Formed in 1995, the National Committee on Youth Guidance and Rehabilitation (NYGR) addresses problems and issues related to juvenile delinquency in Singapore by:

- working with partners to support youth-at-risk and help them find positive alternatives to crime and anti-social behaviour
- coordinating and reviewing existing intervention programmes to identify gaps
- leading collaborative research on youth-at-risk issues and the effectiveness of programmes
- developing a central system to facilitate data sharing across agencies
- working with social service agencies, self-help groups and other community organisations to develop programmes and build capabilities

The NYGR comprises agencies with a stake in reducing juvenile delinquency and youth crime. The Central Youth Guidance Office (CYGO) is the secretariat to the NYGR.
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ADVANCING YOUTH EMPLOYMENT
The National Committee on Youth Guidance and Rehabilitation (NYGR) has transformed its structure, approach and programmes over the years to keep pace with the changing needs of youth-at-risk who need help. NYGR Chairman Masagos Zulkifli outlines the key changes and gives a glimpse of future challenges on the horizon.

Guidance, not crime

The name change from IMYC to NYGR in 2007 reflects how our approach towards helping youth-at-risk has shifted over the years, from serving criminal justice to creating diversionary pathways.

This means that rather than waiting for youth to commit a crime, get charged in court and fall into the prison system – where they may be contaminated by other criminals who are undesirable influences – we divert them away from prison at the earliest possible stage. Through our interventions, we gently lead them onto the right path by inspiring, motivating and guiding them while they remain in their communities.

Our data shows that more than 85 percent of those we diverted from prison are more likely to stay on the right side of the law.

To this end, numerous programmes have been put in place to create an alternative pathway of rehabilitation in the community. One such programme is the Guidance Programme, where first-time youth...
offenders who commit minor offences will not be charged and are let off with a police caution if they complete the six-month counselling and rehabilitative programme.

We have also moved much further upstream, meaning that we identify and help youth-at-risk as early as possible, before they even do anything illegal. A good example is the Youth GO! Programme, where youth workers hit the streets to make friends with youth in the neighbourhood who are troubled or face other life issues. Since Youth GO! was introduced in 2012, youth workers have approached over 15,000 youth to lend them a helping hand or provide a listening ear.

This book introduces some of the key programmes which the NYGR has introduced over the years, outlines how effective these programmes have been, and it features youth whose lives have been changed for the better.

**The CYGO difference**

In 2010, the formation of the Central Youth Guidance Office (CYGO) was functionally crucial in creating an operational unit for our inter-ministry youth work. The secondment of officers from the Ministries of Education, Home Affairs, and Social and Family Development to make up CYGO enabled more effective inter-agency collaboration, while building upon the foundation established by the IMYC. Also, after serving several years in CYGO, the officers returned to their ministries more attuned to the issues facing youth-at-risk.

An immediate positive outcome from the formation of CYGO was the strategic alignment of youth programmes. An example of a CYGO-created platform is the Conversations on Youth conference, which was started for school principals, teachers, police officers, probation officers and community partners to meet every two years to discuss and collectively manage the youth crime situation. This directs discussion to youth-centric rather than organisation-centric solutions.

**Creating a programme map**

Over the years, as the NYGR (then-IMYC) broadened the spectrum of programmes to collectively enlarge and strengthen the safety net for youth-at-risk, it became necessary for us to make sense of and organise these programmes. We needed a clearer picture to make decisions, almost akin to creating a map of a jungle.

So today, we have categorised our programmes for youth-at-risk into three broad groups: statutory programmes required under the law; non-statutory but essential programmes; and those that are non-essential but complementary to the other programmes.

This classification helps us to do our work better because we think about the programmes in each category in a different way. Statutory programmes are generally well-supported, with clear processes and outcomes, as it is legally required. As for the programmes in the other two categories, some of which may be ground-up initiatives started by people who want to make a difference in the lives of youth, we want to help them to carry out stronger programmes by providing support in areas like staff training and data measurement.
Crime trends

It is heartening that over the last few years, youth crime trends in Singapore have been on the decline. Youth arrests, for instance, fell steadily from 5,050 in 2005 to 3,120 in 2014. Outside of the police system, I am also glad to note that there are fewer school dropouts and teenage pregnancies.

This is due to a whole ecology of inter-related factors, from efforts made to identify the first signs of delinquency, to the state of the economy which affects whether parents are employed, to how schools are engaging youth-at-risk, or how the police are ensuring safety in the community by eradicating gang influences. Many factors determine the thoughts, values and behaviours of young people, and no single factor explains why youth turn to or away from crime.

The bottom line is that we can never take things for granted.

Singapore has always been pro-active when it comes to the state of youth. We make sure we are highly attuned to the evolving trends that might affect our youth so as to nip issues in the bud.

Challenges ahead

As we move into the future, it is crucial that we remain nimble in foreseeing and addressing new challenges.

One of these is cyber crime. Singapore youth are amongst the most wired worldwide and the concern is that they could be the victims or perpetrators of online mischief. In Singapore, cyber crime cases have grown significantly. We will continue educating youth and their parents on the responsible use of new media, but at the same time we also have to build up our technological expertise, in areas such as hacker prevention.

Another is the spectre of cannabis. Many states in the United States have decriminalised cannabis to a certain extent, meaning that those abusing the drug may be fined instead of being sent to jail. The global knock-on effect is that cannabis becomes commercialised and easily procured online anywhere in the world. The biggest worry, however, is that cannabis can easily become a gateway drug to more serious drugs like heroin, and the abuser could even turn to crime. About four out of five of the local inmate population had drug antecedents. Thus, we are keeping a tight watch on this development and will continue to educate our youth on the dangers of drug abuse via our preventive drug education talks.

Terrorism is a continuing area of concern. Terrorists in Syria are able to reach out to and engage youth all over the world, including in Singapore, through social media. We have to meet this challenge head on by engaging the youth through the Muslim religious community, so they are inoculated against the doctrines espoused by these terrorists. We also work with the schools, alerting them to watch out for changes in student behaviour and attitude so we can counsel them at an early stage. Already, a 19-year-old was detained in April 2015 for planning acts of terrorism after being radicalised through the Internet. This is one too many, and only a community working together can continue to identify them early and help them before they commit acts of violence.
Putting structure to passion

In order to meet future challenges head on, we need to adapt. We have already started on our journey to put structure to passion.

We are now spending time and resources gathering data so we have concrete historical information to guide our future policy-making decisions. In 2014, for instance, we started the Youth Information System, which brings together data from three ministries – Education, Home Affairs, and Social and Family Development. This database will allow us to see, at a glance, all the intervention programmes a youth-at-risk may have gone through, and is a powerful tool allowing macro-statistical analysis that could guide us toward coming up with better programmes.

Data gathering is also important so that we can measure the effectiveness of our programmes, and what concrete difference they have made, over the years. Ultimately, we want to make sure that what we do is evidence-based. Our resources should be spent on what is most effective, not what we are most passionate about.

We are moving toward professionalising the sector. While social workers and psychologists require degrees before they can practise, there are no similar requirements for youth workers. Therefore, while those who work with youth-at-risk right now are driven by passion and a desire to transform lives – which is the right starting point – not all of them have adequate training.

For instance, sports and arts is a very effective channel through which to engage youth, draw them out of their shells and inspire them positively. But while sport or art enthusiasts who start programmes for youth-at-risk may be domain experts, they may not be well-equipped to counsel a youth who subsequently reveals that he has a problem at home.

To that end, we are conceptualising a National Youth Work Competency framework which will outline competencies and training which youth workers need.

Like a pebble thrown into a pond, the ripple effect of youth crime has far-reaching consequences. Our youth are our future, and it is imperative that we walk with them and guide them along the right path, for one youth convicted is one conviction too many.

Masagos Zulkifli
Chairman
Being asked to chair the Inter-Ministry Committee on Youth Crime (IMYC) between 1995 and 2010 was an opportunity which I was profoundly grateful for. Until today, the experience of working with a pioneer inter-agency team of passionate and committed people to bring about positive change for Singapore’s youth-at-risk still resonates with me.

The impetus that led to the formation of the IMYC was the alarming increase in youth crime in the 1990s. The number of young Singaporeans arrested nearly doubled in 10 years from 691 cases in 1980 to 1,205 in 1990. This rose to 2,102 in 1994.

An Inter-Ministry Committee on Dysfunctional Families, Juvenile Delinquency and Drug Abuse (IMC) recommended that an Inter-Ministry Committee on Juvenile Delinquency (IMJD) be set up in 1995. This became known as the IMYC in 1998.

Previously, different organisations ran separate programmes to help youth-at-risk. Schools may have their own programmes for misbehaving students, the police may have their own ways of dealing with youth who commit crimes, the courts may take over once the youth are charged.

But the formation of the IMYC recognised that the nature of youth rehabilitation – across an entire spectrum from what happens in schools or homes or how youth are treated by the law – demanded a coordinated partnership approach across every relevant government agency.

When we started, I believe, this Whole-of-Government approach to youth rehabilitation was something that no other country had ever done.

The IMYC pioneers came from diverse backgrounds. It comprised people from the then-Ministry of...

Working together presented some challenges at the onset. The different agencies were not always willing to share information, especially confidential information but this improved over time.

Without the benefit of an executive arm like the Central Youth Guidance Office (CYGO) which was formed in 2010, the committee, which discussed high-level policies, also had to think about ground-level operational details.

