats annually and has become the primary help-seeking channel for nearly 80% of young people engaging SOS services, reflecting a shift in how individuals reach out for support in their most vulnerable moments. Recognising that crisis support must go beyond the immediate moment, Gasper championed SOS's development of NEST in 2025 in collaboration with the national youth mental health initiative led by the National Mental Health Office, Ministry of Health (MOH). Through this multi-agency partnership, NEST will be SOS's first dedicated youth crisis facility, providing a community-based model of care that support young people navigate recovery, build resilience, and access ongoing support and strengthening Singapore's youth mental health ecosystem. His leadership demonstrates how social service organisations can evolve with the communities they serve, combining innovation with clinical rigour to ensure no one is left without support.
10	Mr Pramnath Vijaykumar, Head of Legal Operations, Deputy Director (Community Legal Services) PRO BONO SG Pramnath is dedicated to closing the gap between people who need legal help and those who are able to get it, building and running service models that make justice more reachable for vulnerable communities. He currently supports the implementation of Singapore's first Community Law University Hospital, a model conceived at Pro Bono SG that adapts healthcare practice to legal services. Working from that design, Pramnath is responsible for translating it into working operations: triaging cases by urgency, assembling multidisciplinary legal teams around each client's needs, and building the workflows that allow the model to deliver structure, efficiency and depth at scale. His work reflects a shared conviction that legal support, like healthcare, must be organised around the person seeking help rather than around the institution providing it.

	This commitment extends across communities. Pramnath launched the Migrant Workers' Law Centre @ MWC, which supported more than 800 workers in its first year, providing timely assistance to one of Singapore's most underserved populations. He also co-designed a mobile Inclusive Justice Law Centre, taking legal services directly to caregivers and persons with invisible disabilities who face significant barriers to reaching conventional legal help. Taken together, these initiatives reflect a practitioner who pairs legal expertise with systems thinking and empathy, and who asks not only how to deliver services but how to redesign them so that no one is left behind.
11	Ms Ooi Yinn Shan, Senior Medical Social Worker / Counsellor (Day Care Service Lead) Assisi Hospice With over 18 years of experience in the healthcare sector across nursing, medical social work and counselling, Yinn Shan believes in a holistic approach to care that extends beyond physical symptoms and encompasses psychological, social, and spiritual dimensions. In her five years as a medical social worker and counsellor at Assisi Hospice, Yinn Shan has supported patients with life-limiting illnesses and their families, helping them navigate some of life's most challenging moments. A patient who left a lasting impression on her was 92-year-old Mdm C, who was diagnosed with heart disease and experienced recurrent chest pain. Through careful conversations, Yinn Shan uncovered a traumatic childhood memory - Mdm C had witnessed her brother's death during World War II. This previously undisclosed trauma helped the care team better understand the emotional and psychological dimensions of her distress. The team was better able to manage her recurrent chest pain, resulting in fewer hospital readmissions. As a grief counsellor, Yinn Shan provides bereavement counselling to individuals navigating grief and adjusting to life after the loss of a loved one. She also facilitates support groups that address the emotional, psychological and practical challenges of bereavement, as well as Grief Cafés, where participants come together in a compassionate and non-judgmental environment to share their stories, emotions and experiences. Beyond her counselling work, Yinn Shan has co-authored a book on grief stories and contributed to research on home palliative care in Singapore. Whether supporting a patient approaching the end of life or a family navigating grief, she seeks to bring dignity, compassion, and meaningful human connection to those she serves.

