

MEDIA RELEASE

Social Service Organisations in Singapore Step Forward as One Tribe to Affirm Vibrancy of What They Do as Catalysts of Social Change

- *Social Service Tribe, a community of all in-service sector professionals will also be a unified platform to raise profile for the sector in talent attraction*
- *Initiative comes in the wake of revised salary norms of up to 12% for the various professions and job levels in the sector*

22 MARCH 2018, Singapore – Today marks the launch of **Social Service Tribe**, the community of all in-service professionals in the social service workforce. This initiative, spearheaded by the **National Council of Social Service (NCSS)**, reflects the strong and vibrant bonds of a workforce that shares the same values and a common vision to empower everyone to live with dignity.

Derrick Lau, a social worker with REACH Youth Powerhouse shares these values which are integral to and expected of members of the Tribe – Integrity, Client-Centricity, Passion for Service, Compassion and Resilience. At the age of 35, he made a decision to change his profession from music to social service. “To me, it felt like a natural progression. In music, a huge portion of the work is to invoke and inspire. It is likewise in youth service, only more direct – as I channel my experiences, and what I went through in my own life to help troubled youths.”

The Tribe will be a **unified platform** for the sector, made up of over 450 social service organisations, **to raise its profile in talent attraction as one**, instead of individual efforts with limited resources in a highly competitive labour market.

Its website www.socialservicetribe.sg detailing over 30 diverse roles, education and career development pathways, and a job portal, is the first of its kind for industry-specific professionals in Singapore. It aims to inspire current and future generations of Singaporeans to choose social service as their career of choice.

With a more visible profile and the appeal of drawing in more like-minded individuals to serve the sector, the Tribe will **contribute to two of the key thrusts of the 5-year road map, the Social Service Sector Strategic Thrust (4ST)** launched last July – to enable stronger social service organisations in delivering their services; and forge a more collaborative and impactful social service ecosystem.

Mr Sim Gim Guan, NCSS CEO said: “The Social Service Tribe initiative aims to raise the profile of the community working in the social service sector. This is timely as Tribe will be supported by a sector that is adopting the best human resource practices, with opportunities in career and leadership development, training, professional conversion and continuing education in place.”

“Understanding how the sector is perceived by the public at large will help us address some of the common myths. We are very grateful to many of our sector stakeholders who have come forward to affirm that what they do is beyond a job. In the process, we hope to attract like-minded individuals with the same shared purpose and values to consider a career with us.”

Findings from a **2016 nation-wide survey conducted by the NCSS with more than 2,000 respondents** including sector leaders, students and mid-careerists, included:

- **Perception of the sector as just a place for volunteers.** *The Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) forecasts that by the year 2025, Singapore will require a workforce of about 19,000, up from the current 15,000 to meet increasingly complex social needs. Hence, the social service sector requires about 500 new full-time positions each year till 2025.*
- **Two in five are unaware that the social service hires, and only one in five will consider a career in social service.** *The sector offers more than 30 job roles in corporate services, as trained specialists and in the rank and file.*

- **Perception that there is no financial stability and that the sector pays poorly.** *MSF has announced that from 1 April 2018, salary norms across all professions and job levels in the social service will be revised by up to 12%. Since 2012 this review has been conducted every three years to keep remuneration practices competitive.*
- **Among the students surveyed, more than half did not believe that they could build a career in the sector.** *The sector offers a multitude of channels for career development. These channels include training and continuing education opportunities, scholarships, professional conversion, as well as leadership development. In addition, Career Planning is among the four main HR functions adopted as part of the 3-year (2016-2018) People Practice Consultancy initiative that was developed in partnership with three top consultancy firms.*

Currently, many who serve in the Tribe entered the sector from diverse backgrounds. They join for different reasons, but every one holds similar values, which define what it takes to be part of the Tribe.

Physiotherapist Pauline Koh came from an athletic background, and was always interested in biomechanics and human movement. Coupled with the fact that her father instilled in her a desire to help the less unfortunate, she became a qualified physiotherapist with an NCSS Social Service Scholarship and today, draws great satisfaction from seeing her clients regain confidence in life.

Evelyn Chen's first exposure to social service was when she volunteered with adults with varying disabilities while in university. She realised that their difficulties in communication affected their relationships with others, and consequently their quality of life. She was then inspired to help people communicate better. With the help of a social service scholarship, she pursued her master's in speech-language therapy overseas, and since returning she now serves as a speech-language therapist at a social service organisation.

Many sector professionals have come forward to affirm the collective value and impact of being part of the Social Service Tribe. Executive Director of SPD, Abhimanyau Pal said: “We are a group of multi-disciplinary professionals, but each role plays a key part in this ecosystem to empower individuals towards meaningful lives. I have never looked back since the day I joined the social service sector.”

Evelyn reaffirms the exciting potential of the sector: “The perception is that the social service sector is an unexciting one with limited opportunities for development. On the contrary, it is growing at a fast pace, with attractive remuneration, and opportunities for career development. As more attention is placed on the sector, and as it gears up to serve the increasing needs of our society, we can only look forward to exciting times ahead.”

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National Council of Social Service (NCSS)

NCSS is the umbrella body for over 450-member social service organisations in Singapore. Its mission is to provide leadership and direction in enhancing the capabilities and capacity of our members, advocating for social service needs and strengthening strategic partnerships, for an effective social service ecosystem. Community Chest and Social Service Institute (SSI) are part of NCSS.

Social Service Sector Strategic Thrusts (4ST)

The Social Service Sector Strategic Thrusts (4ST) is a 5 year roadmap for the sector, co-developed by NCSS with stakeholders in the social service ecosystem – member organisations, service users, government, community, business leaders and civic-minded individuals. It is guided by a person-centred and holistic approach towards advancing the quality of life for individuals. The 4ST calls for active participation and collaboration so that everyone in the ecosystem plays a part to achieve a shared vision, where every person is empowered to live with dignity in a caring and inclusive society.