It was challenging and intense work. We felt like we were comrades-in-arms fighting fire. All of us were motivated and galvanised by the opportunity to be pioneers, in this partnership approach toward youth rehabilitation.

What we shared was a common purpose and passion to uplift Singapore’s youth.

I still remember we had great discussions at our meetings, not because we had to do the job, but because we wanted to do the job of trying to solve the complex problem of leading at-risk youth back into the light.

As we started the conversation, the collaborations flowed. The Honorary Voluntary Special Constabulary (VSC) scheme, under which teachers were trained to be school “police”, started in 1997 and involved the MOE and MHA. The Guidance Programme, a six-month counselling and rehabilitative programme for young offenders who have committed minor offences, started in 1997 and involved the Attorney-General’s Chambers and the then-Ministry of Community Development.

Our early work with courts resulted in the Streetwise Programme, a voluntary rehabilitation programme for youth who had unwittingly drifted into gangs. The programme has since been enhanced to rehabilitate youth who have committed any criminal offence with gang connotations.

We were given the opportunity to pioneer concepts in youth work which have since taken off. I am particularly proud of Project Bridge, a programme that offers an alternative pathway of success to early school leavers when there were few options. Started in 1999, it equips these early school leavers between the ages of 13 to 19 with job skills via vocational and apprenticeship schemes.

Cyberbullying is now a major area of concern, but back in 2001, we had already started Project CRuSH to help youth surf safely on the Internet.

Toward the last few years of my chairmanship, which ended in 2010, we started to look upstream into the root causes of youth crime, and the need to compile data for more rigorous decision-making.

Looking back, it is heartening to see how the first steps we took as a team in the early days formed part of the foundation for the work which is being done today. In Singapore, we have always believed in our young people, and I am glad we started the journey to help youth-at-risk live life joyfully.

Ho Peng Kee
Former Chairman
The Inter-Ministry Committee on Juvenile Delinquency (IMJD) was set up in 1995 and tasked with reducing the incidence of juvenile delinquency. IMJD became known as the Inter-Ministry Committee on Youth Crime (IMYC) in 1998.

The name change reflected a broadening scope of the committee’s target group and programmes. The Committee aimed to reach out to youth before they were exposed to the juvenile justice system, as well as to provide those who had strayed with a second chance.

It functioned as an advisory and consultative platform for various agencies to raise cross-agency issues and tap on the expertise of its members.

It comprised members from then-Ministry of Community Development, Youth & Sports (MCYS), Ministry of Education (MOE), Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), Ministry of Health (MOH), National Council of Social Service (NCSS), Singapore Prison Service (SPS), Singapore Police Force (SPF), Attorney-General’s Chambers (AGC), then-Subordinate Courts, National Crime Prevention Council (NCPC), National Youth Council (NYC) and academia. IMYC was chaired by Associate Professor Ho Peng Kee, then-Senior Minister of State for Law and Home Affairs, until 2010.

Going further upstream

In 2007, IMYC was renamed as the National Committee on Youth Guidance and Rehabilitation (NYGR). The change in name reflected the committee’s comprehensive and holistic approach to tackling youth crime. When it first started in the 90s, IMYC had focused largely on rehabilitation and intervention, addressing more immediate societal concerns on the rising number of youth arrests at that time. Ten years on, NYGR’s programmes span a wider spectrum.

In particular, NYGR is going upstream to address developmental issues and to tackle the phenomenon of pre-delinquency and the onset of problem behaviour. Many community agencies have also aligned their programmes over the years to nurture positive youth development and devise prevention strategies, focusing on youth as assets by engaging them in positive activities and creating opportunities for their growth.

In 2011, NYGR was re-constituted into a Steering Committee comprising political appointment holders, representatives from relevant ministries’ Government Parliamentary Committees and senior ministry officials. The Steering Committee is supported by a working group comprising ministry officials and domain experts who can be tapped for operational inputs and support in the execution of the committee’s directions. This allows NYGR to take on a more proactive and strategic role in addressing youth-at-risk issues. In addition to reviewing and identifying service gaps, NYGR would also effect systemic changes at the inter-ministry level.
The terms of reference for NYGR were also refined to better reflect its scope of work. The revised terms are:

- Develop and drive an integrated approach towards prevention and early intervention so as to provide better support to youth-at-risk and help them find positive alternatives to crime and anti-social behaviour. This approach would span across agencies and include community organisations;

- Coordinate and review existing prevention, early intervention and rehabilitation efforts by agencies to address gaps in service delivery and develop new programmes;

- Develop a central system to facilitate data sharing across agencies and for better identification, assessment, tracking, intervention and research purposes;

- Lead in collaborative research on offending behaviour and the effectiveness of prevention and intervention programmes and in turn design appropriate programmes to address youth-at-risk issues; and

- Engage and work with social service agencies, self-help groups and other community organisations to develop programmes and to build up their capacity and capabilities.

NYGR comprises representatives from the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF), MHA, MOE, MOH, NCSS, Central Narcotics Bureau (CNB), SPF, SPS as well as resource persons from AGC, State Courts, NCPC and academia.

Improving collaboration

In 2009, MHA formed an Inter-Ministry Committee on the Prevention of Re-Offending to address the problem of re-offending. One of the Committee’s key recommendations was to focus on upstream efforts and improve cross-agency efforts. As a result, the Central Youth Guidance Office (CYGO) was officially set up on 1 July 2010. It is staffed by officers from MSF, MHA and MOE. CYGO takes a life-course perspective of at-risk youth and develops an integrated approach across agencies to identify, engage and intervene at all stages of the youth’s life. It provides a focal point to strengthen and facilitate inter-agency collaboration and integration. CYGO is also the secretariat to NYGR since it took over the role from NYC in January 2011 when Mr Masagos took over as Chairman.
PRESENT
NYGR
MEMBERS

From L > R

Assoc Prof Muhammad Faishal
Ibrahim
Parliamentary Secretary,
Ministry of Education &
Ministry of Social and Family
Development from 1 Oct 2015

2nd Deputy Chairman
Ms Low Yen Ling
Parliamentary Secretary,
Ministry of Education & Ministry
of Trade and Industry from
1 Oct 2015
Mayor, South West CDC

Chairman
Mr Masagos Zulkifli
Minister for the Environment
and Water Resources from
1 Oct 2015

1st Deputy Chairman
Ms Sim Ann
Senior Minister of State,
Ministry of Culture, Community
and Youth & Ministry of Finance
from 1 Oct 2015
From L > R

Ms Ong Toon Hui
Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Social and Family Development
(Note: Dr Lee Tung Jean has been appointed Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Social and Family Development from 1 Sep 2015)

Ms Goh Soon Poh
Deputy Secretary (Policy), Ministry of Home Affairs

Mr Alex Yam Ziming
Member of Parliament for Marsiling-Yew Tee GRC from 16 Sep 2015

Secretariat
Ms Nancy Ng
Director, Central Youth Guidance Office, Ministry of Social and Family Development

Ms Tin Pei Ling
Member of Parliament for MacPherson SMC from 16 Sep 2015

Absent
Mr Lam Yi Young
Deputy Secretary (Policy), Ministry of Education

Ms Teoh Zsin Woon
Deputy Secretary (Development), Ministry of Health
PRESENT
NYGR
MEMBERS

Ms Tina Hung
Deputy CEO and Group Director,
Service Development
National Council of Social Service

Mdm Choy Wai Yin
Director, Guidance, Student
Development Curriculum Division
Ministry of Education

Mrs Ng Ai Lin
Zonal Director (Schools), South
Schools Division
Ministry of Education

Ms Chew Huey Ching
Director, Policy, Planning &
Research Division
Central Narcotics Bureau

Ms P. Premalatha
Director, Youth Division
Singapore Indian Development
Association

Mr Lester Low
General Manager
The Eurasian Association,
Singapore

Mr Goh Chim Khim
Executive Director
Chinese Development
Assistance Council

From L > R
From L > R

Mr Lee Kim Hua
Senior Director, Rehabilitation and Protection Group
Ministry of Social and Family Development

Mr Gerald Balendran Singham
Vice Chairman
National Crime Prevention Council

Assoc Prof Narayanan Ganapathy
Department of Sociology, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
National University of Singapore

DAC Jarrod Pereira
1 Deputy Director (Operations), Operations Department
Singapore Police Force

Mr Mark Tay
Director (Prosecution), Legal Services Division
Ministry of Manpower from 1 Feb 2015

Mr Edgar Foo
District Judge / Assistant Registrar
Family Justice Courts

Mr Kow Keng Siong
Deputy Chief Prosecutor
Attorney-General’s Chambers

Ms Geraldine Ong
Deputy Director, Student Affairs Division
Institute of Technical Education

Mr How Kwang Hwee
Senior Director, Policy Development Division
Ministry of Home Affairs

SUPT Benjamin Chia
Director, Strategic Planning Division
Singapore Prison Service

Ms Tuminah Sapawi
Chief Executive Officer
Yayasan MENDAKI

Absent
YOUTH, JUVENILES AND YOUNG PERSONS ARRESTED (2005-2014)

Note:
1) Youth refer to persons aged 7 to 19 years.
2) Juveniles refer to persons aged 7 to 15 years.
3) Young Persons refer to persons aged 16 to 19 years.

