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**Coalition Report to 27th session, United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)**

**About this Report**

**Coalition of organisations serving persons with disabilities**

This Coalition Report is presented by a coalition of social service organisations (SSOs) from Singapore which serve and represent persons with disabilities in Singapore.

**Aims and Research**

This Report is based on a research study conducted by the coalition in collaboration with the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS), an autonomous research centre of the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy at the National University of Singapore. The study primarily aimed at highlighting the progress made in the Singapore disability sector particularly in facilitating greater social inclusion and care of persons with disabilities. It also identified possibilities to bridge gaps and address needs in the sector including insights into needs and gaps brought about by COVID-19.

**Approach and Methodology**

The Report includes a review of policies and services for persons with disabilities in Singapore as at May 2022, including progress made in the past decade. It also identifies the needs and gaps of persons with disabilities and the Singapore’s disability sector through qualitative research, i.e. surveys, focus group discussions (FGDs) and in-depth interviews with persons with disabilities.

IPS and the coalition recruited a mix of all key stakeholder groups in Singapore’s disability sector to participate in the FGDs. Themes such as i) education, ii) employment, iii) caregiving, iv) living independently, and v) being part of the community were covered.

**Recommendations**

The Report concludes with recommendations for fine-tuning disability service provision in Singapore across the disability sector.

July 2022

**About the Coalition**

The Coalition group comprise the following SSOs:

Established in 1976, **APSN** is a social service agency that provides special education, vocational training and employment support services for individuals with mild intellectual disability. The APSN Schools and Centres adopt a holistic approach in its curriculum, comprising academic, vocational and social skills, which are important for open employment and lifelong learning. APSN seeks to enable persons with special needs to be active contributors of the society and is committed to inspire and build capabilities of its partners and community to lead and advocate an inclusive society.

**AWWA** is a social service agency which seeks to empower and maximise the potential of the disadvantaged to lead independent and dignified lives through the delivery of a wide range of programmes and services. These include early intervention for pre-schoolers, education and integration support for children and adults with additional needs, social assistance for vulnerable families, and care services for seniors.

At **Rainbow Centre**, we envision a world where persons with disabilities are empowered and thriving in inclusive communities.  Central to this vision is our quality of life framework- the Good Life, a person centred care planning approach and the activation of communities. Since starting its first programme in 1989, Rainbow Centre has grown its services to include early intervention programmes, special education schools, out of school hours care and enrichment services, community based services for adults, caregiver support services and a training and consultancy centre for sector capability building.

Established in 1964, **SPD** is one of the largest disability-focused charity in Singapore that seeks to enable people with disabilities of all ages to be independent and self-reliant.  Today, the pioneer in serving people with physical disabilities also provides a range of rehabilitation and care support that centres on therapy, early intervention, employment, vocational training and assistive technology to help people with different disabilities participate in school, work and daily life within mainstream society.

The website links for the Coalition members:

<https://www.awwa.org.sg/>

<https://www.apsn.org.sg/>

<https://www.rainbowcentre.org.sg/>

<https://www.spd.org.sg/>

The website link for IPS:

 <https://lkyspp.nus.edu.sg/ips/>

**Coalition Report by**

***APSN, AWWA, Rainbow Centre and SPD***

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**The Progress, Needs and Gaps**

**of the Disability Sector**

**in Singapore**

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# Section 1: Introduction

## Aims and Objectives

This report identifies possibilities to bridge gaps and address needs in Singapore’s disability sector against the progress made. Based on policy reviews and original qualitative and quantitative research,[[1]](#footnote-2) the findings and recommendations detailed herein strive to encourage discourse within Singapore’s disability community and help chart the next steps for planning policies, schemes and services for PWDs, caregivers and other stakeholders. Wherever relevant, references are made to the principles[[2]](#footnote-3) encapsulated by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD).

This research seeks to achieve more comprehensive and holistic service delivery by the Government, social service agencies and private sectors in their integral roles of serving and supporting PWDs.

# Section 2: Overview of Disability Service Provision in Singapore

## [2.1] Introduction and Historical Overview

From piecemeal post-War relief to a dedicated government project allocated millions in annual funds,[[3]](#footnote-4),[[4]](#footnote-5),[[5]](#footnote-6),[[6]](#footnote-7) disability service provision in Singapore has transformed since its beginnings in the 1940s.[[7]](#footnote-8),[[8]](#footnote-9) Throughout the decades, disability services have been remodelled repeatedly. Noteworthy developments include the establishment of the Social Welfare Department (SWD) in the 1940s,[[9]](#footnote-10),[[10]](#footnote-11) the installation of the Singapore Council of Social Service (SCSS) — now National Council of Social Service (NCSS) — in the 1950s,[[11]](#footnote-12) the evolution of the global rights movement in the 1970s,[[12]](#footnote-13) and the founding of the Community Chest of Singapore in the 1980s.[[13]](#footnote-14),[[14]](#footnote-15),[[15]](#footnote-16) 1988, in particular, saw direct involvement of the Ministry of Education (MOE) in the provision of special education.[[16]](#footnote-17),[[17]](#footnote-18) Subsequent decades witnessed general expansion of government intervention in disability service provision in Singapore.

In his 2004 swearing-in speech, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong formally committed to building an inclusive society for all Singaporeans, “young and old, disabled and able-bodied”[[18]](#footnote-19) alike.[[19]](#footnote-20) This commitment manifested in Singapore’s first ‘Enabling Masterplan’ in 2007, a pioneering five-year “national roadmap to help integrate disabled people into society”.[[20]](#footnote-21),[[21]](#footnote-22) As the cornerstone of government policy on disability,[[22]](#footnote-23) the first Enabling Masterplan articulates the state’s definition of PWDs as:

…those whose prospects of securing, retaining places and advancing in education and training institutions, employment and recreation as equal members of the community are substantially reduced as a result of physical, sensory, intellectual and developmental impairments.[[23]](#footnote-24)

This definition and its application in Singapore are based on a medical and socio-functional approach to disability.[[24]](#footnote-25) In adopting “the medical criteria as the base, and build[ing] on top of that, an examination of the socio-functional limitations”[[25]](#footnote-26) preventing PWDs’ full participation in society, this definition has been regarded as “multi-faceted”.[[26]](#footnote-27) While regularly reviewed by the state, this definition was used in the second (2012–2016) and third (2017–2021) Enabling Masterplans, and remains in force today.[[27]](#footnote-28),[[28]](#footnote-29),[[29]](#footnote-30) In 2013, Singapore ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD) and designed the third and most recent Masterplan to serve as Singapore’s action plan for progressively implementing the UN CRPD.[[30]](#footnote-31),[[31]](#footnote-32) To consolidate efforts, SG Enable — a dedicated agency overseeing matters in the disability sector — was instituted in 2013.[[32]](#footnote-33),[[33]](#footnote-34),[[34]](#footnote-35)

 However, the lack of an official census of PWDs limited the development of Singapore’s disability sector.[[35]](#footnote-36),[[36]](#footnote-37),[[37]](#footnote-38),[[38]](#footnote-39),[[39]](#footnote-40) In 2020, the government addressed this by including disability-related statistics in the national population census for the first time.[[40]](#footnote-41),[[41]](#footnote-42),[[42]](#footnote-43) Previously, the most up-to-date estimates of the prevalence of disability were based on a nationally representative survey by NCSS in 2015.[[43]](#footnote-44),[[44]](#footnote-45) Based on a random sampling of 2,000 Singaporean citizens and permanent residents (PRs) aged 18 and above, the self-reported prevalence rate of PWDs was 3.4% of those aged 18–49 years and 13.3% of those aged 50 years and above.[[45]](#footnote-46) Meanwhile, as cited in a 2017 report on PWDs’ quality of life, MOE estimates that 2.1% of the student population had disabilities.[[46]](#footnote-47),[[47]](#footnote-48)

In the 2020 census, respondents were not asked to indicate if they had a disability. Instead, they were asked to indicate how well they could perform basic activities across six domains: (a) seeing, (b) hearing, (c) remembering, (d) self-care, (e) communicating or (f) moving around.[[48]](#footnote-49),[[49]](#footnote-50) Singapore’s Department of Statistics (DOS) stated that the Washington Group on Disability Statistics’ recommended set of questions allows the government to identify all those who experience such difficulties, even if they are not formally diagnosed with a disability.[[50]](#footnote-51) Overall, 2.5% of Singapore’s resident population aged 5 and older in 2020 were unable to perform, or had a lot of difficulty performing, at least one basic activity.[[51]](#footnote-52) This figure excludes those with learning difficulties like dyslexia who are able to perform the specified activities.[[52]](#footnote-53) While Singapore’s journey towards inclusion is a work-in-progress, the government has adopted a “life-course approach”[[53]](#footnote-54) to disability service provision, covering “early pre-school years, education, and employment, [to] the adult and ageing years”[[54]](#footnote-55) with the goal of making Singapore an inclusive home for PWDs throughout life.[[55]](#footnote-56)

## [2.2] Early Detection, Intervention and Pre-School Education: Infants, Toddlers and Young Children with Developmental Needs (0 – 6 years)

Early detection and intervention services play key roles in maximising developmental potential during the critical period of infancy and early childhood.[[56]](#footnote-57),[[57]](#footnote-58) With regard to early detection, the government’s partnership with KK Women’s and Children’s Hospital (KKH) allows for timely screening of babies at high risk of developmental delays.[[58]](#footnote-59),[[59]](#footnote-60),[[60]](#footnote-61) The Department of Child Development (DCD) at KKH and Child Development Unit (CDU) at the National University Hospital (NUH) assess and diagnose developmental delays.[[61]](#footnote-62) These organisations refer infants or young children in need of early intervention (EI) to the most appropriate services for follow-up care.[[62]](#footnote-63),[[63]](#footnote-64),[[64]](#footnote-65),[[65]](#footnote-66) Other touchpoints providing detection and referral services include Child Guidance Clinics,[[66]](#footnote-67) preschool educators[[67]](#footnote-68) and developmental screening assessments provided by family doctors, polyclinic doctors and pediatricians.[[68]](#footnote-69),[[69]](#footnote-70) Parents are also empowered to identify and flag developmental delays through child health booklets and resource kits provided by the government.[[70]](#footnote-71),[[71]](#footnote-72)

Currently, 21 EI centres run by selected Social Service Agencies (SSAs)[[72]](#footnote-73) and 10 run by private organisations offer government-funded EI services.[[73]](#footnote-74),[[74]](#footnote-75),[[75]](#footnote-76),[[76]](#footnote-77) Caregivers sampled in this study noted that the increased number of EI centres made it progressively easier to access services.[[77]](#footnote-78) Presently, EI services support children with developmental needs[[78]](#footnote-79) in preschool settings (via the *Development Support (DS) and Learning Support (LS) Programme* and the *Integrated Child Care Programme (ICCP)*) and in dedicated EI Centres (via the *Early Intervention Programme for Infants and Children (EIPIC) Programme* and the *Enhanced Pilot for Private Intervention Providers (Enhanced PPIP) Programme*).[[79]](#footnote-80),[[80]](#footnote-81),[[81]](#footnote-82),[[82]](#footnote-83) In July 2019, two programmes — the *EIPIC Under-2s Programme* and the *DS-Plus Programme* — were added to offer more tailored intervention to children with varying developmental needs.[[83]](#footnote-84),[[84]](#footnote-85),[[85]](#footnote-86)

Professionals sampled in this study cited advancements in the provision of EI services, specifically:[[86]](#footnote-87)

1. higher funding for EIPIC programmes;
2. greater range of EIPIC services;

(b) better customisation of EI services;

(c) greater involvement of caregivers in EI service provision;

(d) stronger focus on building developmental skills;

(e) earlier diagnoses and intervention;

(f) improved tracking of children’s developmental milestones;

(g) more meaningful assessment of children’s overall development, and

(h) greater standardisation in quality of EI services across EIPIC centres.

All Singaporean children requiring EI services are eligible for means-tested government subsidies.[[87]](#footnote-88),[[88]](#footnote-89),[[89]](#footnote-90) In 2019, EI programme fees were reduced for most income groups by 30% to 70% on average.[[90]](#footnote-91),[[91]](#footnote-92) According to focus group respondents, fee reductions were especially beneficial for middle-income families, who are eligible for fewer government subsidies than low-income families.[[92]](#footnote-93) Since July 2019, EI and pre-school services have started consolidation under the purview of Early Childhood Development Agency (ECDA) to allow children with developmental needs to benefit from more coordinated preschool education.[[93]](#footnote-94) This was well-received by focus group respondents, who reiterated the importance of early streamlined preschool education for children with developmental needs.

Furthermore, inclusive pre-schools provide avenues for students with and without developmental needs to interact with each other.[[94]](#footnote-95),[[95]](#footnote-96),[[96]](#footnote-97) In 2019, a workgroup involving public and private sectors was tasked to find better ways to support children with moderate to severe developmental needs in mainstream preschools.[[97]](#footnote-98),[[98]](#footnote-99),[[99]](#footnote-100) In 2021, the workgroup released 7 recommendations for greater inclusion in preschools and to enhance support for children with developmental needs.[[100]](#footnote-101),[[101]](#footnote-102) Notable recommendations include:

(a) the development of an Inclusive Support Programme (InSP)[[102]](#footnote-103) to integrate early childhood and early intervention services at preschools,

(b) enhancements to pre-service training and professional development, and

(c) suggestions to strengthen screenings, referrals and parent education.[[103]](#footnote-104)

The government supported these recommendations and is working towards full implementation, with InSP piloted at 7 pre-schools as of June 2022.[[104]](#footnote-105),[[105]](#footnote-106)

While much was done to develop the EI sector over the past 20 years, challenges are emerging. In a 2018 survey of 423 EI professionals, a significant proportion reported quick burnouts (51%), unattractive salary and benefits (44%), and shortages in manpower (34%).[[106]](#footnote-107),[[107]](#footnote-108) 76% of respondents planned to remain in the EI sector for three years or more, while 63% indicated satisfaction with their current work situation.[[108]](#footnote-109),[[109]](#footnote-110) A majority of the surveyed professionals felt that the provision of an inclusive preschool education is obstructed by insufficient resources (66%), deficiencies in the training of mainstream teachers (58%) and an education system that highly emphasises standardised testing (58%).[[110]](#footnote-111),[[111]](#footnote-112) These limitations were pertinent, despite almost all respondents acknowledging the considerable progress of the EI sector over the past decade (92%).[[112]](#footnote-113),[[113]](#footnote-114)

Ongoing efforts to address identified issues include: reviewing the Skills Framework for Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), developing a Continuing Professional Development Roadmap for EC educators[[114]](#footnote-115),[[115]](#footnote-116) and introducing a professional development roadmap to enhance special educational needs (SEN) training for all educators in mainstream schools.[[116]](#footnote-117),[[117]](#footnote-118) These measures aim to develop educators’ skills further and enhance career progression. Professionals sampled in this study commended the introduction of mandatory teacher training for EIPIC (and Special Education) staff employed in EI sector. Additionally, more is done to improve human resource management capabilities of SSAs and tackle staff burnout.[[118]](#footnote-119),[[119]](#footnote-120) Recently, the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) announced that nearly 1,000 job opportunities in the early childhood sector were created to address the strong demand for early childhood-related professionals.[[120]](#footnote-121),[[121]](#footnote-122) Going forward, continued efforts to address existing gaps are critical for the further development of EI sector.

## [2.3] Education: Children, Teenagers and Young Adults with Disabilities (7 to 21 years)

Developing an inclusive education system is fundamental to the successful establishment of an inclusive society.[[122]](#footnote-123) An encouraging step is the 2018 amendment of Singapore’s Compulsory Education Act, making it compulsory for all children with disabilities to receive at least primary school-level education either in mainstream or SPED schools, with effect from the 2019 Primary 1 cohort.[[123]](#footnote-124),[[124]](#footnote-125) The amendment received support from most respondents sampled; professionals especially felt that it became harder for children with disabilities to fall through the cracks of the education system.[[125]](#footnote-126) Upon completing their pre-school education, children with special educational needs who can access the national curriculum and learn in large group settings receive support to continue their primary and secondary education in mainstream schools.[[126]](#footnote-127),[[127]](#footnote-128) Children requiring a more customised and individualised approach to learning attend one of Singapore’s 22 government-funded Special Education (SPED) schools run by SSAs.[[128]](#footnote-129),[[129]](#footnote-130) The per capita grant for each child attending SPED schools is significantly higher than those in mainstream schools, because the former caters specifically to children with varying needs.[[130]](#footnote-131),[[131]](#footnote-132),[[132]](#footnote-133),[[133]](#footnote-134) Several caregivers sampled in this study commended the establishment of more SPED schools in the last decade.[[134]](#footnote-135)

At post-secondary level, students with disabilities may apply for enrolment into mainstream tertiary institutions.[[135]](#footnote-136),[[136]](#footnote-137) Those with moderate to severe special educational needs may apply to SPED schools which offer vocational training programmes and receive nationally-accredited certifications.[[137]](#footnote-138),[[138]](#footnote-139),[[139]](#footnote-140) Professionals sampled in this study praised the introduction of Workforce Skills Qualification (WSQ) for students on the vocational training track at selected SPED schools[[140]](#footnote-141). For SPED students who do not qualify for vocational certification programmes but are capable of work, the School-to-Work (S2W) Transition Programme[[141]](#footnote-142) provides customised job training and support for up to one year after graduation.[[142]](#footnote-143),[[143]](#footnote-144),[[144]](#footnote-145) SG Enable’s Job Shadowing Day provides exposure through day-long job attachments.[[145]](#footnote-146),[[146]](#footnote-147)

 In recent years, demand for autism-focused schools has increased due to greater awareness of autism amongst parents and improved diagnoses.[[147]](#footnote-148),[[148]](#footnote-149) To meet this demand, three autism-focused SPED schools will be established from 2019 onwards.[[149]](#footnote-150),[[150]](#footnote-151) For existing SPED schools, current areas of focus include expanding curriculum customisation and support, strengthening educators’ capability and facilitating greater inter-school collaboration.[[151]](#footnote-152),[[152]](#footnote-153) Professionals participating in this study commended:[[153]](#footnote-154),[[154]](#footnote-155),[[155]](#footnote-156)

1. the increased funding allocated to SPED programmes;
2. the common curriculum framework for all SPED schools;
3. efforts to work with schools to review and enhance the school-based curriculum;
4. the curriculum’s emphasis on a person-centered approach;
5. the contributions of assistive technologies — in the form of communication devices such as augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) tools, interactive bots and cognitive games — in SPED classrooms and therapy settings;
6. the mandatory training of SPED educators;
7. the placement of Transition Coordinators at SPED schools, to ease the transition of children with disabilities to post-SPED;
8. the introduction of selected National Institute of Education (NIE) courses open to SPED teachers; and
9. moves to increase remuneration of SPED teachers.

