

# Children's charity aims to go beyond basic needs in supporting beneficiaries

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Recognising that it must go beyond just helping its beneficiaries with basic needs, the Singapore Children's Society aims to keep up with the changing needs of children and develop initiatives that better support them.

"We must do more than just lending our beneficiaries a helping hand. Instead, we must find ways to enable them to be independent and resilient," said chairman Koh Choon Hui on Tuesday at a gala dinner at Marina Bay Sands to celebrate the charity's 70th anniversary.

For instance, the society's family service centre now offers psychological assessment and intervention on top of support for basic needs like food and shelter due to the rising number of cases of family violence, mental health issues and adverse childhood experiences.

Beyond its services, the society has furthered its research, public education and advocacy efforts to address issues such as children's mental health and bullying.

"We have grown from a convalescent home for malnourished children in Changi in the early 1950s to Singapore's leading children's charity with 11 service centres islandwide," Mr Koh wrote in a commemorative book titled *By Your Side: 70 Years Of Journeying Together*.

The book documents the society's challenges and successes through the years and includes testimonials from beneficiaries, staff and volunteers.

Mark (not his real name), a former resident of Sunbeam Place @ Children's Society from 2005 till the start of 2022, is featured in the book. The 22-year-old thanked staff, social service practitioners and friends he met at the residential home for supporting him.

The residential home in Choa Chu Kang cares for children who

were abused or severely neglected. "They gave me a vision and a goal that I couldn't even see for myself. I'm grateful for every single person who has been in my life," he wrote. "Sunbeam Place is family to me."

The book was presented to Deputy Prime Minister Heng Swee Keat, who was the guest of honour at the dinner.

"Children growing up today have to deal with issues that previous generations did not face," Mr Heng said.

For example, he added, the Internet and social media can negatively affect mental health, and the children will face major global challenges, such as geopolitical turbulence or climate change, in their lifetimes.

The society's services have evolved over time to address the emerging needs of children.

Oasis for Minds Services @ Children's Society was recently set up to provide preventive services and mental health literacy to children, youth and their caregivers, said Singapore Children's Society chief service officer Sue Cheng.

The charity, in collaboration with Yale-NUS College, also conducted research on the use of physical discipline in Singapore through online surveys and interviews.

"The findings serve to better inform parents and caregivers, and raise awareness about the potential harmful consequences of physical and psychological discipline on children's well-being," Ms Cheng said.

Research findings were shared with social service practitioners at its Learning Festival held on Oct 14 as part of the society's 70th anniversary celebrations.

The gala dinner wrapped up the year-long celebrations.

About 320 guests attended the dinner and a record \$1.2 million was raised.

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