(Source: Singapore Police Force)
### Demographics of Youth Offenders (2014)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>2,435</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>685</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student(^1)</td>
<td>2,208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>412</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unskilled</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others(^2)</td>
<td>270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. “Student” includes both MOE and non-MOE students.

2. “Others” include occupations such as clerical/sales staff, managerial/administrative/professional staff, housewife, National Serviceman, skilled worker and other occupations that did not fall into any of the earlier categories.

### Recidivism (2014)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First-Time Offenders</td>
<td>1,965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previously Warned</td>
<td>826</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminal Records of Past Offences</td>
<td>329</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Youth Arrested for Top 10 Offences

The top 10 offences are ranked according to the number of youth arrested for the offence in 2014.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Offence</th>
<th>2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Shop Theft</td>
<td>803</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Rioting</td>
<td>322</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Other Thefts</td>
<td>232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Sexual Assault / Penetration / Grooming / Activity on Victims with Mental Disability</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Theft of Bicycles</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Theft in Dwelling</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Outrage of Modesty</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Cheating and Related Offences</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Wilful Trespass</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Fraudulent Possession of Property</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Percentage of Primary 1 Cohort Who Did Not Complete Secondary Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Ministry of Education)

### Babies Born to Teenage Girls, 2005-2014 (Aged under 20)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Babies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>853</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>838</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>820</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>816</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>678</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>641</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>624</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>575</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>487</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>406</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Immigration and Checkpoints Authority of Singapore)

### Number of Youth Drug Abusers Arrested (Aged under 20)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Arrests</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>50</td>
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(Source: Central Narcotics Bureau)

**Note:**

1) All the above figures exclude mainstream school leavers who went overseas, took a leave of absence or left due to medical reasons.

2) Years indicated in the table refers to the year in which the typical student in that particular cohort would complete secondary school (10 years after Primary 1).

3) Figures for 2012-2014 are preliminary.
CHAPTER 1

PROACTIVE PREVENTION

KEEPING YOUTH HEALTHY
Case Study

THE POWER OF A PEP TALK*

Staff Sergeant Malik Ismail and Staff Sergeant Edmund Ng, from the Geylang Neighbourhood Police Centre, visit schools in the area regularly to conduct assembly talks on crime prevention. In 2013, one of the schools’ operations manager asked if the officers could meet some of their students in smaller groups after the assembly talks. The officers would chat with the students about the offences they have committed and explain to them the consequences if they are arrested and charged in court. Since these sessions began, the school has reported positive change in the students’ behaviour.

*This is a fictitious story based on a real case study. All names have been changed.
Mr Chua told the two officers more about the three students who had been caught bullying their classmates and for fighting with students from another school last week.

Hey guys... how are you? I'm Staff Sergeant Edmund...

... and I'm Malik... so...

The two officers struck up a rapport easily and spoke to the students for nearly an hour.

Guys, I see you have so much energy... Have you heard of the Delta League?

Noppe.

Really? Never heard of it.

It's a soccer league organised by the Police. Hundreds of teams take part during the school holidays.

A few months later...

Pleasure is all ours, Ma'am!

Mr Malik and Mr Edmund, your talk with the three boys a few months back, was really helpful.

Yes, they have actually been behaving much better.

We can link you up with the Delta League officers if you're keen...

Good to see you two here for the school talk again, officers!

You know why? Malik and I told them we would keep an eye out for them when we're patrolling the neighbourhood!

At first they ran away, but now they will come over to say 'Hi'!

Hahaha. Good good!
If youth crime can be likened to a disease, it can be said that prevention is better than cure. Once youth start to commit crime and are sucked into a downward spiral of punishment and recalcitrance, it is like a tumour which has spread, and it is far harder to restore them.

The more effective approach by way of prevention is to show youth who are still on the right side of the law why they are on the right path, how they can continue keeping healthy and how they can help their peers. Through public education and empowering programmes to build self-confidence, they become more resilient and immune to the lure of crime.
Men in blue go to school

The policeman, in his blue uniform, walks into the school, but it’s not because there is trouble. Standing on the school stage during the Assembly period, he is there to give the student population some insights into the different types of crime he deals with – from loan sharking to theft.

He also tells them how to protect themselves against petty crimes like theft. If he is addressing teenagers in a secondary school, he gives them advice on how not to fall into crime themselves.

The talk is part of the long-running School Assembly Talk and Crime Prevention Exhibition initiative by the Singapore Police Force (SPF). Each year, police officers from the Neighbourhood Police Centres (NPCs) fan out to more than 300 primary and secondary schools as well as post-secondary institutions like polytechnics and the Institute of Technical Education to boost crime awareness.

The talks, which are usually well-received, feature case studies as well as quizzes that are popular with the audience. In line with the talks, crime prevention exhibitions are also held in the school.

Such talks are part of a concerted national effort to foster crime prevention knowledge amongst youth in schools and in the wider community, and can be considered as the first line of defence in educating youth on how to stay on the right side of the law before they even commit any crime.

Preventing crime by heightening awareness

Another channel with a wide reach to educate youth on crime prevention is the school Uniformed Groups.

These are popular after-school activities for many students. Not only do Uniformed Group participants arm themselves with an awareness of crime, they are also encouraged to advise and help friends and peers who may need help.

A long-running crime prevention programme for these students is the Crime Prevention Proficiency Badge Scheme run by the National Crime Prevention Council (NCPC), which started in 1982.

The badges are awarded to students aged nine to 18 in four Uniformed Groups – the Girl Guides (including Brownies), National Police Cadet Corps (NPCC), Scouts and St John Ambulance Brigade – after they pass a series of theory and practical tests on crime prevention. Practical requirements include attending crime prevention exhibitions and taking part in relevant activities like fostering awareness of crime.

NPCC cadet “saves” brother from online scam

Proficiency Badge Scheme. So when Nur A’dila saw that her brother, who often shopped online, had received an e-mail informing him that he had won a cash prize, she realised it was an online scam which she had earlier learnt about. She warned him against furnishing his personal particulars, which was required if he wanted to collect the prize, and prevented him from potentially falling into an Internet trap.
prevention in their own schools via skits or exhibitions, or designing crime prevention posters. The scheme is far-reaching and an average of 4,000 badges are given out every year.

**Roping in helping hands**

Within the NPCC – which has become one of the most popular Uniformed Groups amongst Singapore youth since it started in 1959 with 30 cadets and one officer in Bartley Secondary School – knowledge on crime prevention is drilled even deeper.

Young police cadets learn that crime prevention is core to the NPCC mission of fighting crime and keeping Singapore safe.

Every NPCC cadet goes through a three-year programme which is jointly administered by the NPCC, Ministry of Education (MOE) and the SPF to become Police Youth Ambassadors (PYA).

The aim of the programme is to develop these youth so that they can proactively come up with innovative ideas to spread the crime prevention message in their schools and in their own residential communities.

They start out acquiring general knowledge on crime prevention via talks and lectures, before getting hands-on knowledge via school and community projects which are supervised by school officers and police liaison officers from the NPCs.

Interesting projects which the NPCC cadets have embarked on in the past include “adopting” a block of flats to not only distribute daily necessities, but also to impart crime prevention knowledge to the residents. Others have even helped to apprehend snatch thieves.

For the NPCC cadets themselves, being a part of the school’s PYA initiatives underscores the fact that anyone can play a part in crime prevention. Said one cadet, after a day spent knocking on doors to inform residents to be vigilant about crime, “I felt that even with the help of several advertisements to help raise awareness on petty theft, it did not totally deter the potential criminals or fully alert the residents. By doing house-to-house visits, we hope that the members of the public would be reminded that ‘low crime does not mean no crime’ and would be constantly vigilant.”

These projects also strengthen bonds between NPCs and schools, teachers and students.

Since the project underwent a major revamp in 2014 to promote greater cooperation between NPCs and schools, Secondary 3 students from more than 124 schools have served their communities through the PYA.
Building self-confidence

Building self-confidence and self-esteem through camps and fun learning sessions can also create a positive buffer against negative influences.

Between 2007 and 2009, the NCPC organised an annual confidence-building and learning camp called Camp EVO (Empowerment, Vibrancy, Outreach) for 268 Secondary 2 and 3 students who had been nominated by their schools to attend.

During the camps, which were held at venues like Pulau Ubin, the 14- and 15-year-olds had the time of their lives. They whizzed their way down a zip line. They pitched tents. They jumped into the sea from a height.

The camp sought to instil knowledge and values in a fun and positive way, so the teens came away feeling empowered and confident about themselves. They also built up their leadership potential.

For instance, in the act of scaling a wall – which involves the climber and another person below called the belayer who anchors the climber – the participants learnt about responsibility and depending on each other.

They also attended talks where they learnt how to recognise delinquent or criminal behaviour.

Watching out for troubled youth

By way of proactive prevention, one way is to extend a helping hand to youth who are showing the first signs of delinquency.

For instance, when youth stay out late at night away from home, the fear is that they may become victims of crime or mix with unsavoury characters who may influence them to break the law.

To address this, the police started the Youth Hanging Out Late (YHOL) initiative in 2006. Youth aged 18 years old and below – seen loitering in public places after 11pm and are in the company of questionable characters or are involved in wayward activities – are given a verbal warning and their parents may be sent a letter.