Some caregivers recruited in this study welcomed the introduction of vocational, social and life skills into the SPED curriculum, expressing hope that this would help PWDs to secure employment and live more independently after graduation.[[156]](#footnote-157)

To make SPED for Singapore Citizens more affordable, MOE has worked with social service agencies to introduce subsidy schemes[[157]](#footnote-158) and reduce monthly school fees.[[158]](#footnote-159) Six Special Student-care Centres (SSCCs) also provide subsidised before- and after- school care services for PWDs aged seven to 18.[[159]](#footnote-160),[[160]](#footnote-161) In 2020, the eligibility criteria for SSCC subsidies was expanded to allow more families to qualify for financial assistance.[[161]](#footnote-162),[[162]](#footnote-163) Average fees payable by most families were reduced by 30% to 80%.[[163]](#footnote-164),[[164]](#footnote-165)

 With regard to policies on primary and secondary school, MOE has strengthened support for the rising numbers of students with special educational needs enrolled in mainstream schools through specialised learning support programmes[[165]](#footnote-166),[[166]](#footnote-167),[[167]](#footnote-168),[[168]](#footnote-169) and various school-based interventions.[[169]](#footnote-170),[[170]](#footnote-171),[[171]](#footnote-172) Teachers trained in SPED are posted to mainstream schools to support students with special educational needs.[[172]](#footnote-173),[[173]](#footnote-174),[[174]](#footnote-175),[[175]](#footnote-176) Children with visual impairment, hearing loss and/or physical impairments access school-based itinerant support services, and assistive technologies to facilitate their learning in mainstream environments.[[176]](#footnote-177),[[177]](#footnote-178) These measures are well-received by disability sector professionals consulted in the study, who lauded:[[178]](#footnote-179),[[179]](#footnote-180),[[180]](#footnote-181)

1. the availability of trained staff to support students with special needs at primary, secondary and tertiary levels (Special Education Needs (SEN) Officers, previously called Allied Educators for Learning and Behavioural Support or AEDs (LBS))[[181]](#footnote-182),[[182]](#footnote-183);
2. the introduction of selected NIE courses on special education open to mainstream teachers (and SPED teachers);
3. the provision of added curriculum support or case-by-case exemptions for students with disabilities, and
4. technological adaptations that enable students with disabilities to integrate more smoothly into mainstream education.

To expand access to educational arts and culture activities[[183]](#footnote-184), a sensory-friendly series of theatre productions[[184]](#footnote-185) was introduced and a sensory room in the National Museum of Singapore was installed.[[185]](#footnote-186),[[186]](#footnote-187) Plans have been made to institute Quiet Thursdays in the Museum.[[187]](#footnote-188),[[188]](#footnote-189)

SG Enable also partners with Institutes of Higher Learning (IHLs) to match tertiary students with disabilities to suitable internship and mentorship opportunities.[[189]](#footnote-190),[[190]](#footnote-191),[[191]](#footnote-192) SEN Support Offices in all publicly-funded IHL support students with special educational needs at post-secondary and university levels.[[192]](#footnote-193),[[193]](#footnote-194),[[194]](#footnote-195). It was suggested that such resources should be made available to privately-funded IHLs and part-time IHL students, going forward.[[195]](#footnote-196) PWDs and caregivers sampled in this study commended:[[196]](#footnote-197),[[197]](#footnote-198),[[198]](#footnote-199)

1. the availability of note-taking and interpretation services for students who are deaf/hard-of-hearing;
2. the availability of note-taking and scribe services for students with visual impairments;
3. the provision of specialised support for students with SEN more generally through the allocation of staff specialising in SEN support;
4. the availability of assistive technologies for education purposes; and
5. moves to create internship opportunities for students with disabilities.

Singapore’s mainstream primary, secondary and post-secondary schools are being built or upgraded to feature barrier-free accessibility.[[199]](#footnote-200),[[200]](#footnote-201),[[201]](#footnote-202) Other than initiatives targeting physical barriers to inclusion, efforts are made to eradicate social barriers through a variety of programmes promoting purposeful interaction between children with and without disabilities from young[[202]](#footnote-203). These include MOE’s Satellite Partnership Programme (targeting students from mainstream and SPED schools)[[203]](#footnote-204),[[204]](#footnote-205),[[205]](#footnote-206) and a wide range of dedicated play facilities and activities.[[206]](#footnote-207),[[207]](#footnote-208),[[208]](#footnote-209),[[209]](#footnote-210),[[210]](#footnote-211),[[211]](#footnote-212),[[212]](#footnote-213),[[213]](#footnote-214) Specifically, the installation of inclusive playground was acknowledged by focus group respondents as a good development.[[214]](#footnote-215) Professionals expressed their hopes for all playgrounds to be progressively upgraded to be inclusive, instead of establishing inclusive playgrounds separately.[[215]](#footnote-216)

Earlier feedback sought from SPED school leaders and parents of students with SENs indicated that more could be done to improve educators’ skills (in mainstream and SPED settings) and better equip them with teaching resources.[[216]](#footnote-217),[[217]](#footnote-218) MOE has addressed this by crafting a professional development roadmap for the systematic development of mainstream educators’ competencies in supporting SENs.[[218]](#footnote-219),[[219]](#footnote-220) Meanwhile, high staff turnover rates and considerable variation in curricula led to noticeable differences in the quality of teaching within and between SPED schools.[[220]](#footnote-221),[[221]](#footnote-222) Some parents surveyed by the government expressed frustration over long waiting lists for SPED schools.[[222]](#footnote-223),[[223]](#footnote-224),[[224]](#footnote-225) While MOE clarified that “parents [themselves] contribute to longer wait lists and waiting times for admission by fixating on a single [SPED] school”[[225]](#footnote-226), the variations in quality of education reported across SPED schools suggest that further action is needed before parents may be persuaded to consider alternatives.

Meanwhile, respondents in this study recommended adjustments to the student-to-teacher ratios in mainstream[[226]](#footnote-227) and SPED settings[[227]](#footnote-228) and the hiring of additional staff[[228]](#footnote-229) to deliver better educational services to students with disabilities. Smaller class sizes in mainstream settings are thought to benefit students with and without disabilities alike, by providing educators more time to give students dedicated attention while juggling other demands like covering the set curriculum and meeting key performance indicators (KPIs). Likewise, adjustments to existing manpower allocations for SPED sector are urged, with specific recommendations to customise the ratio of SPED educators to students depending on students’ unique needs and extent of disability. Expanding administrative duties and responsibilities in SPED schools have prompted calls to hire more dedicated administrative staff, to allow educators to focus on teaching.

Respondents also noted that recruitment is a perennial challenge for the SPED sector, where it is challenging to attract competent talent.[[229]](#footnote-230) They felt that this stems from multiple factors, especially:[[230]](#footnote-231)

1. the social perception that a SPED educator is not as prestigious as a mainstream educator;
2. the relative lack of training, certification and career development opportunities for SPED educators compared to mainstream educators; and,
3. the absence of complimentary mental health or respite services for SPED staff.

It is hoped that measures implemented in 2020 by the government to improve the remuneration and professional development of SPED staff[[231]](#footnote-232),[[232]](#footnote-233) will, progressively, address these gaps. With regard to mainstream education, discussants attest that the training and placement of more SEN officers[[233]](#footnote-234) in mainstream schools is needed as more students with disabilities enroll in these schools.[[234]](#footnote-235)

Hopes have been expressed for continued efforts to diversify the educational pathways available to SPED students to better reflect the diversity of their career aspirations, potential and goals of personal development.[[235]](#footnote-236) Professionals recommended developing a range of education and enrichment opportunities for SPED graduates to continue to develop themselves and apply the skills gleaned in schools through lifelong learning.[[236]](#footnote-237) The government has recognised “a gap in services for adult persons with disabilities who do not attend any regular disability service after graduating from Special Education Schools”.[[237]](#footnote-238) New pilot programmes — Enabling Service Hubs (ESH) and Enabling Business Hubs (EBH) — are launched with the aim of closing this gap by providing “flexible social and learning activities”[[238]](#footnote-239) and “customised[,]…longer-term [employment] support”[[239]](#footnote-240),[[240]](#footnote-241). Hopefully, with continued efforts, pathways for lifelong learning, enrichment and personal development of PWDs will be progressively expanded.

With regard to student integration in mainstream schools, sampled professionals advised that to encourage meaningful interaction between students with disabilities and their typically-developing peers, there is a need to craft student engagement activities around the needs and interests of students with disabilities.[[241]](#footnote-242) Suggestions by PWDs consulted include providing targeted social and academic support for students with disabilities transiting into or entering mainstream education, perhaps through specialised support services managed, run or staffed by other PWDs who can relate personally to the experience of disablement.[[242]](#footnote-243)

## [2.4] Vocational Training, Employment Support and Independent Living: Young Adults and Older Persons with Disabilities (18 years and above)

Access to employment is critical to social inclusion.[[243]](#footnote-244) PWDs in Singapore are supported by a variety of employment support initiatives.[[244]](#footnote-245) The Open Door Programme (launched in 2014) aims to enhance employability,[[245]](#footnote-246),[[246]](#footnote-247) expand the scope of employment opportunities and encourage employers[[247]](#footnote-248) to hire, train and integrate PWDs through workplace modifications and staff education.[[248]](#footnote-249),[[249]](#footnote-250),[[250]](#footnote-251) Research participants hailed the Open Door Programme as a move in the right direction.[[251]](#footnote-252) To enhance its value, many participants suggested expanding the programme and providing longer-term job support and career guidance for PWDs placed in employment.[[252]](#footnote-253) They hoped these measures would maximise retention of PWDs after job placement[[253]](#footnote-254). Some common challenges include the prevalence of social prejudice at workplaces,[[254]](#footnote-255) impromptu changes in job scope or working environment, and difficulties in preparing for appraisals and performance reviews.[[255]](#footnote-256) More generally, professionals and PWDs sampled in this study reiterated the importance of monitoring the disbursement and use of funds under the Open Door Programme to ensure that errant employers do not profit from these funds by employing PWDs in a tokenistic manner as was observed by some.[[256]](#footnote-257)

Other initiatives include the Special Employment Credit (SEC) and Additional SEC schemes which subsidise the gross monthly salary of PWDs.[[257]](#footnote-258),[[258]](#footnote-259) These were replaced by the Enabling Employment Credit (EEC) scheme in 2021.[[259]](#footnote-260),[[260]](#footnote-261) The EEC scheme delivers “stronger support”[[261]](#footnote-262) to employers and covers four out of five working PWDs.[[262]](#footnote-263) Low-income PWDs can obtain additional financial and employment support via the Workfare Income Supplement (WIS) scheme and the Workfare Skills Support (WSS) scheme.[[263]](#footnote-264),[[264]](#footnote-265) The SkillsFuture Study Award (launched in 2015) and Goh Chok Tong Enable Awards (launched in 2016) also aim to recognise and reward PWDs’ achievements.[[265]](#footnote-266),[[266]](#footnote-267),[[267]](#footnote-268),[[268]](#footnote-269)

In terms of job creation, respondents in this study believed that SG Enable’s various outreach and engagement initiatives have expanded employment opportunities for PWDs.[[269]](#footnote-270) Caregivers appreciate SSAs’ and social enterprises’ role in producing new working environments and job opportunities for PWDs.[[270]](#footnote-271) However, some respondents highlighted the need to ensure that all PWDs placed in employment enjoy basic legal protection, such as formal contracts and workplace insurance.[[271]](#footnote-272) Some workplaces fail to provide this, in contravention of the Ministry of Manpower’s (MOM) best practices.[[272]](#footnote-273) Additionally, respondents hoped that current measures to expand the range of vocations available to PWDs will be extended, so that options for PWDs to be meaningfully and fruitfully employed continue to improve.[[273]](#footnote-274) Notably, in 2021 — after the first phase of fieldwork concluded — the government created 1,700 job and training opportunities for PWDs through specialised programmes[[274]](#footnote-275),[[275]](#footnote-276),[[276]](#footnote-277) that complement the Open Door Programme.[[277]](#footnote-278),[[278]](#footnote-279) In addition, the Jobs Growth Incentive (JGI) — first introduced in September 2020 to support the retention of local workers during the pandemic[[279]](#footnote-280) — supported over 2,900 PWDs between September 2020 and August 2021.[[280]](#footnote-281),[[281]](#footnote-282) During phase 2 of fieldwork, most participants commended the extra government assistance, although middle-class participants continued to lament receiving insufficient assistance.

In 2015, Singapore became the first Southeast Asian nation to ratify the Marrakesh Treaty and provide persons who are blind, visually impaired, and otherwise print-disabled with access to copyrighted materials.[[282]](#footnote-283),[[283]](#footnote-284) The government’s efforts to make websites and online services offered by public agencies more accessible to PWDs was acknowledged as an important step forward[[284]](#footnote-285),[[285]](#footnote-286),[[286]](#footnote-287) by some PWDs consulted in this study. However, it was noted that more can be done to make these resources more accessible to persons with intellectual disabilities.[[287]](#footnote-288) It is suggested that all Singaporean websites and digital services be made progressively accessible to PWDs across the disability spectrum.[[288]](#footnote-289) PWDs and caregivers sampled in this study noted that similar efforts with accessibility need to be made expeditiously for real-time, live news broadcasts and banking services.[[289]](#footnote-290)

With regard to employment support, the Housing Development Board (HDB) now allocates shop spaces near residential areas at discounted rentals to eligible social enterprises, who commit to hiring a workforce comprising at least 20% of PWDs.[[290]](#footnote-291),[[291]](#footnote-292) Commending the innovation of this specific strategy, professionals sampled in this study reported that transport fees of PWDs employed under this partnership have fallen.[[292]](#footnote-293) A pilot programme in North East CDC aims to provide persons with intellectual disabilities with opportunities to find work that interests them in their community.[[293]](#footnote-294) PWDs with moderate to severe disabilities who are unable to secure open employment may be admitted into Sheltered Workshops (SWs)[[294]](#footnote-295) or Day Activity Centres (DACs)[[295]](#footnote-296) run by selected SSAs.[[296]](#footnote-297) SWs provide work or training for PWDs who are not ready or unsuited for open employment.[[297]](#footnote-298),[[298]](#footnote-299) Unfortunately, SWs are not in a position to provide PWDs with employee benefits typically afforded by full-time employment.[[299]](#footnote-300),[[300]](#footnote-301) Meanwhile, DACs provide long-term care services for PWDs who need intensive support.[[301]](#footnote-302),[[302]](#footnote-303),[[303]](#footnote-304)

Professionals consulted in this study acknowledged that more could be done to enable the transition of PWDs from SWs into open employment.[[304]](#footnote-305) The supported employment model — whereby PWDs are placed on job sites to receive exposure to real world working conditions but with a familiar team of professional staff posted on-site to provide support — was mooted by some as a potential means of moving SW participants into open employment[[305]](#footnote-306). However, supported employment is recognised to be costly.[[306]](#footnote-307) More broadly, focus group respondents emphasised the importance of continuing to work towards customising vocational and employment services to meet PWDs’ varied needs and reflect the scope of their vocational or developmental aspirations.[[307]](#footnote-308) In sustaining this, respondents noted the importance of obtaining adequate resources to run services efficiently and generating enough vacancies to accommodate all PWDs in need of these services.[[308]](#footnote-309)

Next, the Assistive Technology Fund (ATF) provides means-tested subsidies for the purchase, replacement, upgrading or repair of assistive technologies (AT).[[309]](#footnote-310),[[310]](#footnote-311),[[311]](#footnote-312) Covering up to 90% of such cost, funds disbursed have a lifetime cap of 40,000 SGD. PWDs may loan AT devices from dedicated technology libraries.[[312]](#footnote-313),[[313]](#footnote-314),[[314]](#footnote-315),[[315]](#footnote-316) Furthermore, the annual Tech for Good Festival organised by charity 'Engineering Good' encourages the development of novel technologies facilitating PWDs’ inclusion in society.[[316]](#footnote-317),[[317]](#footnote-318) Although assistive technologies are not a panacea for resolving accessibility issues,[[318]](#footnote-319) focus group participants widely concurred that assistive devices — ranging from mobile applications to devices and engineering solutions — enable PWDs to live more independently.