12	Ms Rachel Lim, Therapy Head, TOUCH Elderly Group TOUCH Community Services Rachel combines her expertise in occupational therapy and gerontology to design programmes that place seniors' own goals at the centre of their care. In 2022, she spearheaded Singapore's first Reablement Programme, a landmark initiative that supported 158 seniors over three years in regaining the skills and confidence needed for daily living. 96.7% of participants in the programme achieved at least one personal goal, reflecting both the rigour of the programme and the depth of its person-centred approach. Rachel also expanded the Safe Home Scheme, which has benefited over 1,000 seniors through home modifications and targeted fall prevention strategies, bringing practical safety support directly into the environments where seniors live. Together with her team, their efforts reflect a broader vision for eldercare, one that seeks to actively enables seniors to thrive.
Team Award	
13	AWWA Efficiency AI team Team members: • Mr Ramachandran Ashokkumar (Therapy Head, AWWA Ltd) • Ms Rajeswari Ilanko (Lead EI Educator, AWWA Ltd) • Ms Wong Pei Yi (Senior Early Intervention Educator, AWWA Ltd) • Ms Huey Li Tee (Assistant Manager, Business Applications, AWWA Ltd) Early Intervention practitioners face a challenge that is as persistent as it is demanding to accurately documenting children's behavioural outcomes while managing heavy caseloads and staying fully present during sessions. The AWWA Efficiency AI team set out to change that. The team developed an AI-powered documentation system designed specifically for Early Intervention settings, using AI to capture key behavioural descriptors during sessions in real time. By reducing reliance on manual, memory-based records, the system strengthens the accuracy of documentation, improves intervention planning and boosts staff confidence in tracking each child's progress over time. By freeing up practitioner time previously spent on administrative tasks, the solution creates more space for direct child engagement, intervention planning and caregiver coaching — the work that matters most. It also supports workforce sustainability in a sector where burnout and high caseloads remain ongoing concerns.

	This initiative in Early Intervention is a meaningful step towards stronger outcomes for children and the practitioners who support them.
14	NKF EMPower+ team Team members: • Mr Mohamed Naser Bin Zainol (Principal Social Worker, The National Kidney Foundation) • Mr Srikanthan s/o Rajagopalan (Senior Programme Lead, The National Kidney Foundation) • Ms Jasmine Koh (Programme Lead, The National Kidney Foundation) • Ms Tiffany Yong (Programme Lead, The National Kidney Foundation) The National Kidney Foundation's EMPower+ programme is Singapore's first employment programme for dialysis patients. It helps patients overcome barriers to employment that can make it challenging for them to remain in or return to the workforce. Haemodialysis typically requires three four-hour treatment sessions per week, often during standard working hours. Combined with disease- and treatment-related fatigue, nausea, and other side effects, this can make it challenging for some patients to seek or maintain employment. Those who are employed may also face persistent stigma from employers and co-workers, who may perceive them as unfit, unreliable or unsafe, despite evidence that many dialysis patients can work effectively with reasonable workplace accommodations. EMPower+ takes a holistic approach to addressing these challenges. The programme educates employers about the needs and capabilities of dialysis patients, connects patients with suitable employment opportunities, and provides skills training to help them enter or re-enter the workforce. Initiatives under EMPower+ include the Kaki Corner programme, which equips patients with practical food and beverage industry skills and work experience while creating pathways to employment with industry partners. Another initiative, made possible through a collaboration with social enterprise The Social Equity, provides a job portal accessible to dialysis patients and job fairs specifically for them. These job fairs bring together employers who have been oriented by the EMPower+ team on the needs and capabilities of dialysis patients. Through EMPower+, more than 2,000 employers have been reached, while about 250 job referrals are facilitated annually through Kaki Corner, the job portal and job fairs. Beyond helping patients secure employment, the programme aims to restore their confidence, independence and sense of purpose. The impact of the programme also extends to patients' overall well-being. A comparison of Kidney Disease Quality of Life (KDQOL) survey results in July 2024 and June 2025 found that patients who participated in the

	EMPower+ programme experienced improvements of more than 7% in the mental health and burden of kidney disease domains. These domains measure emotional well-being and the extent to which kidney disease interferes with daily life, respectively. The KDQOL is a patient-reported outcome measure that assesses the quality of life of people on dialysis. These findings suggest that the benefits of EMPower+ extend beyond employment, with meaningful work potentially contributing to improvements in patients' overall quality of life.
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