Since 2006, about 42,000 letters have been sent to parents of youth checked by police under the YHOL initiative. SPF also sends such letters to the youth’s school principals as well as the Commanding Officers of the NPCs where the youth’s educational institutions are located. This is to facilitate the NPCs to follow up with the schools as part of the liaison framework between the SPF, the Central Narcotics Bureau (CNB), schools and the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF).
Strengthening families

Taking the “bigger picture” into account, one of the most important factors affecting a youth’s sense of self-esteem and stability is the strength of his family unit.

Proactive prevention does not just relate to the youth as an individual, but also to whether his loved ones are able to create a stable family environment where his emotional needs are met. A secure, well-loved youth who has a healthy relationship with his parents is less likely to get into trouble.

Recognising this, since 2002, MSF has been supporting schools through the School Family Education programme as a preventive measure. Schools can engage family life educators to conduct talks and training for parents. Through these sessions, parents gain better understanding of their children and parenting techniques that help them to increase their parenting confidence. These sessions are conducted at primary and secondary schools as well as junior colleges. In 2013, MSF enhanced its programme and re-named it as FamilyMatters@School. There are currently 290 participating schools. Over the last 13 years, 47,000 family education programmes conducted in schools have reached out to almost 5 million participants.

In 2014, MSF introduced two evidence-based programmes, Triple P (Positive Parenting Programme) and Signposts in a two-year pilot to provide support for parents who are facing parenting challenges. Developed in Australia, Triple P is supported by 35 years of evaluation research, and has been shown to work in many different cultures, socio-economic groups and family structures. It is not a “one-size-fits-all” course; depending on their needs, parents can either attend three 90-minute seminars, or four individual consultations. Signposts is designed by Australia’s Parenting Research Centre to help parents understand and manage their child’s difficult behaviour, and prevent further development of behavioural concerns.

In its first year pilot, about 1,400 parents from 20 schools attended Triple P and Signposts. In 2015, another 30 schools have signed up for the pilot. MSF plans to have more schools offer the evidence-based programmes to parents.

Reviewing approach as demographics change

To better tailor programmes to address youth crime issues at a very early stage, there has been a gradual shift “upstream” to understand why and how youth drift into crime.

Ms Lee Kwai Sem, Director of Rehabilitation and Reintegration Division, Singapore Prison Service, said: “The setup of the NYGR has led to the conceptualising and implementation of many new initiatives for the youth and their families, taking a concerted and multi-agency approach in addressing youth issues and providing greater support for the youth in their rehabilitation and reintegration. With the changing demographic and social profile of youth today, programmes and intervention approach will need to be reviewed systematically such that the interventions can be effective.”
CHAPTER 2

SCHOOL-BASED APPROACHES

UPLIFTING TROUBLED YOUTH IN SCHOOL
Ahmad’s problems began after his mother left the family. Lacking love and parental control, he became bitter and angry, especially at school. The teachers found he had issues controlling his anger and enrolled him in the Ministry of Education’s Time Out Programme (TOP)*.

*This is a fictitious story based on a real case study. All names have been changed.
As he worked hard to master the craft, Ahmad continued to be counselled and mentored by his photography instructor, school counsellor and teachers.

A few months later, Ahmad won the second prize at the school photography competition.

Ahmad’s interest in learning photography rekindled his interest in his studies. Meanwhile, his mother tried repeatedly to reconcile with him.

When Ahmad turned 14, he was finally able to let go of his anger towards his mother.

Hey, you need help with your Maths?

Yah man. This is so hard!

Ahmad, Ibu so sorry for everything.

Ibu so proud of you...
Apart from home, our young spend the most time at school. For at least six hours a day, they are in school surrounded by their friends and teachers. Therefore, beyond being an institution of learning, the school can be a place of support for a youth-at-risk as he is given timely help to stay on the right path in life.

Over the years, a collaborative approach in Singapore between the schools and other agencies such as the police and social workers has resulted in a unique partnership which has effectively resulted in lower dropout rates. Now, youth who might have strayed off the path before are guided and empowered while they are still in school to work toward a bright future.
would influence their peers, schools have increasingly embraced the opportunity to intervene and offer a helping hand at an early stage, while the students are still within the school environment.

Social workers in schools

One of the schools’ longest-standing partners would be social workers.

Social workers have played an important role in providing support for children and youth since Singapore became a nation in 1965. By 1999, social workers were providing social support for students in about 60 percent of our schools.

Today, social workers are very much a part of the support ecosystem in our schools, working closely with school staff in providing comprehensive support to students who are facing social or emotional difficulties.

Over time, the social work approach in supporting students has also evolved. So instead of dwelling on
what is not right with the youth’s life, time is spent on building up positive aspirations. Said Ms Tina Hung, Deputy Chief Executive Officer of the National Council of Social Service (NCSS): “Rather than viewing at-risk youth as liabilities to the community, there was a need to shift our focus to the strengths and talents of the youth in the various programmes and services offered.”

Ms Hung shared that NCSS had been particularly inspired by research conducted by Dr Daphna Oyserman, a US psychology professor, who developed an intervention model called “Schools-To-Jobs” based on the Identity-based Motivation (IBM) theory. Research in the United States has shown that the use of this method has led to students skipping school less, getting better grades and reducing behavioural problems.

This positive approach has come to guide social workers’ approach to their work in schools. The **Scaffold Programme** is one such pioneering initiative designed and led by NCSS.

This approach is unique because it focuses on the positive aspirations of youth, rather than on the personal problems and negative stressors in their lives. Started as a pilot for lower-secondary students in four schools in 2014, it is a 25-week programme where youth – who have been identified by their schools as being at risk – are guided toward identifying their personal aspirations, and the steps to reach them.

The Scaffold Programme is a pilot school social work model developed in collaboration with the Children-At-Risk Empowerment Association (CARE Singapore) and Students Care Service. Unlike previous programmes for at-risk youth, which tended to be

**“Rather than viewing at-risk youth as liabilities to the community, there was a need to shift our focus to the strengths and talents of the youth in the various programmes and services offered.”**

NYGR Member
**Ms Tina Hung**
Deputy Chief Executive Officer
National Council of Social Service
individual counselling sessions, entire classes go through Scaffold. Typically there are 35-40 students per session, but the students are split up into smaller groups of about 10 so everyone receives attention.

For the first 10 weeks, the Scaffold groups set their goals – ranging from their ambitions to personal achievements – and the youth workers will then identify the skills, education pathways and personal characteristics they need to achieve those goals.

For the remaining 15 weeks, the curriculum evolves according to the needs of each class.

**Teacher cops**

The schools have worked closely with the police for many years. Under the **Honorary Voluntary Special Constabulary (VSC)** scheme – introduced in 1997 – selected school discipline masters or mistresses, disciplinary teachers or operations managers undergo two weeks training by the police in areas such as police procedures, police powers, basic law and basic defence tactics. Upon completion of training, they take up the role of volunteer “police officers” in their schools to strengthen students’ understanding of law and order and efforts in prevention of juvenile delinquency. Typically, these “teacher cops” help with investigations into a variety of cases including bullying, theft and fighting; advise students against committing crimes; and liaise with police officers from the Neighbourhood Police Centres. They also work with the Central Narcotics Bureau (CNB) to run drug prevention programmes in the school.

Currently, there are 290 appointed Honorary VSC Senior Officers in secondary schools and the Institute of Technical Education.

**Court collaboration**

The group of 10 bright-eyed bushy-tailed teenagers trooped into the Juvenile Court (as it was then named) but they were not there because they had broken the law. Instead, they were being treated to an exclusive eye-opening tour of the Court. Since 1996, the Court has opened its doors to students, teachers and school leaders to get an in-depth view of the youth criminal justice system, so they can return to their schools to provide better support to youth-at-risk.

Between 1996 and 2011, the Juvenile Court ran the **Peer Group Advisers (PGA)** programme, which allowed students to sit in during a “live” court session, attend briefings by court officers on criminal procedures, handle court documents, discuss views on juvenile delinquency, and even discuss case studies with the presiding Juvenile Court Judge. These students were nominated by their schools based on their strong leadership abilities, an ability to articulate their opinions, and whether they had a strong sense of right and wrong.

Once back in school, armed with the experiential knowledge of the Juvenile Court, these youth leaders were in a better position to help their peers who were delinquent or who were at risk of falling into crime. For instance, some organised assembly talks while others decided to mentor school friends who were delinquent.

What the students said during the discussions also helped the Court to get a youth’s perspective of the juvenile justice system.

The programme, which started with eight schools and 45 students, grew to involve 11 schools with over 120 participating students by 2008. However, it was
terminated in 2011 for by then, the Juvenile Court had shifted its intervention efforts to focus on upstream measures and it was working more with teachers and school counsellors to help students in their schools.

Therefore, learning journeys and workshops for school staff to the Juvenile Court were started in 2013. These sessions were meant for school counsellors, school leaders who are participants in the Leadership in Education Programme, and VSCs who were posted to the schools to assist in school security. These learning journeys and workshops were designed not only to educate the participants on the work done and programmes conducted by the Court (renamed as the Youth Court on 1 October 2014), they were also meant to create a platform for dialogues so that ideas could be exchanged between the respective agencies and the Youth Court. This enabled the Court to carry out its work as well as plan its programmes in the future to meet the needs of stakeholders. Similar to the PGA programme, the participants got to take a much closer look at the workings of the youth criminal justice system. They attended a workshop which involved discussion of case studies, observed court proceedings, interacted with the Youth Court judges and officers, and shared their own experiences.