Transport subsidies, public transport concessions, fee exemptions[[319]](#footnote-320),[[320]](#footnote-321),[[321]](#footnote-322) and a fleet of wheelchair-friendly taxis[[322]](#footnote-323) have been introduced to make commutes easier and more affordable for PWDs.[[323]](#footnote-324) In July 2022, transport subsidies through the Enabling Transport Subsidy (ETS) were enhanced so that persons with disabilities with a monthly per-capita household income (of up to S$2,800) would pay less for the cost of dedicated transport to attend special education schools and community-based programmes.[[324]](#footnote-325) The HDB’s Enhancement for Active Seniors (EASE) programme subsidises the installation of ramps or mechanical wheelchair lifters in flats with multi-step entrances — although eligibility criteria based on citizenship and age must be met first.[[325]](#footnote-326),[[326]](#footnote-327) Meanwhile, the Lift Access Housing Grant (LHG) provides up to 30,000 SGD to those with mobility issues to relocate from HDB flats lacking direct lift access.[[327]](#footnote-328),[[328]](#footnote-329) However, calls have been made for the LHG to include provisions for a “holistic support system”[[329]](#footnote-330) assisting affected residents with the logistics of assessing, purchasing and moving into a new flat.[[330]](#footnote-331),[[331]](#footnote-332)

The Building Construction Agency (BCA) updates Singapore’s Code on Accessibility regularly so that new or upgraded buildings are accessible to PWDs.[[332]](#footnote-333),[[333]](#footnote-334) Likewise, public transport services and other features of Singapore’s urban landscape, such as walkways, are progressively upgraded to be barrier-free.[[334]](#footnote-335),[[335]](#footnote-336) As of December 2020, all public buses have been made wheelchair-accessible.[[336]](#footnote-337),[[337]](#footnote-338),[[338]](#footnote-339) Singapore’s primary public transport operators are training frontline staff to better assist PWDs.[[339]](#footnote-340),[[340]](#footnote-341),[[341]](#footnote-342),[[342]](#footnote-343),[[343]](#footnote-344) Overall, moves to install barrier-free enhancements to Singapore’s public transport systems received widespread commendation from respondents.[[344]](#footnote-345)

In a 2019 review of the employment status of PWDs, the government announced that nearly three in 10 PWDs of working age were employed, with a 28.6% resident employment rate among PWDs between the ages of 15 and 64.[[345]](#footnote-346) A total of 4.2% in this age range were without a job and actively looking for one, translating to a resident unemployment rate of 12.9%.[[346]](#footnote-347) The remaining two-thirds of PWDs in this age group were said to be “outside the labour force”[[347]](#footnote-348) because of poor health or disability. PWDs, advocates and service providers identified two key areas for improvement in previous literature which, if properly addressed, would reduce barriers to employment. These are: accessibility to and within places of work[[348]](#footnote-349) and societal attitudes towards PWDs.[[349]](#footnote-350),[[350]](#footnote-351),[[351]](#footnote-352),[[352]](#footnote-353),[[353]](#footnote-354),[[354]](#footnote-355),[[355]](#footnote-356)

 With regard to issues of accessibility, in a survey of human resource leaders in 2018, 38% of respondents stated that the inclusion of PWDs was the biggest issue in the workplace, due primarily to a lack of appropriate facilities.[[356]](#footnote-357),[[357]](#footnote-358) Furthermore, notwithstanding efforts to build an accessible urban environment,[[358]](#footnote-359) wheelchair users have reported continuing struggles with mobility and difficulties accessing potential places of work or attending job interviews.[[359]](#footnote-360),[[360]](#footnote-361) Similarly, wheelchair users, visually-impaired persons and deaf/hard-of-hearing persons sampled in this study identified continuing struggles in navigating public transport with regard to buses, trains, bus and train stations and pathways connecting or leading up to public transport hubs[[361]](#footnote-362). While they acknowledged that public transport infrastructure has substantially improved, respondents emphasised that more remains to be done in ensuring, first, that public transport is accessible to persons across the disability spectrum and, secondly, that assistive features, like ramps, Braille signage, tactile indicators, elevators and acoustic traffic lights, serve PWDs reliably in everyday practice.[[362]](#footnote-363) In a 2022 survey of about 2000 members of the public conducted for this report[[363]](#footnote-364), it was further discovered that the majority of respondents (about six in ten) desired greater levels of government action in ensuring accessible public transport for PWDs. Greater inclusion of people with varying disabilities in formulation and test-bedding of strategies to provide barrier-free access to public infrastructure, is essential for the realisation of an inclusive society.

With regard to societal attitudes, the over-representation of PWDs in low-wage sectors, such as hospitality, food and beverage, wholesale, retail and administrative support, has been attributed primarily to social prejudice.[[364]](#footnote-365),[[365]](#footnote-366),[[366]](#footnote-367),[[367]](#footnote-368) Such observations are consistent with reports by PWDs that they were coerced —by caregivers or job matching staff in SSAs — into unfulfilling, low-paid work that did not reflect their aptitude or preferences.[[368]](#footnote-369),[[369]](#footnote-370) PWDs sampled in this study noted that prejudice and discrimination continue to pose significant barriers in securing employment, even if PWDs had strong resumes.[[370]](#footnote-371) Furthermore, PWDs who have secured employment have not always found equal remuneration relative to their neurotypical, able-bodied colleagues with the same job scope, even in cases where PWDs exceeded expectations.[[371]](#footnote-372) Such discriminatory practices contravene the Tripartite Guidelines on Fair Employment Practices to which all Singapore-based organisations are subject and which state clearly that employers must recruit employees on the basis of merit, regardless of disability.[[372]](#footnote-373),[[373]](#footnote-374) In other cases, where workplaces were not trained adequately to support employees with disabilities, PWDs recounted instances of struggling to communicate effectively with a direct supervisor or of being mistreated by an errant colleague.[[374]](#footnote-375),[[375]](#footnote-376)

The persistence of social prejudice was highlighted by an NCSS survey in 2015, in which over a third of Singaporean respondents indicated they would hesitate to employ a PWD.[[376]](#footnote-377),[[377]](#footnote-378) However, the same study found that public attitudes improved with higher frequencies of reported contact with PWDs.[[378]](#footnote-379),[[379]](#footnote-380) Thus, it is critical to address prejudice through social mixing and public education. The latest trends suggest that such strategies have reaped discernible results amongst some segments of the Singaporean populace. In 2019, the fifth iteration of the national biennale Enabling Employers’ Awards — held to recognise organisations and individuals who demonstrate commitment to hiring and integrating PWDs into the workforce — saw an over 50% increase in successful contenders from 2017.[[380]](#footnote-381),[[381]](#footnote-382),[[382]](#footnote-383) Focus group discussants acknowledged the value of this programme in inculcating a more inclusive national working culture.[[383]](#footnote-384)

In 2019 two workgroups were also convened to formulate strategies to improve PWDs’ access to lifelong learning[[384]](#footnote-385) and employment[[385]](#footnote-386),[[386]](#footnote-387) and to enable PWDs to lead independent lives more generally.[[387]](#footnote-388),[[388]](#footnote-389) In 2021, both workgroups released a total of 21 recommendations[[389]](#footnote-390) which the government has approved and begun to implement at least in part whilst working progressively towards full implementation.[[390]](#footnote-391),[[391]](#footnote-392),[[392]](#footnote-393) During the second phase of fieldwork, some focus group respondents stated that they were unaware of these new developments. Some caregivers also perceived the new measures as disproportionately favouring high-functioning PWDs.

In other respects, more than 140 employers — including the Singaporean government[[393]](#footnote-394) — have committed to building a more inclusive workforce in 2020 by signing the President’s Challenge[[394]](#footnote-395) Enabling Employment Pledge.[[395]](#footnote-396),[[396]](#footnote-397),[[397]](#footnote-398),[[398]](#footnote-399) 2020 also saw the launch of the ‘Enabling Mark’, a new accreditation framework recognising businesses with disability-inclusive employment practices.[[399]](#footnote-400),[[400]](#footnote-401),[[401]](#footnote-402),[[402]](#footnote-403) By 2021, 88 organisations were thus accredited[[403]](#footnote-404),[[404]](#footnote-405). Moreover, public education and engagement campaigns promoting the inclusion of PWDs have continued to be held regularly.[[405]](#footnote-406),[[406]](#footnote-407),[[407]](#footnote-408),[[408]](#footnote-409) While such developments are promising, it is crucial for the government to continue its close partnerships with PWDs, SSAs, advocates, caregivers and employers to tackle social prejudice comprehensively.

## [2.5] Caregiver Support, Future Care Planning, Healthcare and Residential Services: for PWDs of all Ages

Informal care relationships have a far-reaching impact on the lived experience of PWDs.[[409]](#footnote-410) Many PWDs in Singapore receive support from family caregivers throughout their lives. However, caregiving is challenging because “many are thrust into the role without warning, and find themselves groping in the dark”.[[410]](#footnote-411) In a 2014 NCSS study on disability, nearly 50% of caregivers surveyed experienced poor mental health, with four in 10 feeling psychologically distressed and with six in 10 feeling burdened.[[411]](#footnote-412),[[412]](#footnote-413),[[413]](#footnote-414) With a rapidly ageing population[[414]](#footnote-415),[[415]](#footnote-416),[[416]](#footnote-417),[[417]](#footnote-418) and an estimated 13.3% prevalence rate of disability for those aged 50 and above,[[418]](#footnote-419),[[419]](#footnote-420) there will be fewer family members adopting caregiving roles in later years.

Presently, PWDs and their caregivers are eligible for a range of support schemes. For instance, the Special Needs Trust Company (SNTC) (launched 2008)[[420]](#footnote-421) establishes trust funds disbursing monthly payouts to PWDs after caregivers' demise,[[421]](#footnote-422),[[422]](#footnote-423),[[423]](#footnote-424),[[424]](#footnote-425) while the Special Needs Savings Scheme (SNSS) helps caregivers set aside Central Provident Fund (CPF)[[425]](#footnote-426) savings to finance long-term care.[[426]](#footnote-427),[[427]](#footnote-428),[[428]](#footnote-429) A Lasting Power of Attorney (LPA) also allows Singaporeans (at least 21 years of age) to designate a future donee to act on their behalf, if mental capacity is lost in the future.[[429]](#footnote-430),[[430]](#footnote-431),[[431]](#footnote-432),[[432]](#footnote-433) Under Singapore’s Mental Capacity Act, donees must be appointed (either by the Court or through a LPA) to make decisions on behalf of those deemed to have lost mental capacity.[[433]](#footnote-434),[[434]](#footnote-435) PWDs who are assessed to lack the capacity to appoint a donee may alternatively be appointed deputies and successor deputies through the court via deputyship orders to act on their behalf.[[435]](#footnote-436),[[436]](#footnote-437) The Assisted Deputyship Programme (ADAP) [[437]](#footnote-438),[[438]](#footnote-439) helps with such applications. Application procedures have also been made “easier, cheaper and faster”.[[439]](#footnote-440)

Singaporean citizens are eligible for heavy government subsidies offsetting a range of healthcare costs.[[440]](#footnote-441),[[441]](#footnote-442) The MSF’s ComCare funding (for low-income Singaporeans) and the means-tested Community Health Assist Scheme (CHAS) provide additional financial assistance to eligible individuals and families who require it.[[442]](#footnote-443),[[443]](#footnote-444),[[444]](#footnote-445) Most Singaporeans are automatically enrolled in Singapore’s national savings, insurance and endowment schemes.[[445]](#footnote-446),[[446]](#footnote-447) National disability insurance schemes include ‘ElderShield’ (launched 2002)[[447]](#footnote-448),[[448]](#footnote-449) and ‘CareShield Life’ (launched October 2020).[[449]](#footnote-450),[[450]](#footnote-451),[[451]](#footnote-452),[[452]](#footnote-453),[[453]](#footnote-454) While ‘ElderShield’ provides monthly payouts of 300 to 400 SGD for a period of up to six years after the point of disability, ‘CareShield Life’ provides higher monthly payouts starting at 600 SGD for as long as the disability in question persists and covers pre-existing conditions.[[454]](#footnote-455) Coverage will not lapse, even if premiums cannot be paid.[[455]](#footnote-456),[[456]](#footnote-457) Enrolment in CareShield Life is mandatory for Singaporeans and PRs born in 1980 or later.[[457]](#footnote-458),[[458]](#footnote-459) Meanwhile, ‘Elderfund’ (launched in 2020) provides monthly cash payouts of 250 SGD to severely disabled, low-income Singaporeans aged 30 years or older who are ineligible for other government schemes.[[459]](#footnote-460),[[460]](#footnote-461) The Senior’s Mobility and Enabling Fund (SMF) and Pioneer Generation Disability Assistance Scheme (PioneerDAS) provide seniors with funding for assistive mobility devices and defray certain miscellaneous expenses.[[461]](#footnote-462),[[462]](#footnote-463),[[463]](#footnote-464) Enhancements made to the former in early 2022 have (a) expanded the scope of assistive devices and other healthcare items eligible for subsidies, (b) introduced provisions for the replacement of devices, and (c) increased subsidies for selected items and seniors with lower income.[[464]](#footnote-465),[[465]](#footnote-466)

With respect to caregiving, the means-tested Home Caregiving Grant (HCG) provides monthly payouts of 400 SGD to defray miscellaneous caregiving costs.[[466]](#footnote-467),[[467]](#footnote-468),[[468]](#footnote-469),[[469]](#footnote-470) Moreover, those supporting spouses, children, parents and/or siblings with disabilities may access tax reliefs.[[470]](#footnote-471),[[471]](#footnote-472) The Caregivers Training Grant (CTG) also provides 200 SGD per financial year to subsidise caregiver training[[472]](#footnote-473),[[473]](#footnote-474),[[474]](#footnote-475),[[475]](#footnote-476). The Caregivers Pod (launched in 2018) provides a dedicated space for training and peer support.[[476]](#footnote-477),[[477]](#footnote-478),[[478]](#footnote-479) While the establishment of the Pod was generally praised by caregivers, calls are made for subsequent Caregivers Pods to be established within residential and neighbourhood areas for easy accessibility, and to be staffed by competent, professional carers so that caregivers may receive complete respite in the protected environment of the Pods.[[479]](#footnote-480)

Regarding technological support, SG Enable’s free mobile application, CARElender, provides an overview of upcoming community events suited for PWDs and caregivers.[[480]](#footnote-481) In addition, the increased availability of location-tracking technologies is hailed by some professionals and caregivers sampled in this study as an important step in supporting caregivers in light of the tendency for persons with certain disabilities to go missing. By giving caregivers the ability to track the location of these PWDs, such technologies have been credited by some focus group respondents with relieving caregivers of unnecessary stress and facilitating safer forms of travel-training for PWDs.

With respect to caregiver respite, nine SSAs in Singapore now offer respite services; two provide home-based services.[[481]](#footnote-482),[[482]](#footnote-483) The Drop-In Disability Programme (DDP) administers day-care and recreational services for adults with disabilities.[[483]](#footnote-484),[[484]](#footnote-485),[[485]](#footnote-486),[[486]](#footnote-487),[[487]](#footnote-488) A range of residential services provide PWDs with short- and long-term accommodation,[[488]](#footnote-489) thereby according their caregivers brief or longer-term respite.[[489]](#footnote-490) Such services provide alternative avenues for PWDs whose caregivers are no longer able to provide for their needs.[[490]](#footnote-491),[[491]](#footnote-492),[[492]](#footnote-493) NCSS also provides subsidies of up to 80% to SSAs and charities to encourage technological innovations in the residential care of PWDs.[[493]](#footnote-494),[[494]](#footnote-495)

Current options include Community Group Homes (CGHs), Adult Disability Hostels and Adult Disability Homes (ADHs).[[495]](#footnote-496),[[496]](#footnote-497),[[497]](#footnote-498) CGHs provide a means for employed PWDs with mild support needs to live independently in HDB rental flats.[[498]](#footnote-499),[[499]](#footnote-500),[[500]](#footnote-501) Adult Disability Hostels offer accommodation and residential-based training for PWDs who do not require institutional care but are not ready to live independently.[[501]](#footnote-502),[[502]](#footnote-503) Adult Disability Homes (ADHs) offer accommodation and therapeutic care for PWDs requiring institutional care.[[503]](#footnote-504),[[504]](#footnote-505) These homes are considered “a last resort and only when it is in… the best interests”[[505]](#footnote-506) of PWDs. Thus, reports from relevant professionals are required before PWDs are admitted.[[506]](#footnote-507),[[507]](#footnote-508) Professionals sampled in this study noted that the availability of ADHs in Singapore has improved significantly over the past decade.[[508]](#footnote-509) The opening of St. Andrew’s Adult Home in April 2019 — a purpose-built ADH under St. Andrew’s Autism Centre — was noted and welcomed by some respondents.[[509]](#footnote-510) This specific ADH caters primarily to adults diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).[[510]](#footnote-511)

While much was done to develop caregiver support, previous research highlighted areas for further improvement. For instance, respite is difficult to attain when PWDs require intensive, round-the-clock attention.[[511]](#footnote-512),[[512]](#footnote-513) Some households were observed to undergo disruptive reversals in caregiving roles — with PWDs becoming responsible instead for the care of ageing parents — that result in unmet household needs.[[513]](#footnote-514),[[514]](#footnote-515) Such challenges are compounded for single-parent and/or low-income households with limited financial and human resources.[[515]](#footnote-516),[[516]](#footnote-517),[[517]](#footnote-518),[[518]](#footnote-519) Caregivers have expressed the need for alternative life-long care arrangements for PWDs outside placements in segregated residential services.[[519]](#footnote-520),[[520]](#footnote-521) Similar sentiments were expressed by respondents in this study, who suggested adopting a more community-focused approach in housing PWDs, with additional provisions for comprehensive educational and enrichment programmes.[[521]](#footnote-522) This did not necessarily entail abandoning the current framework of residential services, such as ADHs; but rather the selective adoption of practices from other institutions like SPED schools, which are perceived as opening up to the broader community — for example, a recent initiative in establishing a cafe staffed by PWDs on SPED premises for members of the general public.[[522]](#footnote-523) In March 2022, MSF announced the pilot of Enabling Services Hubs (ESHs), co-funded by the Tote Board, to (1) identify and reach out to PWDs and their caregivers to understand their needs and connect them with relevant support, (2) provide additional support with community befrienders, and (3) provide on-site services such as continual learning programmes and social inclusion activities for PWDs and respite care for caregivers.[[523]](#footnote-524)

While most respondents acknowledged the importance of robust institutions in housing PWDs with more challenging or severe needs, they nonetheless said that more could be done for other PWDs beyond conventional residences[[524]](#footnote-525). Many attested to the need for a healthy balance where PWDs in residential settings are given some level of autonomy in forging and sustaining social relationships, while their safety and personal interests are safeguarded against those who wish to exploit them.[[525]](#footnote-526) Through such a balancing act, it is hoped that PWDs will face fewer barriers in meeting fundamental social needs.[[526]](#footnote-527)

In the context of future care planning services, some caregivers consulted in this study proposed expanding the scope of the SNTC to include provisions for the development of a care plan for PWDs[[527]](#footnote-528). However, the SNTC has case managers who craft care plans so that future caregivers are better informed when taking decisions such as disbursing the funds saved via the SNTC according to the best interests of PWDs. Yet, some caregivers gave feedback that such planning is still not comprehensive or streamlined enough to meet their needs;[[528]](#footnote-529) perhaps due to the SNTC being a relatively recent development.