**Keeping our students in school**

The reasons behind students wanting to drop out of school are multifaceted. Some find it a struggle to cope academically or are grappling with identity issues, while others may be facing problems at home or feel compelled to stop schooling and start working to support their family. To address this, secondary schools students who are at risk of dropping out of school prematurely are placed in the **Time Out Programme (TOP)**.

TOP was first piloted in 2006. The programme is conducted at over 100 secondary schools. Mrs Ng Ai Lin, MOE’s Zonal Director (Schools), South, said: “The Time Out Programme is one of the many intervention measures adopted by schools to address the issue of student disengagement. They are ground-up initiatives by secondary schools to help reduce attrition amongst students at risk of dropping out of schools.”

TOP involves the temporary withdrawal of students from mainstream curriculum and the provision of a modified curriculum that emphasises the enhancement of social-emotional and affective skills, to help them overcome personal, family and social barriers that confound their motivation and performance in learning. TOP provides at-risk students the chance to take a step back and sort personal, family or social problems they might be facing under the guidance of a mentor, counsellor or teacher, before they reintegrate into regular class.

Guided by MOE’s TOP Resource Toolkit, schools have generally adopted a targeted approach and customised their TOP according to their students’ needs. With a designated team of staff to monitor their TOP, schools may collaborate with external agencies such as Voluntary Welfare Organisations (VWOs) to conduct their TOP.

The modified curriculum in TOP may include motivational techniques and study skills to improve students’ academic performance and outdoor activities such as kayaking for character development and counselling. This modified curriculum, together with follow-up plans, are designed to help the students
find purpose in learning and reintegrate back to class through greater interactivity and smaller group size.

Ultimately, the aim is to equip these students with the conviction and confidence to stay on and succeed in school.

One grateful TOP participant said: “I am glad that I was in the programme because I have someone to turn to who would listen to me, and the mentors gave great advice.” Another credited TOP for giving her some direction in life: “At first, I had no dream job and I didn’t think about my future. But this programme made me realise there is something which I want to do, and I am now working hard to achieve this dream.”

On TOP’s overall effectiveness over the past nine years, Mrs Ng said: “Schools monitor the attendance of TOP participants closely and have reported positive outcomes in terms of reduced attrition.”

Besides MOE’s support for disengaged youth in schools, the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) also provides support in the community to youth with high absenteeism issues as well as those who have already dropped out of school through the Enhanced STEP-UP (ESU) programme. Through casework and counselling, groupwork and family intervention sessions, the appointed VWOs running the ESU programme engage the youth to achieve meaningful outcomes. Between 2010 and 2014, ESU has served about 9,600 youth.

Overall, the dropout rate in Singapore has fallen over the years. The percentage of each Primary 1 cohort that did not complete secondary education fell from over 3 percent in 2003, to about 1 percent in 2010.

Apart from giving the students time out, another strategy adopted by MOE was to inspire them with a clear career goal so they will want to stay in school and work towards it. Said Mrs Ng: “The purpose is to enable students to see the relevance of learning in school and motivate them to complete secondary education.”

The Youth Apprenticeship Programme (YAP) was piloted in 2010, targeting Secondary 3 Normal Academic or Normal Technical students identified as being at risk of leaving school prematurely. They attend four days of school, and the last day is spent training with an industry partner such as the Building and Construction Authority Academy or the Singapore Hotel and Tourism Education Centre (SHATEC).

Said Mrs Ng, “The majority of the students who participated in YAP’s pilot phase reported an improvement in their level of engagement in classroom and school activities.”

Participation in the customised DSLR Photography Module had positive impact in this participant’s behaviour in school and attitude towards learning.
MOE conducted the programme for another run in 2011, before handing the YAP model over to the Central Youth Guidance Office for implementation at the national level. The *Youth Employment and Advancement Hub (YEAH!)* was set up in 2013 to provide an alternative pathway to success through career coaching, life skills, vocational training, apprenticeship and job matching.

MOE and schools work closely with various agencies to develop programmes that support the at-risk students. This is testament to Singapore’s collaborative inter-ministry approach towards providing support for youth.

Said Mrs Ng: “The establishment of inter-agency collaboration has been one of the most successful aspects of youth guidance. In dealing with delinquency issues effectively, a multi-pronged, many hands approach is required. Using the ‘Many Helping Hands’ approach, MOE and schools have been working hand-in-hand with MSF, Ministry of Home Affairs, CNB, Singapore Police Force and other agencies to tap their expertise and complement mutual efforts in addressing discipline-related issues. Schools also tap community resources such as self-help groups, in supporting their students’ education.”

**School haven**

For some, the school has even become a second home. At the end of the school day, not every child or youth has a conducive home environment to return to.

For students in secondary schools, the MOE piloted an *After School Engagement (ASE)* initiative in 2014 which similarly aims to engage the students through
meaningful and engaging activities in a positive school environment after curriculum hours.

Mrs Ng said: “ASE consists of upstream pre-emptive interventions and support for students who are vulnerable to negative external influence. These upstream and early intervention measures will reach out to secondary students to provide them with opportunities to engage in positive pro-social activities. The ASE programmes are specially designed by each school to provide opportunities for their students to develop social and emotional competencies, leadership skills, and to foster a greater sense of school connectedness and belonging.”

**Looking ahead**

Mrs Ng acknowledged that currently, there are a multitude of programmes – some ground-up within the schools and others offered by numerous agencies working hand-in-hand with the MOE – which are in place to identify and help youth-at-risk.

However, she noted: “As the profile of youth-at-risk changes, the need to change and diversify measures in engaging them increases. Hence, one of the challenges is to develop a rigorous process to review and evaluate the effectiveness and relevance of these programmes. Besides leveraging the inter-agency collaboration, another challenge is to purposefully engage parents or guardians of youth-at-risk, to actively involve them in supporting the holistic development of these youth-at-risk.”
Inspiring youth to connect to school

Alvin did not like his teachers to talk down to him, for he resented authority figures. He disliked school and often came late. When he did come, he picked fights. Yet, when others spoke well of him, he did not think he deserved it because he felt he was lousy.

Worried that his behavior could descend into a downward spiral of angst, rebellion and crime, Alvin’s teachers sent him to attend the Scaffold programme, which social workers were running in his school.

It is a 25-week programme where the participants, instead of being lectured on what they were doing wrong, were inspired to identify their goals and work constructively towards them.

The positive approach worked. In Alvin’s school, as points were given to students who demonstrated good values and behaviour, he decided he wanted to earn the points. Eventually, he realised he had more to gain in a supportive community, and he turned away from a network of friends who were undesirable influences. Within a year, his discipline record improved drastically, and he started paying attention in school.
CHAPTER 3
KEEPING GOOD COMPANY
CHANGING GROUP INFLUENCES
Case Study

CHEERING ON TROUBLED TEENS*

When Amanda was in Primary 6, she was molested by her stepfather. The traumatic experience led to anxiety attacks, and she began to play truant from school and picked up smoking. Three years later when her stepfather was arrested, Amanda met a Youth GO! social worker at an outreach session. With support from the Youth GO! programme, she was able to heal from her psychological scars. Now, Amanda is back to school.

*This is a fictitious story based on a real case study. All names have been changed.
One night, when Amanda was hanging out at the playground with her friend, she met Jane, a social worker from Youth 001.

Jane, who was on a lookout for troubled youth, invited the girls to join Youth 001’s free Hip Hop dance class.

After Jane’s multiple attempts to engage Amanda, Amanda finally agreed to join the dance classes and came to enjoy them.

Jane continued to build and deepen her relationship with Amanda by introducing her to various activities.

Amanda learned to bake a chiffon cake...

...and to play the drums.

Jane eventually began individual counselling with Amanda.

Amanda also joined other youth to discover her self-identity and strengths.

So, Amanda, tell us about one strength you have.

...um... okay... I think I dance pretty well ...

As Amanda became emotionally stable, she attempted to quit her smoking addiction.

With Jane’s encouragement, Amanda decided to repeat her Secondary 3 year in school.

Thanks for supporting me this whole year. Couldn’t have done it without you two.

Hey, it’s nothing! Just so glad you’re going back to school.

Yah! I must if I want to be a social worker like you.

You go, girl!

Chat

Hey Jane. Guess what?

Wassup?

I’m down to one stick a day.

Wow. You can do it? 😊

¥
We all want to belong. In particular, youth who are seeking a sense of self-identity during their vulnerable teenage years want to be part of social groups where they feel accepted for who they are. The trouble begins when a youth-at-risk falls in with friends who are bad influences. He may join a street gang or start a career in petty crime.

To address this, various programmes have been put in place to change group influences. From the earliest stage of preventing youth-at-risk from falling in with bad company - by proactively seeking them out on the streets or organising sporting activities - to running mentoring programmes where adults give a guiding hand, the aim is to ensure that they keep good company and stay on the right track.
**Going to the youth**

It is past midnight. Clad in Bermuda shorts and T-shirts, a group of social workers hits the streets in a patrol routine, which is called a “night drift”. They are looking to engage youth who may be mixing with bad company, or are involved in anti-social activities.

At a void deck, they spot a group of youth. Upon chatting with the teenagers, they find out that one of the boys had quarrelled with his father, left home and was staying with friends. The social workers befriend him and subsequently engage him after a few sessions. Eventually the social workers succeed in getting him to return home to talk to his father about the misunderstanding. They also tell him that they can accompany him home to talk to his father if the youth is not confident that his father will listen.

The street outreach effort comes under the **Youth GO!** programme, which is overseen by the Central Youth Guidance Office (CYGO). Youth GO! is based on the idea of proactively seeking youth-at-risk where they hang out. Youth GO! fills a gap in the existing suite of programmes for these youth by bringing services to the youth instead of waiting for the youth to seek help. The programme targets youth aged 12 to 21 who are not receiving any form of support.

“The uniqueness of Youth GO! lies in its service model of ‘drifting’ to where the youth hang out on the streets in order to observe and subsequently engage them to assess their risks,” said CYGO Director Nancy Ng.

During the pilot phase of Youth GO! in 2012 and 2013, two teams of social workers from Fei Yue Community Services and Care Corner Singapore tirelessly combed the streets in the northwestern and northeastern regions of Singapore. They conducted their “drifts” at targeted times during the day and night.

They approached a total of about 11,500 youth. On average, the teams would see about 260 youth every month who looked like they might be at risk of anti-social behaviours, and they would initiate chats with about 185 of them. Post-chat, the social workers would follow up with the youth, channelling them to productive programmes to help them get back on track.

In Dec 2014, Youth GO! was expanded to the southwestern region of Singapore. In addition to the regular outreach model, the Southwest team also “drifts” to identified hotspots outside of the southwestern region where there are reports of youth hanging out.

The programme is characteristic of the kind of help available for youth-at-risk in Singapore: rather than wait for the youth to get into trouble, it is proactive and preventive in nature. In trying to change group influences, Youth GO! also operates within the communities where these youth hang out.
Nurturing community role models

Taking the community approach a step further, the Youth Community Outreach Programme (COP) not only reaches out to youth-at-risk, but also offers them a chance to become positive role models in their communities.

A change of label

Most of the labels slapped on Kenneth* were bad. The 14-year-old was called a troublemaker who played truant, argued with his teachers, fought with his classmates and smoked.

One person, however, believed in him: the school discipline master saw that beyond the labels, Kenneth showed glimpses of true leadership potential as he could rally his friends to carry out tasks.

He encouraged and nominated Kenneth to sign up for the Youth COP, and that was when the labels started changing.

Given the chance for the first time to do good in the community and be a useful citizen, Kenneth, proudly wearing his Youth COP badge, kicked the smoking habit and decided to commit to school.

Showing his commitment to the Youth COP code of conduct with his exemplary attitude, Kenneth was “promoted” to become a Youth COP consultant, which earned him the chance to run a Youth COP camp for Secondary 1 trainee Youth COP members during which his leadership skills were positively highlighted.

With his new self-identity, Kenneth began to focus more on his studies and did well enough in school to be given an Edusave Bursary Award. When asked about the programme’s impact on him, Kenneth shared that “Youth COP changed the way people look at me and the way I look at myself.”

* not his real name

Youth COP spreading crime prevention messages during a patrol

Started in 2007 by Students Care Service, Clementi Neighbourhood Police Centre and Clementi Woods Secondary School, with the support from the National Crime Prevention Council (NCPC), Youth COP participants begin on a positive note as they are trained, guided and appointed to become “Youth COP”.

Due to the success and impact of the programme, Youth COP has since expanded to Kent Ridge Secondary School, Clementi Town Secondary School, Tanglin Secondary School and Montfort Secondary School with the addition of Hougang Neighbourhood Police Centre as a partner. Currently, about 180 youth join the programme every year.

Youth COP members benefit from training by the police officers and social workers, where they learn about the law and the consequences of the most common youth crimes, effective communication, responsibility and decision-making as well as social and leadership skills.

Once they are out in the community, some of the responsibilities that these ambassadors are given include carrying out neighbourhood patrols alongside police officers, planning and executing crime prevention efforts in their schools and communities,
distributing informative pamphlets on various crimes like loan sharking, and doing volunteer work such as spring-cleaning the homes of the elderly.

Youth COP received the National Community Safety and Security Programme Award from the Ministry of Home Affairs in 2010.

Police Deputy Assistant Commissioner (DAC) Jarrod Pereira said that in recent years, with regard to youth rehabilitation, the police have worked very closely with the community. “Within the new Community Policing System or COPS, there is a dedicated Community Policing Unit to oversee youth crime and tailor police engagement in the neighbourhoods.”

**Keeping youth engaged**

Sometimes, youth may end up joining gangs because they are bored, with no motivation in life. One way of engaging them is to give them the chance to take part in meaningful and fun activities, which reduces the possibility that they will have too much time on their hands to get up to mischief.

In this regard, one of the most successful and largest programmes is the Delta League run by the Singapore Police Force (SPF) and the NCPC, where youth aged 13 to 17 come together to play football during the June and December school holidays. Started in 2011, participation has soared, from a 16-team league then, to a 96-team league. Over 10,000 youth have played in a Delta League football team and it is the largest football league in Singapore.

As the youth come together to expend their energies in some sporting fun, the police capitalise on the opportunity to caution them against falling into crime, and help them to improve themselves at the same time. The youth get to interact with police officers and life coaches, who inspire them to change their lives for the better. Boys who are determined to turn over a new leaf are even offered free tattoo removal by a dermatologist.

The police also runs its **Youth Engagement Programme (YEP)**, which introduces police mentors to at-risk males aged 13 to 14 years old. It was developed by SPF psychologists, with inputs from the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Social and Family Development.

Most of these activities take place after school, and involve at least one policeman who will act as a mentor to these youth to provide life guidance and advice.

DAC Pereira explained that in recent years, the police have preferred engagement and proactive prevention to enforcement. He said: “The YEP aims to alter attitudes, adjust behaviours and advocate positive change in the lives of such youth.”

Since 2011, about 1,700 secondary school students have participated in the YEP.
Adult mentors share advice

Youth who come from disadvantaged family backgrounds may not have positive adult role models in their lives, so the presence of an adult mentor could have a significant effect in influencing the development of their self-concept, the learning of important life skills and the willingness to change specific behaviours.

Since 2009, there has been a national impetus to enhance the capacity of the youth mentoring sector. This paved the way for agencies to develop structured and sustainable mentoring programmes for youth-at-risk, in particular those from single-parent and low-income households.

To this end, various organisations, from the SPF – where police “mentors” started coaching youth in 2011 – to the National Council of Social Service (NCSS) collaborating closely with Voluntary Welfare Organisations to plan and develop social services, have nurtured the growth of mentoring programmes in the community.

NCSS oversees and supports mentoring programmes both in schools and in the community. School-based mentoring programmes include the FRENZ Programme run by the Malay Youth Literary Association (4PM) which helps students from the Institute of Technical Education, as well as the Sports, Tuition and Mentoring Programme run by Loving Heart Multi-Service Centre which serves students in schools in the Jurong district. Community-based mentoring programmes include Evergreen Bees run by Care Corner Teck Ghee Youth Centre in Ang Mo Kio, the Experiential Learning and Mentoring Programme run by Youth Guidance Outreach Services

“...The YEP aims to alter attitudes, adjust behaviours and advocate positive change in the lives of such youth.”

NYGR Member
DAC Jarrod Pereira
1 Deputy Director (Operations)
Singapore Police Force
in Woodlands and **MightyKids Families & Community** by Life Community Services Society in Telok Blangah.

Between 2010 and 2014, an estimated 1,266 youth-at-risk attended mentoring programmes that were supported by NCSS.

**Self-help groups game to help**

Testament to the “many helping hands” approach, self-help groups in Singapore are amongst the many agencies in Singapore that are collaborating to help youth-at-risk, and they also run mentoring programmes.

For Indian youth in need of guidance and support, for instance, the Singapore Indian Development Association (SINDA) started its **Guidance and Mentorship Programme (GAME)** in 2011. To date, more than 600 youth have participated in the programme. The programme is targeted at Indian youth in secondary schools, who may be disengaged from school and display lack of motivation and low self-esteem. About 85 percent of the participants are from the Normal Academic and Normal Technical streams.

In GAME, volunteer mentors meet their mentees for three hours every Saturday over a period of six months, where they will try to raise their mentees’ self-esteem, motivate them to do well in school and address behavioural issues.

To encourage the befriending process, SINDA organises activities that mentors and mentees can join, like football and various workshops on areas like vocal training or playing musical instruments and dance. After the six months, the mentors and mentees usually stay in touch via social media platforms. Participants who graduate go on to be Peer Leaders based on their good conduct, overall progress and leadership potential, and they return to serve in the programme.

Since its inception, Yayasan MENDAKI has been focusing on education, especially for low-income groups which comprise the bottom 30 percent of the community, and supporting the families of school-going children. Between 2005 and 2015, MENDAKI ran the **Max Out** programme, which equipped Malay/Muslim out-of-school youth with the necessary

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**Help from a police mentor**

At first, Staff Sergeant Norhidahyah Binte Ahmad could not break the ice. She had been assigned to help the reticent teenager under Project Guiding Light, a mentoring programme that falls under SPF’s YEP.

“The stigma of him being in a YEP and being mocked at by his peers also created an invisible wall that hampered initial efforts to build up common trust,” said SS Norhidahyah, who is based at the Bishan Neighbourhood Police Centre.