Another significant concern for caregivers is the degree of access that their care recipients would have to basic legal and social protections, particularly in future scenarios where caregivers themselves have died.[[529]](#footnote-530) Due to some PWDs’ vulnerability to exploitation by others, inability to explain the realities of their condition or speak up for their rights, many caregivers fear that without competent advocates, their care recipients would be swindled or find themselves on the wrong side of the law.[[530]](#footnote-531) In light of these widespread fears, a suggestion was mooted to institute a one-stop, cross-departmental touchpoint of service specialising in providing legal and social protection to PWDs.[[531]](#footnote-532)

In addition, focus group discussants recommended strengthening support for caregivers in hospitals at the time of their care recipient’s diagnosis with disability. More generally, with the establishment of more comprehensive and coherent touchpoints at hospitals, it is thought that caregivers and PWDs would be empowered to make informed and timely use of the full spectrum of support services available to the disabled.[[532]](#footnote-533) While the government has done much to provide PWDs residing in Singapore with access to affordable healthcare and universal health insurance coverage, including those with pre-existing disabilities, through national schemes such as MediShield Life; caregivers have feedbacked that more could be done in the space of private insurance which is currently perceived as inadequate in their coverage of persons with autism.[[533]](#footnote-534)

In terms of expanding access to existing medical and healthcare services, suggestions by PWDs and caregivers in this study are to:[[534]](#footnote-535)

1. train mental health providers to communicate in sign language so that deaf/hard-of-hearing persons have better access to mental health services;
2. provide in-house interpretation services in hospitals to ensure that all deaf/hard-of-hearing persons can communicate effectively with doctors;
3. train specialised healthcare staff or disability advocates to support PWDs in medical settings and when communicating with doctors;
4. conduct more training for frontline staff in hospitals on how to assist blind persons or persons with visual impairment respectfully and effectively; and to
5. ensure that the internal settings of hospitals are barrier-free for persons across the spectrum of disability (including but not limited to the blind, the deaf and the wheelchair-bound).

With regard to caregiver support services, professionals and caregiver respondents expressed hope that home-based and other forms of respite care services would be expanded in the future, for the particular benefit of caregivers with care recipients who have moderate to severe support needs.[[535]](#footnote-536) Caregivers in this latter category typically found it difficult to source for respite providers with professional competencies and facilities necessary to cater to the needs of persons with severe disabilities and/or behavioural issues.[[536]](#footnote-537) This has been attributed to respite care for persons with severe disabilities or support needs being resource-heavy and expensive to run.[[537]](#footnote-538) In general, access to caregiver respite services ought to be streamlined further so that caregivers in urgent need of respite may obtain expedited relief.[[538]](#footnote-539)

Caregivers of persons with high support needs are often observed to become increasingly socially isolated, as public spaces rarely have the necessary accommodations — such as sensory rooms, places for PWDs to be tube-fed in private and areas to charge ventilators and breathing aids — needed to meet the varied needs of such PWDs.[[539]](#footnote-540) Thus, it is recommended that more be done to equip public spaces with these facilities to support caregivers and PWDs in leading active lives in the community.[[540]](#footnote-541)

While much has been done to provide support services to primary caregivers on an individual basis — usually, to one or both parents, as in the case of children with disabilities — it is further recommended that support services cater to the well-being of family units as a whole.[[541]](#footnote-542) Specific areas of concern include the mental health of neuro-typical and able-bodied siblings — who are often the secondary caregivers — and the marital health of couples with children with disabilities.[[542]](#footnote-543) Lastly, suggestions are mooted for the provision of customised employment support and job placement services for full-time caregivers who would like to support themselves and their families better financially but struggle to find suitable work on their own.[[543]](#footnote-544)

Notwithstanding these suggestions for further improvement, focus group respondents generally expressed appreciation for the role played by the Singapore government in advancing the provision of caregiver support and respite through the institution of SG Enable, the establishment of the Enabling Village initiative, the development of the SNTC, and the allocation of funds for financial support, caregiver training and respite services.[[544]](#footnote-545) Moreover, the formation of formal and informal caregiver support groups and networks is a good development for the disability sector.[[545]](#footnote-546)

The government’s latest Caregiver Support Action Plan — implemented progressively from 2019 to 2021 — aims, among other things, to expand respite care options, caregiver support networks, and accessibility to disability services.[[546]](#footnote-547),[[547]](#footnote-548) Recently, the SG Together Alliance for Action on Caregivers of PWDs — a partnership between NCSS, SG Enable and community partners — was formed to “co-create solutions on pressing issues”[[548]](#footnote-549) including those related to self-care as well as accessing peer mentorship and informal support.[[549]](#footnote-550),[[550]](#footnote-551),[[551]](#footnote-552),[[552]](#footnote-553) While these developments are promising, it is crucial for policymakers to obtain regular and representative feedback from Singapore’s diverse caregivers and PWDs to understand how best to meet their varied and changing needs across their lifetime.

## [2.6] Impact of Covid-19

Subsequent FGDs conducted in 2022 have focused on how the Covid-19 pandemic has affected professionals, caregivers and PWDs. The impact of Covid-19 was felt by all Singaporeans and as expected, respondents reported negative impacts[[553]](#footnote-554), including:

1. increased difficulty of balancing caregiving responsibilities with work commitments amid flexible work arrangements;
2. lack of respite from caregiving as PWDs do not attend school or DACs in person;
3. lack of appropriate medical facilities and trained staff to care for PWDs in accordance with Covid-19 measures;
4. limitations of home-based learning for students with disabilities, i.e., few resources and lower engagement;
5. struggle of PWDs to adapt to changes in routine, e.g., staying home, wearing masks, using contact tracing technology;
6. stunted development or regression of young PWDs' social-emotional skills amid fewer face-to-face interactions;
7. lower effectiveness of occupational theory and physiotherapy when conducted virtually;
8. temporary shortage of therapists due to closing of borders;
9. delays in diagnosis and gaining of access to early intervention due to shortage of resources in acute hospitals; and
10. increased sense of danger for PWDs, especially the deaf, in navigating public spaces due to increased use of motorised bicycles by, and increase in numbers of, food delivery riders.

Flexible work arrangements have also allowed most caregivers to have more family bonding time; some children with disabilities were happy about not attending school in-person.

In 2020, the government budgeted nearly S$100 billion to cushion the impact of the pandemic with a focus on ensuring the wellbeing of vulnerable communities[[554]](#footnote-555),[[555]](#footnote-556) – however, it is estimated that the actual expenditure to-date is lower.[[556]](#footnote-557) For PWDs, the government collaborated with the community to develop care kits and improve protocols and access to resources and information in testing, quarantine and home recovery.[[557]](#footnote-558),[[558]](#footnote-559),[[559]](#footnote-560),[[560]](#footnote-561),[[561]](#footnote-562) As part of its Covid-19 response, the government provided additional employment and financial support to PWDs, such as creating new jobs and training opportunities with National Jobs Council and a one-time cash relief grant to households with more than one PWD.[[562]](#footnote-563),[[563]](#footnote-564),[[564]](#footnote-565)

Nevertheless, Covid-19 has exposed many additional vulnerabilities faced by PWDs which do not affect neurotypical persons as much.[[565]](#footnote-566) PWDs may be left behind amid rapid uptake of technologies like virtual platforms and contact tracing applications if efforts are not undertaken to ensure accessibility. Children and students with disabilities would also need suitable resource banks to accommodate changes prompted by crises such as Covid-19 and ensure equitable access to education. These are worth taking into consideration as Singapore continues to improve inclusion of PWDs.

# Section 3: Cross-Cutting Recommendations and Concluding Remarks

This research study has highlighted the progress made in Singapore’s disability sector whilst identifying possibilities to bridge gaps and address needs through policy reviews and original research. This paper first established the context of disability service provision in Singapore through an overview of key developments in the sector. In closely reviewing the various disability services developed for PWDs across the multiple stages of their life, particular attention was given to the following areas: early detection and intervention services; mainstream and special education from pre-school to the post-secondary levels; vocational training and employment support services; funds and other measures that enable PWDs to lead more independent lives; and services pertaining to caregiver support, future care planning and residential living.

 After considering how such services have been implemented, evolved and received over the past decade, the paper elaborates the findings gleaned through two runs of fieldwork--(1) focus group discussions and in-depth interviews conducted over 11 months from August 2019 to July 2020 with a total of 166 participants, and (2) focus group discussions with 50 participants and a quantitative survey with about 2000 respondents from May 2022 to July 2022. According to PWDs, caregivers and professionals sampled in this study, clear and considerable progress has been made in empowering PWDs and building a more inclusive society, especially in recent years following 2017's release of Singapore’s Third Enabling Masterplan. Among survey respondents recruited for this report,[[566]](#footnote-567) nearly nine in ten agreed that there has been considerable improvement in the lives of PWDs over the past few decades. Key developments cited by focus group participants include the greater customisation of EI services, the consolidation of preschool education and EI services under the ECDA, state efforts to make websites and online services offered by public agencies more accessible to PWDs, the generation of employment opportunities for PWDs in residential areas, the expansion of caregiver respite and support services, and the development of a purpose-built disability home for adults with autism. Other notable initiatives include significant reductions in fees for EI and SCSS services across most income groups, the introduction of a roadmap and action plan for the SPED and caregiver support sectors respectively, the installation of assistive technology loan libraries, the institution of the Lift Access Housing Grant (LHG), the introduction of the Home Caregiving Grant (HCG) and the development of CareShield Life and Elderfund.

These advancements are commendable. However, several strategies have been put forward for further development and fine-tuning of disability service provision in Singapore, not only within specific domains such as education or employment but across the sector generally.

First, with regard to government coordination, professionals have called for the numerous government ministries involved in various aspects of disability service provision — the MOE, MSF, MOM, Ministry of Health (MOH), Ministry of Transport (MOT) and the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI) — to collaborate to ease PWDs’ transition between disability services across various life stages.[[567]](#footnote-568) This includes ensuring, as far as possible, seamless continuity in access to services such as speech therapy, dyslexia support and assistive technologies through PWDs’ transition from educational institutions into adulthood.[[568]](#footnote-569) Moreover, professionals sampled in this study have said that the general challenges are the recruitment and training of talent, and the provision of respite care to employees across the disability sector.[[569]](#footnote-570) In response, professionals suggested the provision of attractive remuneration, targeted training and certification programmes, complimentary respite care arrangements and flexible work arrangements for staff employed at all levels of the disability sector — from the provision of miscellaneous support services, such as employment-support programmes, to the running of homes or centres such as ADHs or DACs.[[570]](#footnote-571) In 2021, the government announced enhanced funding support for ADHs and DACs to make DAC services more affordable, and increase the number of care stuff to improve the quality of care and service standards.[[571]](#footnote-572),[[572]](#footnote-573),[[573]](#footnote-574),[[574]](#footnote-575) Hopefully, going forward, more will be done to address other identified gaps in the recruitment, training and care of staff.

In another vein, respondents urged greater consolidation of information on disability services[[575]](#footnote-576) and streamlining of application procedures for access to such services, including applications to access resources like government funds and subsidies — such as the ATF — or even caregiver support services.[[576]](#footnote-577) The government has acknowledged this gap and initiatives have been implemented recently to begin addressing it. For instance, in 2019, SG Enable launched a new website, The Enabling Guide, which aims to be a one-stop resource for PWDs, caregivers and other stakeholders by pulling together various strands of information on miscellaneous disability services and schemes.[[577]](#footnote-578),[[578]](#footnote-579),[[579]](#footnote-580) Moving forward, the government has announced that, as of 1 October 2020, SG Enable is also to serve as a single touchpoint for the entire disability sector[[580]](#footnote-581) by progressively[[581]](#footnote-582):

1. taking over the administration of disability programmes currently run by the MSF and the NCSS;
2. consolidating volunteer efforts across the sector; and,
3. spearheading public education efforts on issues related to disability.

The MSF’s Disability Office will retain policy oversight over disability matters.[[582]](#footnote-583),[[583]](#footnote-584)

 While recent efforts to streamline the administration of disability efforts are heartening, caregivers and respondents with permanent and longer-term disabilities have questioned the current need to source and pay for up-to-date doctors’ certifications of disability before submitting applications for government funds and subsidies, over the course of a PWD’s lifetime.[[584]](#footnote-585) They desired greater flexibility in eligibility assessments for government funding and better coordination and record-sharing by public administrators in charge of such applications.[[585]](#footnote-586) Encouragingly, a new Disability Case Management Programme pilot was launched in 2021 with the aim of improving case management support for PWDs with high support needs and their families.[[586]](#footnote-587),[[587]](#footnote-588),[[588]](#footnote-589) The pilot will serve 100 such families as a start. It remains important for the government to work towards meeting the case management needs of those with permanent and longer-term disabilities.

In addition, discussants advised the continued, regular review of means-testing eligibility criteria for disability services, to prevent households in need from falling through emerging cracks.[[589]](#footnote-590) Vulnerable households include middle-income families with multiple children or multiple children with disabilities.[[590]](#footnote-591) Respondents have reiterated the importance of using up-to-date financial records when applying means-testing criteria, especially as unemployment often occurs abruptly.[[591]](#footnote-592) The suggestion was also mooted for means-testing assessments to be fairer and more holistic by accounting for household debts and expenses in addition to income.[[592]](#footnote-593)

Next, calls have been made to strengthen support for those with temporary or acquired disabilities.[[593]](#footnote-594) Currently, those with acquired disabilities — resulting from health (e.g. stroke) or accidents — are ineligible for funds and provisions under the Open Door Programme and the ATF, although they may benefit from added support in terms of workplace modifications, job redesign and the purchase of assistive technologies.[[594]](#footnote-595) Moreover, those with acquired disabilities have specific support needs that are not equivalent to those of persons with congenital disabilities.[[595]](#footnote-596) Hence, it is recommended that schools, workplaces, healthcare providers and service providers in the disability sector work closely together to craft suitable and holistic means of support for persons with acquired disabilities.[[596]](#footnote-597)

Lastly, the administration of the ATF, while widely regarded as an important resource for PWDs, is thought to be able to benefit from the following adjustments[[597]](#footnote-598):

1. customised funding guidelines taking into account the markedly high resource needs of persons with complex, lifelong physical disabilities like Distal Muscular Dystrophy;
2. expanded means-testing criteria that allocate all PWDs those devices most essential for living independently, irrespective of personal or household income;
3. checks and balances on the sale and pricing of assistive technologies by private corporations;
4. provisions for the trial and test-bedding of assistive technologies, and;
5. provisions for the subsidised rental of crucial assistive technologies whilst applications for their replacements are being processed.

While assistive technology loan libraries have been set up at TechAble and at selected IHLs, respondents' continued requests for test-bedding and loaning of assistive technologies indicate the value of reviewing the reach of such facilities, and/or of a public awareness campaign informing PWDs of the availability of such resources.[[598]](#footnote-599) Although other points listed by respondents have yet to be specifically addressed by the government, ATF subsidies have been enhanced to make assistive devices more affordable for lower-income Singaporeans.[[599]](#footnote-600),[[600]](#footnote-601) The scope of the ATF scheme has been expanded to better meet the life-long device needs of eligible[[601]](#footnote-602) PWDs, as they age.[[602]](#footnote-603),[[603]](#footnote-604)

It is hoped that the findings and recommendations in this research will spark fruitful conversations within the broader disability community in Singapore and contribute to the formulation of better policies, schemes and services for PWDs and their caregivers. Singapore’s next Enabling Masterplan charts the development of the disability sector over the next eight years with the goal of developing “a more caring and inclusive Singapore”.[[604]](#footnote-605) With the current climate of global and national uncertainty, it will be increasingly crucial for Singapore to sustain its historic record of transforming disability service provision in response to evolving needs and identities.