She persisted, talking to him and his parents. Slowly, she won him over and he began to enjoy the programmes and activities that he had to attend. “My mentee sensed my sincerity over time and started looking up to me not only as a role model but as a sister,” she said.

On his part, the mentee added: “This mentoring programme helped me to change my character. I used to be very mischievous. I was influenced by friends from outside who taught me a lot of bad stuff. Now, I am a better person.”
supervision and support at home; Project Aspirar which provides career guidance to upper secondary students and motivates them to pursue their dreams through interaction with professionals; and Mentoring through Internship Programme which develops positive work attitude and build confidence in ITE and Polytechnic students through mentoring, training and work opportunity.

CDAC also organises parenting talks, workshops and other family bonding activities for parents. These activities are conducted regularly to help develop parenting skills, improve parent-child communication and strengthen family bonding. Annually, CDAC reaches out to more than 17,000 low-income households through its various programmes.

The Eurasian Association (EA) also provides support for the less privileged families, through the Eurasian Community Fund (ECF). The ECF Education awards were first given in 1996 and they have been instrumental in providing deserving students with bursaries, merit, excellence and distinction awards. The Merit Bursary awards began in 2009, which provide full tuition fees, books and ancillary expenses to students pursuing post-secondary education at ITE or the Polytechnics. Education awards were disbursed to 498 recipients in 2014.

In addition, the EA is looking at strengthening engagement with and among the community, especially with the younger generation. The youth sub-committee will intensify its outreach by organising more events and programmes. The EA is hoping to bring more youth into the association, who can then be more active in the Eurasian community. EA would also be able to build the next generation of community leaders and continue to provide support to the youth in need.

While not running a specific programme targeting at youth-at-risk, the Chinese Development Assistance Council (CDAC) conducts a wide range of education and development programmes for students from kindergarten to ITE/polytechnic levels. In addition to its affordable tuition programme for academically weak students, CDAC offers development and enrichment programmes at its 12 CDAC centres located island wide. Besides helping students to improve academically, these programmes also inculcate right values in them and support their social and emotional development. For example, Supervised Homework Group which mentors and guides academically weaker upper primary students who are from the less privileged families and lack of parental

academic skills to gain entry back into mainstream schools including the Institute of Technical Education (ITE). MENDAKI has also run a youth mentoring programme for primary and secondary students since 2004 called Youth-in-Action (YIA). The YIA programme centres on the need for students to complete the first 10 years of formal education in primary and secondary schools. To reach out to these youth, a holistic approach with tripartite efforts from school, family and communities is employed.

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CHAPTER 4

MENTAL WELLNESS

BEING MINDFUL OF MENTAL HEALTH
Case Study

FRIENDS TO RELY ON*

When Roy's father left the family, Roy began developing maladaptive behaviours. The 16-year-old loved setting things on fire and even became self-abusive. As he became more aggressive in school, his teachers referred him to the Forensic Rehabilitation, Intervention, Evaluation & Network Development Services (FRIENDS) team at the Child Guidance Clinic of the Institute of Mental Health for therapy.

*This is a fictitious story based on a real case study. All names have been changed.
Through therapy, Roy learnt to cope with his emotions with relaxation and stress management techniques.

You know why I like fire?

The flames. I like how they wrap around something and slowly burn it away. It is comforting. They take my pain and fears away...

breathe in... breathe out...

Gradually, he began to understand the impact of his actions and how others felt when he behaved negatively.

You'll never get drunk again.

Roy's mother also joined him for family counselling. Together, they worked through the fears, anger and sense of abandonment that his father's leaving had triggered.

Roy, Mama won't touch another bottle again. And you try your best, ok?

After months of help from the FRIENDS team, Roy took up part-time work at a fast food chain and adjusted well socially. Seeing his improvement, Roy's principal gave him a second chance to return to school.

Bye guys, I'm off to work! See you tomorrow!
In Singapore, there is a growing awareness of the importance of mental wellness in the overall state of well-being of a young person. As such, one of the newest partners in Singapore’s youth guidance and rehabilitation network is the Ministry of Health, which joined hands with the NYGR’s agencies in 2011. Through a variety of programmes that collectively aim to destigmatisise negative associations with mental health, and reach out to young people in a friendly and accessible manner, these outreach efforts have resulted in young people being increasingly aware of when they need to seek help, and where.
Promoting youth mental health awareness – Let’s CHAT

The space resembles a café, with its carpets and soft colourful neon chairs. Clusters of young people hang out, talking softly, some with laptops in front of them. Others turn to the books and materials on the shelves for some reading pleasure.

The difference in this café, however, is that the books and materials are on mental health. And the young people, if they want to, can book a private session for a free mental health check with a doctor and a youth worker. It is the only place where young people can be assured of confidentiality in a safe environment.

The CHAT Hub was opened in 2010 on the fifth floor of *SCAPE - a prime spot in the heart of Singapore’s shopping district that has been earmarked for youth activities. It is a hip, youth-friendly, accessible space which aims to provide youth-friendly resources to help young people understand mental health and how to recognise if they or their friends may be facing mental health issues.

The CHAT Hub aptly represents efforts by mental health workers to reach out to young people. After all, young adults experience marked emotional, social and psychological changes. The developmental years are the peak period for the onset of mental health problems. Early detection and intervention are of great help.

Ms Nancy Ng, who heads the Central Youth Guidance Office, said: “We’re not only talking about mental health disorders, but general mental health, which if not addressed can lead to stress, loss of self-esteem and self-confidence.”

CHAT Hub is one arm of the Community Health Assessment Team (CHAT) which was initiated by the Institute of Mental Health (IMH) in 2009 as part of the National Mental Health Blueprint. CHAT offers a friendly and non-threatening gateway for young people, aged 16 to 30, to acknowledge, learn about and address their mental health issues.

As this programme adopts a friendly approach, young people who are struggling with mental issues will not be afraid to seek help at an early stage. “We want to connect with youth and help them to identify the challenges they face while empowering them to cope with these issues,” said Dr Swapna Verma, Project Director of CHAT. She is also the Chief of the Early Psychosis Intervention Department and a Senior Consultant at the IMH.

The CHAT team wants to raise awareness of the importance of mental well-being. Since 2009, it has conducted 60 mental health literacy talks at 11 Institutes of Higher Learning to more than 4,900 young people. More than 300 young people have been trained to support their peers and friends in a
We’re not only talking about mental health disorders, but general mental health, which if not addressed, can lead to stress, loss of self-esteem and self-confidence.

Youth Support Youth (YSY) programme, which is a collaboration between CHAT, the Health Promotion Board, Samaritans of Singapore and Silver Ribbon Singapore.

To support professionals who work with young adults, CHAT has conducted 21 training sessions and workshops for more than 870 counsellors, educators, social workers and community workers since 2009. In 2015, the training arm of the National Council of Social Service (NCSS) - the Social Service Institute, engaged the services of CHAT to run workshops. This enabled more social service partners to be able to address mental health issues in their area of work.

Supporting youth with addictions

The National Addictions Management Service (NAMS) treats patients who are suffering from drugs, alcohol, gambling, and other types of addictions. Besides running a Specialist Outpatient Clinic and providing inpatient care at IMH, NAMS also conducts addiction awareness talks for the community, training for healthcare and social service professionals and has a dedicated team conducting research on addictions.

Adolescents are especially susceptible to addictions to substance use and behavioural addictions, as their brains are still developing, and this in turn affects their ability to weigh risks accurately and make sound judgments for the long-term. NAMS set up ReLive in 2008, which is an integrated treatment service that provides care for adolescents aged 13 to 18 struggling with substance and behavioural addiction issues. The ReLive team launched several initiatives aimed at ensuring easy access to the relevant treatment services available for adolescents and youth,
Helped by CHAT, she now helps others

She was a regular teenage girl who was sociable, able to attend school and perform well in her studies and CCA activities. But beneath that success was a lasting fatigue and overall feelings of misery, and she constantly had troubles with sleep, memory and concentration that affected her ability to study further.

Nadera Binte Abdul Aziz, now 23, knew that what she felt was not normal. Online research led her to making a self-diagnosis: Dysthymia, a form of persistent mild depression.

Having had thoughts of wanting to be a counsellor, and with an interest in mental health, she volunteered at the IMH after her ‘A’ levels when she was 19. Nadera brought joy and company to the residents through singing, doing art, and celebrating festive occasions such as Chinese New Year and Christmas with the residents. That was how she got to know about CHAT and its free mental health checks and support for young people.

However, it was only when she was 20 and in her first year in university that she decided to drop in at the CHAT Hub to confirm her suspicions.

“What struck me immediately was the decoration and design of the place which made it feel like it was a place for youth. There were also other youth seated around the sofas using their laptops, engaged in discussion. I felt reassured as it was not like entering some hospital or clinic,” she said.

She saw a psychologist and youth worker at the CHAT Hub, who assessed her and agreed she might have dysthymia. However, being hesitant to seek treatment at first, she opted for a referral letter to keep. A few months later, she used that letter to go to the GP to fix an appointment at the IMH for treatment.

“I liked that I was not forced to go to IMH immediately. I had the choice to go back and think and still remain anonymous. It was this empowerment and the CHAT team’s kind support thereafter, which ultimately motivated me to go to the IMH for treatment,” she said.

Her experience with dysthymia motivated Nadera to speak out for other young persons. When CHAT ran an outreach campaign called “Burst the Silence” featuring mental health confessions in 2012 to de-stigmatise mental health issues, Nadera wrote about herself.