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|  | ***Table 1: Art 4 (General Obligations) (1a)*** |
| Description  | 1. States Parties undertake to ensure and promote the full realization of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all persons with disabilities without discrimination of any kind on the basis of disability. To this end, States Parties undertake:a) To adopt all appropriate legislative, administrative and other measures for the implementation of the rights recognized in the present Convention; |
| Developments Cited | * Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong made a formal commitment in his swearing-in speech in 2004 to build an inclusive society for all Singaporeans, “young and old, disabled and able-bodied” alike
	+ In 2013, Singapore ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD) and, thereafter, designed the third and most recent Masterplan to serve as Singapore’s action plan for the progressive implementation of the UN CRPD, moving forward
* In 2019, SG Enable launched a new website, The Enabling Guide, which aims to be a one-stop resource for PWDs, caregivers and other stakeholders by pulling together various strands of information on miscellaneous disability services and schemes
* In 2020, the government included disability-related statistics in the national population census for the first time
* More has been done in recent years to improve human resource management capabilities of SSAs and tackle staff burnout
* Public education and engagement campaigns promoting the inclusion of PWDs have continued to be held regularly
* In 2021, the government announced enhanced funding support for ADHs and DACs to make DAC services more affordable, and increase the number of care stuff to improve the quality of care and service standards.
* A new Disability Case Management Programme pilot was launched in 2021 with the aim of improving case management support for PWDs with high support needs and their families
 |
| Gaps Identified*(by Previous Literature)* | * The lack of an official census of PWDs has been acknowledged to be a key limitation in the further development of Singapore’s disability sector
 |
| Recommendations Mooted*(by Respondents)* | * With regard to government coordination, professionals have called for the numerous government ministries involved in the various aspects of disability service provision – such as the Ministry of Education (MOE), Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF), Ministry of Manpower (MOM), Ministry of Health (MOH), Ministry of Transport (MOT) and the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI) – to work even more closely to ease PWDs’ transition between disability services across various life stages
	+ This would include ensuring, as far as possible, seamless continuity in access to services such as speech therapy, dyslexia support and assistive technologies through PWDs’ transition from educational institutions into adulthood
* Professionals sampled in this study have said that the general challenges are the recruitment and training of talent, and the provision of respite care to employees across the disability sector
	+ In response, professionals suggested the provision of attractive remuneration, targeted training and certification programmes, complimentary respite care arrangements and flexible work arrangements for staff employed at all levels of the disability sector — from the provision of miscellaneous support services, such as employment-support programmes, to the running of homes or centres such as ADHs or DACs
* In another vein, respondents urged greater consolidation of information on disability services and streamlining of application procedures for access to such services, including applications to access resources like government funds and subsidies — such as the ATF — or even caregiver support services
* Caregivers and respondents with permanent and longer-term disabilities have questioned the current need to source and pay for up-to-date doctors’ certifications of disability before submitting applications for government funds and subsidies, over the course of a PWD’s lifetime
	+ They desired greater flexibility in eligibility assessments for government funding and better coordination and record-sharing by public administrators in charge of such applications
* Calls have been made for support to be strengthened for those with temporary or acquired disabilities
	+ Currently, those with acquired disabilities — resulting from health (e.g. stroke) or accidents — are ineligible for funds and provisions under the Open Door Programme and the ATF, although they may benefit from added support in terms of workplace modifications, job redesign and the purchase of assistive technologies
	+ Moreover, those with acquired disabilities have specific support needs that are not equivalent to those of persons with congenital disabilities
	+ Hence, it is recommended that schools, workplaces, healthcare providers and service providers in the disability sector work closely together to craft suitable and holistic means of support for persons with acquired disabilities
 |

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|  | ***Table 2: Art 4 (General Obligations) (1g)*** |
| Description  | 1. States Parties undertake to ensure and promote the full realization of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all persons with disabilities without discrimination of any kind on the basis of disability. To this end, States Parties undertake:g) To undertake or promote research and development of, and to promote the availability and use of new technologies, including information and communications technologies, mobility aids, devices and assistive technologies, suitable for persons with disabilities, giving priority to technologies at an affordable cost; |
| Developments Cited | * The Assistive Technology Fund (ATF) provides means-tested subsidies for the purchase, replacement, upgrading or repair of assistive technologies (AT)
	+ PWDs may also loan AT devices from dedicated technology libraries
* The annual government-funded Tech for Good Festival encourages the development of novel technologies facilitating PWDs’ inclusion in society
* In 2022, ATF subsidies became enhanced to make assistive devices more affordable for lower-income Singaporeans
* The scope of the ATF scheme was also expanded this year to better meet the life-long device needs of eligible PWDs, as they age
 |
| Recommendations Mooted*(by Respondents)* | * The administration of the ATF – while regarded widely as an important resource for PWDs – is thought to be able to benefit from the following adjustments:
	+ customised funding guidelines which take into account the markedly high resource needs of persons with complex, lifelong physical disabilities like Distal Muscular Dystrophy;
	+ expanded means-testing criteria that allocate all PWDs those devices most essential for living independently irrespective of personal or household income;
	+ checks and balances on the sale and pricing of assistive technologies by private corporations;
	+ provisions for the trial and test-bedding of assistive technologies, and;
	+ provisions for the subsidised rental of crucial assistive technologies whilst applications for their replacements are being processed.
* While assistive technology loan libraries have been set up at TechAble and at selected IHLs, respondents' continued requests for test-bedding and loaning of assistive technologies indicate the value of reviewing the reach of such facilities, and/or of a public awareness campaign informing PWDs of the availability of such resources
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|  | ***Table 3: Art 9 (Accessibility) (1a)*** |
| Description  | 1. To enable persons with disabilities to live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life, States Parties shall take appropriate measures to ensure to persons with disabilities access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, to transportation, to information and communications, including information and communications technologies and systems, and to other facilities and services open or provided to the public, both in urban and in rural areas. These measures, which shall include the identification and elimination of obstacles and barriers to accessibility, shall apply to, inter alia:a) Buildings, roads, transportation and other indoor and outdoor facilities, including schools, housing, medical facilities and workplaces; |
| Developments Cited | * Transport subsidies, public transport concessions, fee exemptions and a fleet of wheelchair-friendly taxis have been introduced to make commutes easier and more affordable for PWDs
* The HDB’s Enhancement for Active Seniors (EASE) programme also subsidises the installation of ramps or mechanical wheelchair lifters in flats with multi-step entrances – although eligibility criteria based on citizenship and age must first be met
* The Lift Access Housing Grant (LHG) provides up to 30,000 SGD to those with mobility issues to relocate from public housing flats lacking direct lift access
* The Building Construction Agency (BCA) updates Singapore’s Code on Accessibility regularly so that new or upgraded buildings are kept accessible to PWDs
* Public transport services and other features of Singapore’s urban landscape, such as walkways, are progressively upgraded to be made barrier-free
* As of December 2020, all public buses have been made wheelchair-accessible
* Singapore’s primary public transport operators are training frontline staff to better assist PWDs
 |
| Progress Noted *(by Respondents)* | * Overall, moves to install barrier-free enhancements to Singapore’s public transport systems have received widespread commendation from research respondents
 |
| Gaps Identified*(by Previous Literature)* | * Calls have been made for the LHG to include provisions for a “holistic support system" assisting affected residents with the logistics of assessing, purchasing and moving into a new flat
* PWDs, advocates and service providers have identified two key areas for improvement in previous literature which, if properly addressed, would reduce barriers to employment
	+ This includes accessibility to and within places of work
* A survey of human resource leaders in 2018 reported that 38% of respondents stated that the inclusion of PWDs was the biggest issue in the workplace and due primarily to the lack of appropriate facilities
* Notwithstanding efforts to build an accessible urban environment, wheelchair users have reported continuing struggles with mobility and difficulties accessing potential places of work or attending job interviews
 |
| Gaps Identified*(by Respondents)* | * Wheelchair users, visually-impaired persons and deaf/hard-of-hearing persons sampled in this study have identified continuing struggles in navigating public transport with specific regard to buses, trains, bus and train stations and pathways connecting or leading up to public transport hubs
* Caregivers of persons with high support needs are also often observed to become increasingly socially isolated as public spaces rarely come equipped with the necessary accommodation – such as sensory rooms, places for PWDs to be tube-fed in private and areas to charge ventilators and breathing aids – needed to meet the varied needs of such PWDs
 |
| Recommendations Mooted*(by Previous Literature)* | * Calls have been made for the LHG to include provisions for a “holistic support system” assisting affected residents with the logistics of assessing, purchasing and moving into a new flat
 |
| Recommendations Mooted*(by Respondents)* | * While it was acknowledged widely that substantial improvements have been made to Singapore’s public transport infrastructure over the years, research respondents continued to note that more remains to be done in ensuring, first, that public transport is accessible to persons across the disability spectrum and, secondly, that assistive features like ramps, Braille signage, tactile indicators, elevators and acoustic traffic lights serve PWDs reliably in everyday practice
* In terms of expanding access to existing medical and healthcare services, suggestions have been mooted by PWDs and caregivers sampled to:
	+ train mental health providers to communicate in sign language so that deaf/hard-of-hearing persons may have better access to counselling or mental health services;
	+ provide in-house interpretation services in hospitals to ensure that all deaf/hard-of-hearing persons can communicate effectively with doctors;
	+ train specialised healthcare staff or disability advocates to support persons with intellectual disabilities in medical settings and when communicating with doctors;
	+ conduct more training for frontline staff in hospitals on how to assist blind persons or persons with visual impairment respectfully and effectively; and to
	+ ensure that the internal settings of hospitals are barrier-free for persons across the spectrum of disability (including but not limited to the blind, the deaf and the wheelchair-bound).
* It has been recommended that more be done to equip public spaces with facilities – such as sensory rooms, places for PWDs to be tube-fed in private and areas to charge ventilators and breathing aids – so that caregivers and PWDs both are better supported in leading active lives in the community
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|  | ***Table 4: Art 9 (Accessibility) (1b)*** |
| Description  | 1. To enable persons with disabilities to live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life, States Parties shall take appropriate measures to ensure to persons with disabilities access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, to transportation, to information and communications, including information and communications technologies and systems, and to other facilities and services open or provided to the public, both in urban and in rural areas. These measures, which shall include the identification and elimination of obstacles and barriers to accessibility, shall apply to, inter alia:b) Information, communications and other services, including electronic services and emergency services. |
| Gaps Identified*(by Respondents)* | * PWDs and caregivers sampled have noted that more needs to be done to ensure that real-time, live news broadcasts and the gamut of banking services are accessible to PWDs across the disability spectrum
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|  | ***Table 5: Art 9 (Accessibility) (2f)*** |
| Description  | 2. States Parties shall also take appropriate measures:f) To promote other appropriate forms of assistance and support to persons with disabilities to ensure their access to information; |
| Developments Cited | * In 2015, Singapore became the first Southeast Asian nation to ratify the Marrakesh Treaty and provide PWDs with print or reading disabilities access to copyrighted materials
 |
| Recommendations Mooted*(by Respondents)* | * Focus group discussants recommended the establishment of more comprehensive and coherent touchpoints at hospitals so that caregivers and PWDs would be empowered better to make informed and timely use of the full spectrum of support services available to the disabled in Singapore
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|  | ***Table 6: Art 9 (Accessibility) (2g)*** |
| Description  | 2. States Parties shall also take appropriate measures:g) To promote access for persons with disabilities to new information and communications technologies and systems, including the Internet; |
| Progress Noted *(by Respondents)* | * The Singapore government’s efforts to make websites and online services offered by public agencies more accessible to PWDs have been acknowledged by some PWDs consulted as an important step forward
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| Gaps Identified*(by Respondents)* | * It has been noted that more could be done to make websites and online services offered by public agencies more accessible to persons with intellectual disabilities
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| Recommendations Mooted*(by Respondents)* | * Going forward, it is hoped that all Singaporean websites and digital services will be made accessible progressively to PWDs across the disability spectrum
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|  | ***Table 7: Art 11 (Situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies)***  |
| Description  | States Parties shall take, in accordance with their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law, all necessary measures to ensure the protection and safety of persons with disabilities in situations of risk, including situations of armed conflict, humanitarian emergencies and the occurrence of natural disasters. |
| Developments Cited | * In 2020, the government budgeted nearly S$100 billion to cushion the impact of the pandemic with a focus on ensuring the wellbeing of vulnerable communities – however, it is estimated that the actual expenditure to-date is lower
* For PWDs, the government collaborated with the community to develop care kits and improve protocols and access to resources and information in testing, quarantine and home recovery.
	+ As part of its Covid-19 response, the government provided additional employment and financial support to PWDs, such as creating new jobs and training opportunities with National Jobs Council and a one-time cash relief grant to households with more than one PWD.
 |
| Gaps Identified*(by Respondents)* | The impact of Covid-19 was felt by all Singaporeans and as expected, respondents reported negative impacts, including:* increased difficulty of balancing caregiving responsibilities with work commitments amid flexible work arrangements;
* lack of respite from caregiving as PWDs do not attend school or DACs in person;
* lack of appropriate medical facilities and trained staff to care for PWDs in accordance with Covid-19 measures;
* limitations of home-based learning for students with disabilities, i.e., few resources and lower engagement;
* struggle of PWDs to adapt to changes in routine, e.g., staying home, wearing masks, using contact tracing technology;
* stunted development or regression of young PWDs' social-emotional skills amid fewer face-to-face interactions;
* lower effectiveness of occupational theory and physiotherapy when conducted virtually;
* temporary shortage of therapists due to closing of borders;
* delays in diagnosis and gaining of access to early intervention due to shortage of resources in acute hospitals; and
* increased sense of danger for PWDs, especially the deaf, in navigating public spaces due to increased use of motorised bicycles by, and increase in numbers of, food delivery riders.
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|  | ***Table 8: Art 16 (Freedom from Exploitation, Violence and Abuse) (1)*** |
| Description  | 1. States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social, educational and other measures to protect persons with disabilities, both within and outside the home, from all forms of exploitation, violence and abuse, including their gender-based aspects. |
| Gaps Identified*(by Respondents)* | * A significant concern for caregivers proved to be the degree of access that their care recipients would have to basic legal and social protections, particularly in future scenarios where caregivers themselves have passed on
	+ Due to the vulnerability of persons with certain disabilities to exploitation by others, or the inability of those with some disabilities to explain the realities of their condition or speak up for their rights, many caregivers fear that in the absence of competent advocates, their care recipients would either be swindled by tricksters or find themselves on the wrong side of the law and suffer as a result
 |
| Recommendations Mooted*(by Respondents)* | * In light of PWDs’ vulnerability to exploitation by others, a suggestion was mooted to institute a one-stop, cross-departmental touchpoint of service specialising in providing legal and social protection to PWDs
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|  | ***Table 9: Art 19 (Living Independently and Being Included in the Community)*** |
| Description  | States Parties to the present Convention recognize the equal right of all persons with disabilities to live in the community, with choices equal to others, and shall take effective and appropriate measures to facilitate full enjoyment by persons with disabilities of this right and their full inclusion and participation in the community, including by ensuring that:1. Persons with disabilities have the opportunity to choose their place of residence and where and with whom they live on an equal basis with others and are not obliged to live in a particular living arrangement;
2. Persons with disabilities have access to a range of in-home, residential and other community support services, including personal assistance necessary to support living and inclusion in the community, and to prevent isolation or segregation from the community;
3. Community services and facilities for the general population are available on an equal basis to persons with disabilities and are responsive to their needs.
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| Developments Cited | * In 2019 a workgroup was convened to formulate strategies to enable PWDs’ to lead independent lives more generally
	+ In 2021, the workgroup released 11 recommendations which all came to receive government support. The recommendations are focused on (a) improving the accessibility of the built environment, (b) ensuring access to information and services, (c) increasing the adoption of assistive technology and (d) raising awareness of disability and thus promoting inclusion. The government has already begun implementing some of these recommendations and will work towards full implementation
 |
| Gaps Identified*(by Previous Literature)* | * Caregivers interviewed by the government have expressed the need for alternative life-long care arrangements for PWDs outside placements in segregated residential services
 |
| Gaps Identified*(by Respondents)* | * While most respondents acknowledged the importance of robust institutions in housing PWDs with more challenging or severe needs, they nonetheless said that more could be done for other PWDs beyond conventional residences
 |
| Recommendations Mooted*(by Respondents)* | * Focus group respondents in this study made recommendations for the adoption of a more community-focused approach in housing PWDs, with added provisions for comprehensive educational and enrichment programmes
	+ It was raised that this did not necessarily entail abandoning the current framework of residential services, such as ADHs; but rather the selective adoption of practices from other institutions like SPED schools, which are perceived as opening up to the broader community — for example, a recent initiative in establishing a cafe staffed by PWDs on SPED premises for members of the general public
* Many respondents attested to the need for a healthy balance where PWDs in residential settings are given some level of autonomy in forging and sustaining social relationships, while their safety and personal interests are safeguarded against those who wish to exploit them
	+ Ultimately, through such a balancing act, it is hoped that PWDs will face fewer barriers in meeting fundamental social needs
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|  | ***Table 10: Art 24 (Education) (2b)*** |
| Description  | 2. In realizing this right, States Parties shall ensure that:b) Persons with disabilities can access an inclusive, quality and free primary education and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live; |
| Developments Cited | * The amendment of Singapore’s Compulsory Education Act in 2018 made it compulsory for all children with disabilities to receive at least primary school-level education, with effect from the 2019 Primary 1 cohort
* Singapore’s mainstream primary, secondary and post-secondary schools are being built or upgraded to feature barrier-free accessibility
* Other than initiatives targeting physical barriers to inclusion, efforts are made to eradicate social barriers through a variety of programmes promoting purposeful interaction between children with and without disabilities from young
	+ These include MOE’s Satellite Partnership Programme (targeting students from mainstream and SPED schools)
 |
| Progress Noted *(by Respondents)* | * Having received widespread support from the vast majority of respondents sampled, professionals in particular highlighted how the passing of the Act has made it harder for children with disabilities to fall through the cracks of the education system.
	+ Now, upon completing their pre-school education, children with special educational needs who can access the national curriculum and learn in large group settings receive support to continue their primary and secondary education in mainstream schools
 |
| Gaps Identified*(by Previous Literature)* | * Some parents surveyed by the government had expressed frustration at having to contend with long waiting-lists when seeking to enroll their child into a SPED school
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| Recommendations Mooted*(by Respondents)* | * Professionals sampled have advised for the crafting of student engagement activities held in mainstream schools around the needs and interests of students with disabilities, so as to ensure meaningful interaction between such students and their typically developing peers
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|  | ***Table 11: Art 24 (Education) (2d)*** |
| Description  | 2. In realizing this right, States Parties shall ensure that:1. Persons with disabilities receive the support required, within the general education system, to facilitate their effective education;
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| Developments Cited | * With regard to policies on primary and secondary school, MOE has strengthened support for the rising numbers of students with special educational needs enrolled in mainstream schools through specialised learning support programmes and various school-based interventions
* Teachers trained in providing SPED are posted to mainstream schools to provide targeted support for students with special educational needs
 |
| Progress Noted *(by Respondents)* | * The provision of added curriculum support or case-by-case exemptions for students with disabilities in mainstream schools
 |
| Recommendations Mooted*(by Respondents)* | * Focus group respondents in this study have recommended adjustments to the student-to-teacher ratios in mainstream settings to deliver even better educational services to students with disabilities
	+ In particular, smaller class sizes in mainstream settings are thought to benefit students with and without special educational needs alike by providing educators the added time needed to give each student dedicated attention whilst juggling other demands such as covering the set curriculum and meeting key performance indicators (KPIs).
* PWDs consulted recommended the provision of targeted social and academic support for students with disabilities transiting into or entering mainstream education, perhaps even through specialised support services managed, run or staffed by other PWDs who can relate personally to the experience of disablement
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|  | ***Table 12: Art 24 (Education) (2e)*** |
| Description  | 2. In realizing this right, States Parties shall ensure that:1. Effective individualized support measures are provided in environments that maximize academic and social development, consistent with the goal of full inclusion.
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| Developments Cited | * Inclusive pre-schools are providing avenues for students with and without developmental needs to learn and play alongside each other
* A workgroup involving the public and private sectors has also been tasked with finding better ways to support children with moderate to severe developmental needs in mainstream preschools
	+ In 2021, the workgroup released 7 recommendations to move towards greater inclusion in pre-schools and enhance support for children with developmental needs. Notable recommendations included the development of an Inclusive Support Programme (InSP), enhancements to pre-service training and professional development and suggestions to strengthen screenings, referrals and parent education. The government has expressed its support for the recommendations and is working towards full implementation, with InSP piloted at 7 pre-schools as of June 2022
* In 2018, a survey of 423 EI (Early Intervention) professionals revealed that the vast majority of respondents (92%) had assessed the EI sector to have made considerable progress over the past decade, in spite of reported limitations.
* Beyond preschool, children who require a more customised and individualised approach to learning may attend one of Singapore’s 22 government-funded Special Education (SPED) schools run by SSAs
	+ The per capita grant for each child attending SPED schools in Singapore is significantly higher than that for those in mainstream schools, because the former cater to children with varying needs
* Three new autism-focused SPED schools will be set up over the next few years
* For existing SPED schools, key areas of focus in recent years have included expanding curriculum customisation and support, strengthening the capability of SPED educators, and facilitating greater collaboration between SPED schools
 |
| Progress Noted *(by Respondents)* | * In general, moves in the last decade to establish more SPED schools in Singapore have been commended by some caregivers sampled
* Some caregivers recruited welcomed, too, the introduction of vocational, social and life skills into the SPED curriculum – expressing the hope that this would better enable SPED graduates to secure employment and live life more independently upon completing their education
* In particular, professionals participating in this study have commended:
	+ the increased funding allocated to SPED programmes;
	+ the common curriculum framework for all SPED schools;
	+ the efforts to work with schools to review and enhance the school-based curriculum; and
	+ the curriculum’s emphasis on a person-centered approach;
 |
| Gaps Identified*(by Previous Literature)* | * High turnover rates of staff in SPED schools, coupled with considerable variation in SPED curricula, has led to noticeable differences in the quality of teaching both within and between SPED schools
 |
| Recommendations Mooted*(by Respondents)* | * Focus group respondents in this study have recommended adjustments to the student-to-teacher ratios in SPED settings to deliver even better educational services to students with disabilities
* Hopes have also been expressed that there will be continuing efforts to diversify the educational pathways available to students enrolled in SPED schools so as to better reflect the diversity of students’ career aspirations, potential and goals of personal development
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|  | ***Table 13: Art 24 (Education) (3c)*** |
| Description  | 3. States Parties shall enable persons with disabilities to learn life and social development skills to facilitate their full and equal participation in education and as members of the community. To this end, States Parties shall take appropriate measures, including:c) Ensuring that the education of persons, and in particular children, who are blind, deaf or deafblind, is delivered in the most appropriate languages and modes and means of communication for the individual, and in environments which maximize academic and social development. |
| Developments Cited | * Children with visual impairment, hearing loss and or physical impairments can also access school-based itinerant support services, and assistive technologies to facilitate their learning in mainstream environments
 |
| Progress Noted *(by Respondents)* | * Professionals consulted have commended technological adaptations that have enabled students with disabilities to integrate more smoothly into mainstream education
* Professionals sampled have also commended the contributions of assistive technologies – in the form of communication devices such as augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) tools, interactive bots and cognitive games – in SPED classrooms and therapy settings
* On the whole, PWDs and caregivers sampled have commended:
	+ the availability of note-taking and interpretation services for students who are deaf/hard-of-hearing in mainstream education;
	+ the availability of note-taking and scribe services for students with visual impairments in mainstream education; and
	+ the availability of assistive technologies for the purposes of education
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|  | ***Table 14: Art 24 (Education) (4)*** |
| Description  | 4. In order to help ensure the realization of this right, States Parties shall take appropriate measures to employ teachers, including teachers with disabilities, who are qualified in sign language and/or Braille, and to train professionals and staff who work at all levels of education. Such training shall incorporate disability awareness and the use of appropriate augmentative and alternative modes, means and formats of communication, educational techniques and materials to support persons with disabilities. |
| Developments Cited | * Introduction of new measures aimed at developing Early Childhood (EC) educators’ skills and enhancing career progression
	+ Review of Skills Framework for Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)
	+ Development of a Continuing Professional Development Roadmap for EC educators
* A professional development roadmap is to be introduced in phases for all educators in mainstream schools so as to enhance special educational needs (SEN) training and to systematically develop mainstream educators’ competencies in supporting special educational needs
* Measures have been introduced to improve the remuneration accorded to SPED staff
* More recently, in 2021, the MSF announced in that close to 1,000 job opportunities were created for Singaporeans to join the early childhood sector to help address the strong demand for early childhood-related professionals.
 |
| Progress Noted *(by Respondents)* | * In total, 76% of respondents polled in a 2018 survey of 423 EI (Early Intervention) professionals planned to remain in the EI sector for three years or more while 63% of respondents indicated satisfaction with their current work situation
* Professionals participating in this study have commended:
	+ the mandatory training of SPED educators;
	+ the placement of Transition Coordinators at SPED schools, to ease the transition of children with disabilities to post-SPED;
	+ the availability of trained staff to support students with special needs at primary, secondary and tertiary levels (Special Education Needs (SEN) Officers, previously called Allied Educators for Learning and Behavioural Support or AEDs (LBS);
	+ the introduction of selected National Institute of Education (NIE) courses open to SPED teachers; and
	+ moves made to increase the remuneration accorded to SPED teachers
* PWDs and caregivers sampled have commended the provision of specialised support for students with SEN more generally through the allocation of staff specialising in SEN support
 |
| Gaps Identified*(by Previous Literature)* | * In 2018, a survey of 423 EI professionals revealed that a significant proportion of respondents reported the prevalence of quick burnouts (51%), unattractive salary and benefits (44%), and shortages in manpower (34%)
	+ 76% of respondents planned to remain in the EI sector for three years or more, while 63% indicated satisfaction with their current work situation
	+ Furthermore, a majority of these respondents contended that the goal of providing an inclusive preschool education had been obstructed by insufficient resources (66%), deficiencies in the training of mainstream teachers (58%) and an education system that has placed high emphasis on standardised testing (58%)
* Earlier feedback sought from SPED school leaders and parents of students with special educational needs by the government indicated that more could be done to improve educators’ skills (in mainstream and SPED settings) and better equip them with teaching resources
 |
| Gaps Identified*(by Respondents)* | * More generally, respondents in this study have provided feedback that recruitment has been a perennial challenge for the SPED sector, where it has proved challenging to attract competent talent
	+ While respondents perceived this outcome as stemming from a multiplicity of factors, key determinants cited included the following:
		- the social perception that being a SPED educator is not as prestigious as being a mainstream educator;
		- the relative lack of training, certification and career development opportunities for SPED educators as compared to mainstream educators; and,
		- the absence of complimentary mental health or respite services for SPED staff
 |
| Recommendations Mooted*(by Respondents)* | * Expanding administrative duties and responsibilities in SPED schools have prompted calls to hire more dedicated administrative staff, so as to better allow SPED educators to focus their energies on teaching
* With regard to mainstream education, discussants attest that the training and placement of more SEN officers in mainstream schools is needed as more students with disabilities enroll in these schools
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|  | ***Table 15: Art 24 (Education) (5)*** |
| Description  | 5. States Parties shall ensure that persons with disabilities are able to access general tertiary education, vocational training, adult education and lifelong learning without discrimination and on an equal basis with others. To this end, States Parties shall ensure that reasonable accommodation is provided to persons with disabilities. |
| Developments Cited | * At the post-secondary level, students with disabilities may apply for enrolment into mainstream tertiary institutions
* Alternatively, those with moderate to severe special educational needs may apply to SPED schools which offer vocational training programmes and receive nationally-accredited certifications
* For SPED students who do not qualify for vocational certification programmes but are still capable of work, the School-to-Work (S2W) Transition Programme provides customised job training and support for up to one year after graduation
* SG Enable’s Job Shadowing Day provides added work exposure through day-long attachments to various professionals
* SG Enable partners with Institutes of Higher Learning (IHLs) to match tertiary students with disabilities to suitable internship and mentorship opportunities
* Special Educational Needs (SEN) Support Offices have now been set up in all publicly-funded IHLs to support students with special educational needs at post-secondary and university levels
* PWDs with moderate to severe disabilities who are unable to secure open employment may be admitted into Sheltered Workshops (SWs) or Day Activity Centres (DACs) run by selected SSAs
	+ SWs provide work or training for PWDs who are not yet ready or unsuited for open employment
		- Unfortunately, SWs are not in a position to provide PWDs with the employee benefits typically afforded by full-time employment
	+ DACs provide long-term care services for PWDs in need of intensive support
* In 2019, a workgroup was convened to formulate strategies to improve PWDs’ access to lifelong learning
	+ In 2021, recommendations by the workgroup were released – overall, these recommendations seek to (a)better prepare students with special educational needs for employment and (b) support PWDs in upgrading their skills
	+ The government has approved all the recommendations mooted and is working progressively towards full implementation
* New pilot programmes – Enabling Service Hubs (ESH) and Enabling Business Hubs (EBH) – were launched in 2022 to work towards meeting a gap in services for adult PWDs who do not attend any regular disability service after graduating from Special Education Schools
	+ The ESH will provide “flexible social and learning activities” while the EBH will offer “customised[,]…longer-term [employment] support”
 |
| Progress Noted *(by Respondents)* | * The introduction of the WSQ (Workforce Skills Qualification) for students on the vocational training track at selected SPED schools drew particular praise from professionals sampled
* PWDs and caregivers sampled have commended moves to create internship opportunities for students with disabilities
 |
| Recommendations Mooted*(by Respondents)* | * It has been suggested that resources to set up SEN support Offices should be made available to privately-funded IHLs and to part-time IHL students, going forward
* Recommendations were made by professionals engaged to develop a range of education and enrichment opportunities for SPED graduates so that they may continue to develop themselves and apply the skills gleaned in SPED schools through lifelong learning
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|  | ***Table 16: Art 25 (Health) (b)*** |
| Description  | States Parties recognize that persons with disabilities have the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health without discrimination on the basis of disability. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure access for persons with disabilities to health services that are gender-sensitive, including health-related rehabilitation. In particular, States Parties shall:b) Provide those health services needed by persons with disabilities specifically because of their disabilities, including early identification and intervention as appropriate, and services designed to minimize and prevent further disabilities, including among children and older persons; |
| Developments Cited | * With regard to early detection, the Singapore government’s partnership with the KK Women’s and Children’s Hospital (KKH) has allowed for the timely screening of babies at high risk of developmental delays
* The Department of Child Development (DCD) at the KKH and the Child Development Unit (CDU) at the National University Hospital (NUH) both provide assessments and diagnoses for developmental delays
* These organizations can also refer infants or young children in need of early intervention (EI) to the most appropriate services for follow-up care
* Other touchpoints providing detection and referral services include Child Guidance Clinics, preschool educators and developmental screening assessments provided by family doctors, polyclinic doctors and paediatricians across Singapore
* Parents have also been empowered to identify and flag developmental delays through the redesigned child health booklets and resource kits assigned to every Singaporean child by the government
* There is currently a range of government-funded EI services offered across 21 EI centres run by selected Social Service Agencies (SSAs) and 10 EI centres run by private organisations
	+ At present, EI services support children with developmental needs in preschool settings (via the *Development Support (DS) and Learning Support (LS) Programme* and the *Integrated Child Care Programme (ICCP)*) and in dedicated EI Centres (via the *Early Intervention Programme for Infants and Children (EIPIC) Programme* and the *Enhanced Pilot for Private Intervention Providers (Enhanced PPIP) Programme*)
	+ Since July 2019, two additional programmes – the *EIPIC Under-2s Programme* and the *DS-Plus Programme* – were introduced to offer intervention more tailored to the needs of children with varying developmental needs
* All Singaporean children requiring EI services are eligible for means-tested government subsidies
	+ In 2019, EI programme fees were also reduced for most income groups by approximately 30% to 70% on average
 |
| Progress Noted *(by Respondents)* | * Caregivers sampled in this study noted how the expansion in the number of EI centres over the years has made it progressively easier to access EI services in Singapore
* Professionals sampled in this study have cited advancements in the provision of EI services, specifically in terms of the following:
	+ higher funding for EIPIC programmes;
	+ a greater range of EIPIC services;
	+ the better customisation of EI services;
	+ the greater involvement of caregivers in EI service provision;
	+ a stronger focus on building developmental skills;
	+ earlier diagnoses and intervention;
	+ improved tracking of children’s developmental milestones;
	+ a more meaningful assessment of children’s overall development, and
	+ greater standardisation in the quality of EI services being provided across EIPIC centers
* In 2019, EI programme fees were also reduced for most income groups by approximately 30% to 70% on average
	+ According to focus group respondents, the fee reductions were especially beneficial for middle-income families who, as a category, are not eligible for as many government subsidies as families from low-income backgrounds are
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|  | ***Table 17: Art 25 (Health) (e)*** |
| Description  | States Parties recognize that persons with disabilities have the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health without discrimination on the basis of disability. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure access for persons with disabilities to health services that are gender-sensitive, including health-related rehabilitation. In particular, States Parties shall:e) Prohibit discrimination against persons with disabilities in the provision of health insurance, and life insurance where such insurance is permitted by national law, which shall be provided in a fair and reasonable manner; |
| Gaps Identified*(by Respondents)* | * While the government has done much to provide PWDs residing in Singapore with access to affordable healthcare and universal health insurance coverage, including those with pre-existing disabilities, through national schemes such as MediSheild Life; caregivers have feedbacked that more could be done in the space of private insurance which is currently perceived as inadequate in their coverage of persons with autism
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|  | ***Table 18: Art 27 (Work and Employment) (1a)*** |
| Description  |  1. States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to work, on an equal basis with others; this includes the right to the opportunity to gain a living by work freely chosen or accepted in a labour market and work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities. States Parties shall safeguard and promote the realization of the right to work, including for those who acquire a disability during the course of employment, by taking appropriate steps, including through legislation, to, inter alia:a) Prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability with regard to all matters concerning all forms of employment, including conditions of recruitment, hiring and employment, continuance of employment, career advancement and safe and healthy working conditions; |
| Developments Cited | * All Singapore-based organisations are subject to the Tripartite Guidelines on Fair Employment Practices which state clearly that employers must recruit employees on the basis of merit, regardless of disability
 |
| Gaps Identified*(by Previous Literature)* | * In previous literature, PWDs, advocates and service providers have identified societal attitudes towards PWDs as a key area for improvement which if properly addressed is thought to be able to reduce barriers to employment
	+ With regard to societal attitudes, the over-representation of PWDs in low-wage sectors – such as hospitality, food and beverage, wholesale, retail and administrative support – has been attributed primarily to social prejudice
	+ Such observations are consistent with reports by PWDs that they had been coerced – by caregivers or job matching staff in SSAs – into unfulfilling, low-paid work that did not reflect their aptitude or preferences
* The persistence of social prejudice was highlighted by a NCSS survey in 2015, in which over a third of Singaporean respondents polled indicated they would hesitate to employ a PWD
	+ However, the same study found that public attitudes improved with higher frequencies of reported contact with PWDs
 |
| Gaps Identified*(by Respondents)* | * According to professionals consulted, a common challenge for PWDs in employment has been the prevalence of social prejudice at workplaces
* More generally, professionals and PWDs sampled in this study reiterated the importance of monitoring the disbursement and use of funds under the Open Door Programme to ensure that errant employers do not profit from these funds by employing PWDs in a tokenistic manner as was observed by some
* PWDs sampled in this study noted that prejudice and discrimination have continued to pose significant barriers to securing employment, even in cases where PWDs had strong resumes
* In cases where workplaces were not trained adequately to support employees with disabilities, PWDs have acknowledged instances of struggling to communicate effectively with a direct supervisor or of being mistreated by an errant colleague
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|  | ***Table 19: Art 27 (Work and Employment) (1b)*** |
| Description  | 1. States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to work, on an equal basis with others; this includes the right to the opportunity to gain a living by work freely chosen or accepted in a labour market and work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities. States Parties shall safeguard and promote the realization of the right to work, including for those who acquire a disability during the course of employment, by taking appropriate steps, including through legislation, to, inter alia:b) Protect the rights of persons with disabilities, on an equal basis with others, to just and favourable conditions of work, including equal opportunities and equal remuneration for work of equal value, safe and healthy working conditions, including protection from harassment, and the redress of grievances; |
| Gaps Identified*(by Respondents)* | * PWDs who have secured employment have not always found equal remuneration relative to their neuro-typical, able-bodied colleagues with the same job scope, even in cases whereby expectations set for PWDs in the workplace are thought to have been exceeded
	+ Note: Such discriminatory practices are in direct contravention of the Tripartite Guidelines on Fair Employment Practices to which all Singapore-based organisations are subject and which state clearly that employers must recruit employees on the basis of merit, regardless of disability
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|  | ***Table 20: Art 27 (Work and Employment) (1c)*** |
| Description  | 1. States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to work, on an equal basis with others; this includes the right to the opportunity to gain a living by work freely chosen or accepted in a labour market and work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities. States Parties shall safeguard and promote the realization of the right to work, including for those who acquire a disability during the course of employment, by taking appropriate steps, including through legislation, to, inter alia:c) Ensure that persons with disabilities are able to exercise their labour and trade union rights on an equal basis with others; |
| Gaps Identified*(by Respondents)* | * Some respondents highlighted the need to ensure that all PWDs who are placed in employment enjoy basic legal protection, such as formal contracts and workplace insurance, which some workplaces fail to provide, in contravention of the Ministry of Manpower’s (MOM) best practices
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|  | ***Table 21: Art 27 (Work and Employment) (1e)*** |
| Description  | 1. States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to work, on an equal basis with others; this includes the right to the opportunity to gain a living by work freely chosen or accepted in a labour market and work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities. States Parties shall safeguard and promote the realization of the right to work, including for those who acquire a disability during the course of employment, by taking appropriate steps, including through legislation, to, inter alia:e) Promote employment opportunities and career advancement for persons with disabilities in the labour market, and assistance in finding, obtaining, maintaining and returning to employment; |
| Developments Cited | * The Open Door Programme (launched 2014) aims to enhance PWDs’ employability, expand the scope of employment opportunities and encourage employers to hire, train and integrate PWDs through workplace modifications and staff education
* The Special Employment Credit (SEC) and Additional SEC schemes subsidise the gross monthly salary of PWDs
	+ These were replaced by the Enabling Employment Credit (EEC) scheme in 2021
	+ The EEC scheme delivers “stronger support” to employers and covers four out of five working PWDs
* Low-income PWDs can obtain additional financial and employment support via the Workfare Income Supplement (WIS) scheme and the Workfare Skills Support (WSS) scheme
* The SkillsFuture Study Award (launched 2015) and Goh Chok Tong Enable Awards (launched 2016) also aim to recognize and reward PWDs’ achievements
* Notably, in 2021 — after the first phase of fieldwork concluded — the government created 1,700 job and training opportunities for PWDs through specialised programmes that complement the Open Door Programme
* In addition, the Jobs Growth Incentive (JGI) — first introduced in September 2020 to support the retention of local workers during the pandemic — supported over 2,900 PWDs between September 2020 and August 2021
* The Housing Development Board (HDB) now allocates shop spaces near residential areas at discounted rentals to eligible social enterprises which commit to hiring a workforce of at least 20% of PWDs
* In 2019, the fifth iteration of the national, biennale, Enabling Employers’ Awards – held to recognise organisations and individuals who demonstrate commitment to hiring and integrating PWDs into the workforce – saw an over 50% increase in successful contenders from 2017
* In 2019, a workgroup was convened to formulate strategies to improve PWDs’ access to employment
	+ In 2021, the workgroup released a total of 10 recommendations which all came to receive government support. Overall, the recommendations seek to (a)better prepare students with special educational needs for employment, (b) create new employment opportunities, (c) support PWDs in upgrading their skills and (d) better recognize and incentivize employers
		- The government has begun to implement some of the recommendations whilst working progressively to realize all of the recommendations in full
* In March 2020, more than 100 employers – including the Singaporean government – committed themselves to building a more inclusive workforce by signing the President’s Challenge Enabling Employment Pledge
* 2020 also saw the launch of the ‘Enabling Mark’, a new accreditation framework recognizing businesses with disability-inclusive employment practices
	+ By 2021, 88 organisations had became thus accredited
 |
| Progress Noted *(by Respondents)* | * All in all, the resources made available under the Open Door Programme to better integrate PWDs into workplaces were hailed by research respondents in this study as being a move in the right direction
* In terms of job creation, respondents in this study believed that SG Enable's various outreach and engagement initiatives have expanded employment opportunities for PWDs
* Caregivers have voiced their appreciation of the role played by SSAs and social enterprises in producing new working environments and job opportunities for PWDs
* Next, with regard to employment support, the Housing Development Board (HDB) now allocates shop spaces near residential areas at discounted rentals to eligible social enterprises which commit to hiring a workforce of at least 20% of PWDs
	+ Commending the innovation of this specific strategy, professionals sampled reported how transport fees incurred by PWDs employed under this partnership have fallen as a result
* The value of the national, biennale, Enabling Employers’ Awards – held to recognise organisations and individuals who demonstrate commitment to hiring and integrating PWDs into the workforce – in inculcating a more inclusive national working culture has been acknowledged by focus group discussants
 |
| Gaps Identified*(by Respondents)* | * According to professionals sampled, common challenges for PWDs cited in workplaces have included impromptu changes in job scope or working environment and difficulties in preparing for appraisals and performance reviews
* Professionals consulted in this study acknowledged that more could be done to enable the transition of PWDs engaged in SWs into open employment
 |
| Recommendations Mooted*(by Respondents)* | * To further enhance the value of the Open Door Programme, suggestions were mooted by many to expand the scope of the programme to include the provision of longer-term job support and career guidance for PWDs placed in employment
	+ It is hoped that such measures would serve to maximise the retention of PWDs after job placement
* Respondents expressed the hope that current measures to expand the range of vocations available to PWDs will be extended progressively so that options for PWDs to be engaged in meaningful and fruitful employment may continue to improve
* The supported employment model – whereby PWDs would be placed on job sites to receive exposure to real world working conditions but with a familiar team of professional staff posted on-site to provide support – was mooted by some as a potential means of moving Sheltered Workshop participants into open employment
	+ That said, supported employment has been recognised to be costly to run
* More broadly, however, focus group respondents have emphasised the importance of continuing to work towards the customisation of vocational and employment services to better meet the varied needs of diverse PWDs and reflect the scope of their vocational or developmental aspirations
	+ In sustaining such an effort, respondents noted, first, the importance of obtaining adequate resources to run such services efficiently and, secondly, of generating enough vacancies to accommodate all PWDs in need of these services
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|  | ***Table 22: Art 27 (Work and Employment) (1g)*** |
| Description  | 1. States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to work, on an equal basis with others; this includes the right to the opportunity to gain a living by work freely chosen or accepted in a labour market and work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities. States Parties shall safeguard and promote the realization of the right to work, including for those who acquire a disability during the course of employment, by taking appropriate steps, including through legislation, to, inter alia:g) Employ persons with disabilities in the public sector; |
| Developments Cited | * In March 2020, more than 100 employers – including the Singaporean government – committed themselves to building a more inclusive workforce by signing the President’s Challenge Enabling Employment Pledge
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|  | ***Table 23: Art 28 (Adequate Standard of Living and Social Protection) (1)*** |
| Description  | 1. States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to an adequate standard of living for themselves and their families, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions, and shall take appropriate steps to safeguard and promote the realization of this right without discrimination on the basis of disability. |
| Developments Cited | * A range of residential services provide PWDs with short- and long-term accommodation
	+ Such services provide alternative avenues for PWDs whose caregivers are no longer able to provide for their needs
	+ At present, options include Community Group Homes (CGHs), Adult Disability Hostels and Adult Disability Homes (ADHs)
* NCSS also provides subsidies of up to 80% to SSAs and charities to encourage technological innovations in the residential care of PWDs
 |
| Progress Noted *(by Respondents)* | * Professionals sampled have noted that the availability of ADHs in Singapore has improved significantly over the past decade
	+ The opening of St. Andrew’s Adult Home in April 2019 — a purpose-built ADH under St. Andrew’s Autism Centre — was noted and welcomed by some respondents
	+ This specific ADH caters primarily to adults diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
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|  | ***Table 24: Art 28 (Adequate Standard of Living and Social Protection) (2b)*** |
| Description  | 2. States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to social protection and to the enjoyment of that right without discrimination on the basis of disability, and shall take appropriate steps to safeguard and promote the realization of this right, including measures:b) To ensure access by persons with disabilities, in particular women and girls with disabilities and older persons with disabilities, to social protection programmes and poverty reduction programmes; |
| Developments Cited | * All Singaporean citizens are eligible for heavy government subsidies offsetting a range of healthcare costs
* The MSF’s ComCare funding (for low-income Singaporeans) and the means-tested Community Health Assist Scheme (CHAS) provide additional financial assistance to eligible individuals and families who require it
* Most Singaporeans will also be automatically enrolled in Singapore’s national savings, insurance and endowment schemes
	+ National disability insurance schemes include either ‘ElderShield’ (launched 2002) or ‘CareShield Life’ (launched October 2020)
* ‘Elderfund’ (launched 2020) provides monthly cash payouts of 250 SGD to severely disabled, low-income Singaporeans aged 30 years or older who are ineligible for other government schemes
* The Senior’s Mobility and Enabling Fund (SMF) and the Pioneer Generation Disability Assistance Scheme (PioneerDAS) also provides seniors with funding for assistive mobility devices and defrays certain miscellaneous expenses
	+ Enhancements made to the SMF in early 2022 have also (a) expanded the scope of assistive devices and other healthcare items eligible for subsidies, (b) introduced provisions for the replacement of devices and (c) increased subsidies for selected items and for seniors with lower income
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|  | ***Table 25: Art 28 (Adequate Standard of Living and Social Protection) (2c)*** |
| Description  | 2. States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to social protection and to the enjoyment of that right without discrimination on the basis of disability, and shall take appropriate steps to safeguard and promote the realization of this right, including measures:c) To ensure access by persons with disabilities and their families living in situations of poverty to assistance from the State with disability-related expenses, including adequate training, counselling, financial assistance and respite care; |
| Developments Cited | * To make SPED for Singapore Citizens more affordable, MOE has worked with social service agencies to introduce subsidy schemes and reduce monthly school fees
* Six Special Student-care Centres (SSCCs) also provide subsidised before- and after- school care services for students with disabilities aged seven to 18
	+ In 2020, the eligibility criteria for SSCC subsidies was expanded to allow more families to qualify for financial assistance
	+ Average fees payable by most families were reduced by 30% to 80%
* The Special Needs Trust Company (SNTC) (launched 2008) establishes trust funds disbursing monthly payouts to PWDs after caregivers' demise, while the Special Needs Savings Scheme (SNSS) helps caregivers set aside Central Provident Fund (CPF) savings to finance long-term care
* The means-tested Home Caregiving Grant (HCG) provides monthly payouts of 200 SGD to defray miscellaneous caregiving costs
* Moreover, those supporting spouses, children, parents and/or siblings with disabilities may access tax reliefs
* The Caregivers Training Grant (CTG) also provides 200 SGD per financial year to subsidise caregiver training
* The Caregivers Pod (launched 2018) provides a dedicated space for training and peer support
* With respect to caregiver respite, nine SSAs in Singapore now offer respite services; two provide home-based services
* Moreover, the Drop-In Disability Programme (DDP) administers day-care and recreational services for adults with disabilities
* A range of residential services also provide PWDs with short- and long-term accommodation and, by doing so, accord their caregivers brief or longer-term respite
* The government’s latest Caregiver Support Action Plan — implemented progressively from 2019 to 2021 — aims, among other things, to expand respite care options, caregiver support networks, and accessibility to disability services
* Recently, the SG Together Alliance for Action on Caregivers of PWDs — a partnership between NCSS, SG Enable and community partners — was formed to “co-create solutions on pressing issues" including those related to self-care as well as accessing peer mentorship and informal support
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| Progress Noted *(by Respondents)* | * Focus group respondents in this study have expressed appreciation for the role played by the Singapore government in advancing the provision of caregiver support and respite through the institution of SG Enable, the establishment of the Enabling Village initiative, the development of the SNTC, and the allocation of funds for financial support, caregiver training and respite services
* Moreover, the formation of formal and informal caregiver support groups and networks has been acknowledged to be a good development for the disability sector more generally
 |
| Gaps Identified*(by Previous Literature)* | * While much has been done to develop caregiver support, previous research has nonetheless highlighted areas for further improvement – for instance, respite is difficult to attain when PWDs require intensive, round-the-clock attention
* Some households have also been observed to undergo disruptive reversals in caregiving roles – with PWDs becoming responsible instead for the care of ageing parents – that result in unmet household needs
	+ Such challenges are only further compounded for single-parent and or low-income households with limited financial and human resources
 |
| Gaps Identified*(by Respondents)* | * In the context of future care planning services, some caregivers consulted in this study have proposed an expansion in the scope of the SNTC to include provisions for the development of a care plan for PWDs
	+ However, the SNTC does have case managers who craft care plans so that future caregivers can be better informed when taking decisions such as disbursing the funds saved via the SNTC according to the best interests of PWDs
	+ Yet, some caregivers feedbacked that such planning is still not comprehensive or streamlined enough to meet their needs, perhaps due to the SNTC being a relatively recent development
* Caregivers have found it difficult to source for respite providers who possess the professional competencies and facilities necessary to cater to the needs of persons with severe disabilities and/or behavioural issues
	+ It has been suggested that this may be because respite care for persons with severe disabilities or support needs is resource-heavy and therefore expensive to run
 |
| Recommendations Mooted*(by Respondents)* | * While the establishment of the Caregivers Pod in 2018 was lauded by caregivers sampled as a good move generally, calls have been made for subsequent Caregivers Pods to, first, be set up within residential and neighbourhood areas for easy accessibility and, secondly, to be staffed by competent, professional carers so that caregivers may entrust PWDs in their care and receive complete respite in the protected environment of the Pods
* Next, with regard to caregiver support services, professionals and caregivers sampled have expressed the hope that home-based and other forms of respite care services would be expanded in the future, for the particular benefit of caregivers with care recipients who have moderate to severe support needs
* In general, however, it was noted that access to caregiver respite services ought to be streamlined further so that any caregivers in urgent need of respite may obtain expedited relief
* Moreover, while much has been done to provide support services to primary caregivers on an individual basis – usually, to one or both parents, as in the case of children with disabilities – it is further recommended that support services cater also to the well-being of family units as a whole
	+ Specific areas of concern cited include, the mental health of neuro-typical and able-bodied siblings – who are often the secondary caregivers – and the marital health of couples with children with disabilities
* Suggestions have also been mooted for there to be customised employment support and job placement services for full-time caregivers who would like to support themselves and their families better financially but who find it difficult to source for suitable work on their own
* In addition, discussants have advised the continued, regular review of means-testing eligibility criteria for disability services, to better prevent households in need from falling through emerging cracks
	+ Vulnerable households cited specifically in this regard include middle-income families with multiple children or sometimes even multiple children with disabilities
* Respondents have also reiterated the importance of using up-to-date financial records when applying means-testing criteria, especially as unemployment often occurs abruptly
* The suggestion was also mooted for means-testing assessments to include the calculation of household debts and expenses in addition to that of household income for a fairer, more holistic application of means-testing criteria
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|  | ***Table 26: Art 30 (Participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport) (1c)*** |
| Description  | 1. States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to take part on an equal basis with others in cultural life, and shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that persons with disabilities:c) Enjoy access to places for cultural performances or services, such as theatres, museums, cinemas, libraries and tourism services, and, as far as possible, enjoy access to monuments and sites of national cultural importance. |
| Developments Cited | * Efforts to expand access to educational arts and culture activities have led to the introduction of a sensory-friendly series of theatre productions and the installation of a sensory room in the National Museum of Singapore
* Further plans are being made to institute Quiet Thursdays in the Museum, moving forward
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|  | ***Table 27: Art 30 (Participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport) (5d)*** |
| Description  | 5. With a view to enabling persons with disabilities to participate on an equal basis with others in recreational, leisure and sporting activities, States Parties shall take appropriate measures:d) To ensure that children with disabilities have equal access with other children to participation in play, recreation and leisure and sporting activities, including those activities in the school system; |
| Developments Cited | * Efforts are being made to eradicate social barriers through promoting purposeful interaction between children with and without disabilities from a young age
	+ A wide range of dedicated play facilities (including inclusive playgrounds) and activities have been established as a result
 |
| Progress Noted *(by Respondents)* | * The installation of inclusive playgrounds has been generally acknowledged by focus group respondents to be a good development
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| Recommendations Mooted*(by Respondents)* | * Professionals expressed their hopes for all playgrounds to be progressively upgraded to be inclusive, instead of establishing inclusive playgrounds separately
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|  | ***Table 28: Art 33 (National Implementation and Monitoring) (1)*** |
| Description  |  1. States Parties, in accordance with their system of organization, shall designate one or more focal points within government for matters relating to the implementation of the present Convention, and shall give due consideration to the establishment or designation of a coordination mechanism within government to facilitate related action in different sectors and at different levels. |
| Developments Cited | * In 2013, Singapore ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD) and, thereafter, designed the third and most recent Masterplan to serve as Singapore’s action plan for the progressive implementation of the UN CRPD, moving forward
	+ To better consolidate efforts in these directions, SG Enable was instituted in 2013 to serve as a dedicated agency overseeing matters relating to the disability sector
* Moving forward, the government has announced that, as of 1 October 2020, SG Enable is to serve as a single touchpoint for the entire disability sector by progressively:
	+ Taking over the administration of disability programmes currently run by the MSF and the NCSS;
	+ Consolidating volunteer efforts across the sector; and,
	+ Spearheading public education efforts on issues related to disability.
* That said, the MSF’s Disability Office is to retain policy oversight over disability matters
 |

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| Ms Lily YipMr Stanley Tang | Head, Pre-school and Curriculum, Research and Innovation Development, APSN (up till July 2021)Chief Executive Officer, APSN (from 29 Nov 2021) |
| Mr JR Karthikeyan | Chief Executive Officer, AWWA |
| Mr Malcolm WongMs Lynette Gomez | Deputy Executive Director, Rainbow Centre (up till 31 Aug 2021)Deputy Principal, Rainbow Centre (from 29 Nov 2021) |
| Mr Abhimanyau Pal | Chief Executive Officer, SPD |

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| Ms Sakunika Wewalaarachchi | Co-Principal Investigator |
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| Mr Shane Pereira | Research Associate |
| Ms Elizabeth Lim | Research Associate |
| Ms Sim Kai Lin | Research Associate |
| Ms Samantha Nah | Research Assistant |

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1. In the first phase of fieldwork, participants from a mix of key stakeholder groups in Singapore’s disability sector were recruited to participate in a series of 24 focus group discussions (FGDs) and 27 in-depth interviews, from August 2019 to July 2020. In the second qualitative phase of the study conducted in 2022 from May to July 2022, 50 additional participants were recruited to form 12 focus group discussions.

These groups included :

(i) PWDs across the disability spectrum;

(ii) Caregivers;

(iii) Frontline officers of service providers and social workers;

(iv) Early educators; and,

(v) Other professionals and community partners interested in the needs of PWDs.

A total of 216 participants were recruited for the qualitative component of this study.

In addition, about 2000 respondents were recruited from the general population to complete a quantitative survey investigating public attitudes towards PWDs and other disability issues. These respondents were recruited in 2022 between June to July. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. *List of* ***UN CRPD Articles*** *–*

[*https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities-2.html*](https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities-2.html) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
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19. ***This is in line with CRPD Article: Art 4 (General Obligations) (1a)***–

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30. *Ibid.* [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
31. ***This is in line with CRPD Article: Art 4 (General Obligations) (1a)***–

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34. ***This is in line with RPD Article: Art 33 (National Implementation and Monitoring) (1)*** *–*

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[*https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-24-education.html*](https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-24-education.html) [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
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121. ***This is in line with CRPD Article: Art 24 (Education) (4)*** –

[*https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-24-education.html*](https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-24-education.html) [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
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[*https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-24-education.html*](https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-24-education.html) [↑](#footnote-ref-135)
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136. ***This is in line with CRPD Article: Art 24 (Education) (5)*** –

[*https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-24-education.html*](https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-24-education.html) [↑](#footnote-ref-137)
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[*https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-24-education.html*](https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-24-education.html) [↑](#footnote-ref-140)
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[*https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-24-education.html*](https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-24-education.html) [↑](#footnote-ref-145)
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[*https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-24-education.html*](https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-24-education.html) [↑](#footnote-ref-151)
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[*https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-24-education.html*](https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-24-education.html) [↑](#footnote-ref-153)
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154. ***This is in line with CRPD Article: Art 24 (Education) (4)*** –

[*https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-24-education.html*](https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-24-education.html) [↑](#footnote-ref-155)
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242. ***This is in line with CRPD Article: Art 24 (Education) (2d)*** –

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270. *Ibid.* [↑](#footnote-ref-271)
271. ***This is in line with CRPD Article: Art 27 (Work and Employment) (1c)*** –

*https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-27-work-and-employment.html* [↑](#footnote-ref-272)
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273. ***This is in line with CRPD Article: Art 27 (Work and Employment) (1e)*** –

*https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-27-work-and-employment.html* [↑](#footnote-ref-274)
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275. *In Attach-and-Train (AnT) programmes, PWDs will receive on-the-job and structured training by host companies, in temporary attachments and/or traineeships. Persons with disabilities on AnT will receive an allowance benchmarked at 80% of the salary for similar roles. The government will support 70% and the host company the remaining 10% of the allowance.* Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-276)
276. ***In Skills Development Programmes (SDP)****, PWDs can attend customised training courses to upskill themselves. Persons with disabilities who attend SDPs will be given a monthly allowance of up to $640 for the duration of the training.* Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-277)
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*https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-28-adequate-standard-of-living-and-social-protection.html* [↑](#footnote-ref-490)
490. Goy (2016). [↑](#footnote-ref-491)
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492. ***This is in line with CRPD Article: Art 28 (Adequate Standard of Living and Social Protection) (1)*** –

*https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-28-adequate-standard-of-living-and-social-protection.html* [↑](#footnote-ref-493)
493. ***This is in line with CRPD Article: Art 28 (Adequate Standard of Living and Social Protection) (1)*** –

*https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-28-adequate-standard-of-living-and-social-protection.html* [↑](#footnote-ref-494)
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496. Goy (2016). [↑](#footnote-ref-497)
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*https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-28-adequate-standard-of-living-and-social-protection.html* [↑](#footnote-ref-498)
498. Goy (2016). [↑](#footnote-ref-499)
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505. *Ibid.* Para 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-506)
506. *Ibid.* [↑](#footnote-ref-507)
507. Goy (2016). [↑](#footnote-ref-508)
508. ***This is in line with CRPD Article: Art 28 (Adequate Standard of Living and Social Protection) (1)*** –

*https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-28-adequate-standard-of-living-and-social-protection.html* [↑](#footnote-ref-509)
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510. *Ibid.* [↑](#footnote-ref-511)
511. Raghunathan, R., Balakrishnan, B., Smith, C. J., & Md Kadir, M. (2015). *People with physical disabilities in Singapore: Understanding disabling factors in caregiving, education, employment and finances* (SMU Change Lab). Lien Centre for Social Innovation. https://ink.library.smu.edu.sg/lien\_reports/8 [↑](#footnote-ref-512)
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*https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-28-adequate-standard-of-living-and-social-protection.html* [↑](#footnote-ref-513)
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514. ***This is in line with CRPD Article: Art 28 (Adequate Standard of Living and Social Protection) (2c)*** –

*https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-28-adequate-standard-of-living-and-social-protection.html* [↑](#footnote-ref-515)
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518. ***This is in line with CRPD Article: Art 28 (Adequate Standard of Living and Social Protection) (2c)*** –

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519. Ministry of Social and Family Development (2017a). [↑](#footnote-ref-520)
520. ***This is in line with CRPD Article: Art 19 (Living Independently and Being Included in the Community)*** –

*https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-19-living-independently-and-being-included-in-the-community.html* [↑](#footnote-ref-521)
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524. ***This is in line with CRPD Article: Art 19 (Living Independently and Being Included in the Community)*** –

[*https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-19-living-independently-and-being-included-in-the-community.html*](https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-19-living-independently-and-being-included-in-the-community.html) [↑](#footnote-ref-525)
525. ***This is in line with CRPD Article: Art 19 (Living Independently and Being Included in the Community)*** –

*https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-19-living-independently-and-being-included-in-the-community.html* [↑](#footnote-ref-526)
526. *Ibid.* [↑](#footnote-ref-527)
527. ***This is in line with CRPD Article: Art 28 (Adequate Standard of Living and Social Protection) (2c)*** –

*https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-28-adequate-standard-of-living-and-social-protection.html* [↑](#footnote-ref-528)
528. *Ibid.* [↑](#footnote-ref-529)
529. ***This is in line with CRPD Article: Art 16 (Freedom from Exploitation, Violence and Abuse) (1)*** –

*https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-16-freedom-from-exploitation-violence-and-abuse.html* [↑](#footnote-ref-530)
530. *Ibid.* [↑](#footnote-ref-531)
531. *Ibid.* [↑](#footnote-ref-532)
532. ***This is in line with CRPD Article: Art 9 (Accessibility) (2f)*** –

[*https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-9-accessibility.html*](https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-9-accessibility.html) [↑](#footnote-ref-533)
533. ***This is in line with CRPD Article: Art 25 (Health) (e)*** –

*https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-25-health.html* [↑](#footnote-ref-534)
534. ***This is in line with CRPD Article: Art 9 (Accessibility) (1a)*** –

*https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-9-accessibility.html* [↑](#footnote-ref-535)
535. ***This is in line with CRPD Article: Art 28 (Adequate Standard of Living and Social Protection) (2c)*** –

*https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-28-adequate-standard-of-living-and-social-protection.html* [↑](#footnote-ref-536)
536. *Ibid.* [↑](#footnote-ref-537)
537. *Ibid.* [↑](#footnote-ref-538)
538. *Ibid.* [↑](#footnote-ref-539)
539. ***This is in line with CRPD Article: Art 9 (Accessibility) (1a)*** –

*https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-9-accessibility.html* [↑](#footnote-ref-540)
540. *Ibid.* [↑](#footnote-ref-541)
541. ***This is in line with CRPD Article: Art 28 (Adequate Standard of Living and Social Protection) (2c)*** –

*https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-28-adequate-standard-of-living-and-social-protection.html* [↑](#footnote-ref-542)
542. *Ibid.* [↑](#footnote-ref-543)
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545. *Ibid.* [↑](#footnote-ref-546)
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547. ***This is in line with CRPD Article: Art 28 (Adequate Standard of Living and Social Protection) (2c)*** –

*https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-28-adequate-standard-of-living-and-social-protection.html* [↑](#footnote-ref-548)
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549. *Ibid.* [↑](#footnote-ref-550)
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551. *According to recent announcements made in 2022, the AfA has already begun to support the implementation of two projects, namely,* ***Project 3i*** *and* ***Community Circles*** *: “****Project 3i****is a caregiver-led initiative to provide social and emotional support for caregivers that is integrative, individualised and intentional. It will connect caregivers to form community networks, and support caregivers through peer mentorship and professional support. The second project is****Community Circles****, where a small group of friends, neighbours, or volunteers, forms a ‘circle’ of support around caregivers, to provide practical and emotional support. [Both] [t]hese projects have initiated an ecosystem of community and peer support that reaches out to caregivers”.* Extracted from: Ministry of Social and Family Development (2022b, Para 9). [↑](#footnote-ref-552)
552. ***This is in line with CRPD Article: Art 28 (Adequate Standard of Living and Social Protection) (2c)*** –

*https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-28-adequate-standard-of-living-and-social-protection.html* [↑](#footnote-ref-553)
553. ***This is in line with CRPD Article: Art 11 (Situations of Risk and Humanitarian Emergencies)*** –https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-11-situations-of-risk-and-humanitarian-emergencies.html [↑](#footnote-ref-554)
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561. ***This is in line with CRPD Article: Art 11 (Situations of Risk and Humanitarian Emergencies)*** –https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-11-situations-of-risk-and-humanitarian-emergencies.html [↑](#footnote-ref-562)
562. Ministry of Social and Family Development. (2021a, January 29). *1,200 job and training opportunities for persons with disabilities in 2021*. Retrieved July 4, 2022, from https://www.msf.gov.sg/media-room/Pages/1200-job-and-training-opportunities-for-pwds-in-2021.aspx [↑](#footnote-ref-563)
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564. ***This is in line with CRPD Article: Art 11 (Situations of Risk and Humanitarian Emergencies)*** –https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-11-situations-of-risk-and-humanitarian-emergencies.html [↑](#footnote-ref-565)
565. Chow et al. (2022). [↑](#footnote-ref-566)
566. A survey on public attitudes towards disability was conducted in 2022 between June to July with about 2000 members of the public (Singapore Citizens and Permanent Residents only). [↑](#footnote-ref-567)
567. ***This is in line with CRPD Article: Art 4 (General Obligations) (1a)***–

[*https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-4-general-obligations.html*](https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-4-general-obligations.html) [↑](#footnote-ref-568)
568. *Ibid.* [↑](#footnote-ref-569)
569. *Ibid.* [↑](#footnote-ref-570)
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572. Ministry of Social and Family Development (2022b). [↑](#footnote-ref-573)
573. *“In October 2021, we increased funding for Day Activity Centres or DACs, by $3 million, or 20%. This will allow our DACs to hire more care staff and to increase the quality of care for clients…”*: Ibid. Para 5c. [↑](#footnote-ref-574)
574. ***This is in line with CRPD Article: Art 4 (General Obligations) (1a)***–

[*https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-4-general-obligations.html*](https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-4-general-obligations.html) [↑](#footnote-ref-575)
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579. ***This is in line with CRPD Article: Art 4 (General Obligations) (1a)***–

[*https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-4-general-obligations.html*](https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-4-general-obligations.html) [↑](#footnote-ref-580)
580. Ministry of Social and Family Development (2020c). [↑](#footnote-ref-581)
581. ***This is in line with CRPD Article: Art 33 (National Implementation and Monitoring) (1)*** *–*

[*https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-33-national-implementation-and-monitoring.html*](https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-33-national-implementation-and-monitoring.html) [↑](#footnote-ref-582)
582. Ministry of Social and Family Development. (2020b, March 5). *Speech by Mr Desmond Lee at the Committee of Supply 2020.* https://www.msf.gov.sg/media-room/Pages/Speech-by-Mr-Desmond-Lee-at-the-Committee-of-Supply-2020.aspx [↑](#footnote-ref-583)
583. ***This is in line with CRPD Article: Art 33 (National Implementation and Monitoring) (1)*** *–*

[*https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-33-national-implementation-and-monitoring.html*](https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-33-national-implementation-and-monitoring.html) [↑](#footnote-ref-584)
584. ***This is in line with CRPD Article: Art 4 (General Obligations) (1a)***–

[*https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-4-general-obligations.html*](https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-4-general-obligations.html) [↑](#footnote-ref-585)
585. *Ibid.* [↑](#footnote-ref-586)
586. Ministry of Social and Family Development (2021e). [↑](#footnote-ref-587)
587. *Under the pilot, a multi-disciplinary nine-person team of social workers and allied health professionals trained in disability care will help each family better access the ecosystem of disability and social support services, and coordinate the interventions and services that the family requires.* :Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-588)
588. ***This is in line with CRPD Article: Art 4 (General Obligations) (1a)***–

[*https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-4-general-obligations.html*](https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-4-general-obligations.html) [↑](#footnote-ref-589)
589. ***This is in line with CRPD Article: Art 28 (Adequate Standard of Living and Social Protection) (2c)*** –

*https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-28-adequate-standard-of-living-and-social-protection.html* [↑](#footnote-ref-590)
590. *Ibid.* [↑](#footnote-ref-591)
591. *Ibid.* [↑](#footnote-ref-592)
592. *Ibid.* [↑](#footnote-ref-593)
593. ***This is in line with CRPD Article: Art 4 (General Obligations) (1a)***–

[*https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-4-general-obligations.html*](https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-4-general-obligations.html) [↑](#footnote-ref-594)
594. *Ibid.* [↑](#footnote-ref-595)
595. *Ibid.* [↑](#footnote-ref-596)
596. *Ibid.* [↑](#footnote-ref-597)
597. ***This is in line with CRPD Article: Art 4 (General Obligations) (1g)*** –

*https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-4-general-obligations.html* [↑](#footnote-ref-598)
598. *Ibid.* [↑](#footnote-ref-599)
599. Ministry of Social and Family Development (2022a). [↑](#footnote-ref-600)
600. ***This is in line with CRPD Article: Art 4 (General Obligations) (1g)*** –

*https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-4-general-obligations.html* [↑](#footnote-ref-601)
601. *“Currently, persons with disabilities may also apply to the SMF (Seniors’ Mobility and Enabling Fund) for devices that would support their ageing needs. From 14 February 2022, persons with disabilities who have tapped on the ATF before age 60 years will be supported by the ATF for all their device needs throughout their lifetime.”* : Ministry of Social and Family Development (2022a, Para 6). [↑](#footnote-ref-602)
602. *Ibid.* [↑](#footnote-ref-603)
603. ***This is in line with CRPD Article: Art 4 (General Obligations) (1g)*** –

*https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-4-general-obligations.html* [↑](#footnote-ref-604)
604. Ministry of Social and Family Development (2022b). [↑](#footnote-ref-605)