Recalling the experience, “I remember, it was my first stepping stone to ‘coming out’ about my depression. My sharing was generic actually. Even so, it was scary, but without that step, I wouldn’t be the advocate I am today. It helped me to accept my condition rather than be embarrassed about it.”

She engaged CHAT again as a university student at SIM Global Education to organise an exhibition titled “The Black Dog” to raise awareness on chronic depression. “It was my first exhibition, and I couldn’t have done it without CHAT’s support and my school’s student care services team,” she said.

Now a Senior Executive with the NCSS’s Disability Services unit, Nadera calls herself an “ardent CHAT fan” and is a CHAT ambassador, where she assists CHAT on projects, speaks to young persons at outreach events and gives them the help she received as a young person.

“When I heard that CHAT was coming up with an ambassador programme, I wrote in immediately. It was a natural move considering all the great work it has done to benefit youth like myself. When I was selected, I saw it as a privilege to be able to represent and work with the organisation to improve it. I am currently continuing my ambassador programme with CHAT.”
particularly for those battling substance use and cybergaming addictions.

In addition to the ReLive team, NAMS also piloted the “UnPlug” programme in 2013 for youth who present with excessive gaming. The “UnPlug” programme aims to educate youth on cybergaming addiction, as well as the effects of cybergaming addiction on self and others. Another goal of this group programme is to provide a safe environment where youth can explore the challenges they face in battling cybergaming addiction. This cybergaming addiction group programme is open to all existing youth patients under the care of NAMS.

To build awareness of its services and to improve patient’s ease of access to treatment, NAMS has launched several initiatives in partnership with various agencies.

The Youth Residential Service Housecall Programme is an ongoing collaboration between Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) and NAMS since 2011. The programme involves counsellors providing counselling sessions at Singapore Boys’ Home and Singapore Girls’ Home to youth identified to have addiction issues such as substance abuse and gaming.

NAMS also works closely with Response Early intervention and Assessment in Community mental Health (REACH), providing joint assessments in schools or homes for students who may be suffering from substance or behavioural addiction.

Supporting youth involved with the law

Another IMH programme specifically addresses the mental well-being of children and youth-at-risk, who may have committed crimes or were victims of child abuse.

Forensic Rehabilitation Intervention Evaluation Network Development Services (FRIENDS) is a multidisciplinary team lodged within the IMH’s Child Guidance Clinic, dedicated to supporting children and youth aged between seven and 19, who are involved with the juvenile justice system. The team at FRIENDS completes mental health assessments, provides treatment, and also works with partners, such as the children’s homes, on ways to care for young people with mental health issues.

While a crime is being investigated, the doctors at FRIENDS will complete an assessment to understand if the young offenders or victims are struggling with mental health issues and if they are mentally and emotionally able to testify. Between April 2011 and January 2015, FRIENDS assessed 1,516 youth who were due to appear in court – some were victims and others were offenders.

In addition to their outpatient consultations, FRIENDS also provides psychiatric consultation services in the Singapore Girls’ Home and Singapore Boys’ Homes. This ensures that the youth receive mental health support while staying in the Homes.

The FRIENDS team also provides interventions for moderate-risk young offenders and victims of abuse. Early interventions aim to promote better psychological and social functioning, as well as to minimise the risk of further mental health difficulties.

In collaboration with the Attorney-General’s Chambers, Singapore Police Force and MSF, a diversionary programme (GP-FRIENDS) for youth
Stemming cybergaming addiction through counselling

Michael* got hooked on a computer game, Defence Of The Ancients, during the school holidays. When school reopened, he continued to play for six to seven hours at an Internet gaming shop every day. He soon began playing truant from school and his grades began slipping and he failed his ‘N’ levels despite last-minute studying. He then re-started gaming after the failures as he felt that it was the only thing that he was good at. However, no amount of gaming could help “erase the humiliating failures”. He opted to take his exams again, but even as he prepared for the examinations, depression, exacerbated by the stress, caused him to attempt suicide twice and he was admitted for treatment.

Michael’s counsellor from NAMS noted that much of his problems stemmed from a lack of self-worth that was exacerbated by the exam failures. This drove him to seek short-term self-affirmation in gaming, which unfortunately led to a vicious cycle of poor results and worsening poor self-confidence. She began working with him to develop coping techniques and skills.

Using a technique called motivational interviewing, she reminded him of his strengths – such as his strong swimming skills and being a swimmer in the school swimming team.

Michael was able to draw on the same discipline he had instilled in his pursuit of sports to concentrate on his studies. He sat for his ‘O’ levels again after four months of therapy, and passed.

* not his real name
with mild sexual offending behaviours was piloted in 2014. The aim of the GP-FRIENDS programme is to reduce the rate of re-offending and to divert these youth away from the criminal justice system. They will receive a psycho-education programme on appropriate and inappropriate sexual behaviours to help them understand the context of their offending behaviours and empower them with strategies to manage their triggers. Youth who complete the GP-FRIENDS programme and do not reoffend will not be prosecuted.

In support of its partners, FRIENDS provided training to the Muhammadiyah Welfare Home, Pertapis Children’s Home and Boys’ Town between February 2012 and February 2015. Some of the topics covered during training included behaviour management strategies, understanding and working with traumatised children and managing inappropriate sexualised behaviour.

When working with the youth-at-risk population, it is crucial to engage in preventive and early interventions to enhance their emotional well-being.
CHAPTER 5

KEEPING OUR YOUTH RESILIENT AGAINST DRUGS
Case Study
SAY YES TO A NEW LIFE*

With his parents often working late and paying little attention to him at home, Damien would spend his free time hanging out with his neighbourhood friends. As he craved for companionship and wanted to be part of their group, he was easily influenced by his friends and picked up smoking at the age of 14. They also introduced him to cannabis, a controlled drug. Over time, Damien started to abuse cannabis with his friends. When he was 16, he was arrested for suspected drug abuse by the police during a routine spot check. After he was tested positive for drug abuse and assessed to have a moderate risk of relapse, Damien was committed to the newly opened Community Rehabilitation Centre (CRC)* to undergo drug rehabilitation.

*This is a fictitious story based on a real case study. All names have been changed.

*The CRC began operations in May 2014 to help first-time young male drug offenders with moderate risk of re-offending to reintegrate into society, with family support.
Seeing his parents in tears, Damien began to feel remorse.

I never knew Ma and Pa cared so much about me...

At the CRC...

Mr Ng, can he still continue his studies?

Mr Ng, can he still continue his studies?

Yes. He will go to school daily and come back to the CRC in the evening.

So Damien, under this new programme, you’ll be here for 6 months then – if you do well – you can go on supervised home leave for 6 months...

Over the course of the six months, the rehab centre helped Damien to wean his drug addiction.

His parents visited often and supported him in his rehabilitation. Meanwhile, Damien returned to school to attend classes regularly.

The life skills programme and counselling also taught him to resist the temptation to pick up drugs again and to reject negative peer influence.

Ma... you’ve lost a lot of weight...

Sorry Ma, Pa. Really...

It’s hard to sleep at night. Damien... knowing that you’re here...

Just a few more weeks to home leave. Pa. It’s been difficult going back to school, but the counsellors here have taught me skills to cope with stress. I really regret getting into drugs...

We’re okay son. Just hope to see you home soon...

Ma will cook your favourite fishhead curry when you come home!

Finally home!

Wa, shick! I really miss your cooking.

I hope I will not disappoint you both again.

This is truly ‘Home Sweet Home’. I must continue to apply what I’ve learnt from my counsellors in CRC at home and in school. Most importantly, I’m never ever gonna touch drugs again!
Drug abuse is a serious crime in Singapore. Unfortunately, it has become an issue of growing concern as youth are increasingly liberal in their attitudes toward drugs. Since 2011, Singapore’s primary drug enforcement agency, the Central Narcotics Bureau (CNB), has been working in partnership with other agencies, including the police and schools, to spread the drug prevention message to youth in a concerted manner on the ground.
Preventing drug abuse from taking root

A group of teenagers are dancing it out on the stage, in the atrium of shopping mall, to try and win a dance competition. There is one difference: as part of the scoring criteria, the teenagers have to incorporate an anti-drug message in their dance performance.

DanceWorks!, jointly organised by CNB and the National Council Against Drug Abuse (NCADA), is a fun and effective medium to spread the anti-drug message to youth and the general public. Since its inception in 1999, more than 17,000 youth have participated in the dance competition.

Preventive drug education (PDE) is one of CNB’s key strategies in educating the community on the harms of drugs and strengthening the resilience of youth to stay drug-free. Focusing on youth below the age of 25, CNB aims to reach out to and educate these youth on the harmful effects and serious consequences of drug abuse. Taking into consideration the important role of social influences in drug addiction, CNB’s efforts are centred on helping youth identify drugs, learn their harmfulness and resist temptations to try drugs through a wide range of activities and programmes to send out PDE messages throughout the year. To this end, CNB works with NCADA, community partners and other government agencies to organise events for youth.

CNB has been organising anti-drug events, for general youth and also for youth-at-risk, as part of its PDE programmes. One memorable high-energy activity was Project TriAce organised in 2012, in which 320 youth from various community groups and organisations including the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF), Youth Guidance Outreach Services, MENDAKI and the Association of Muslim Professionals, took part in laser tag sessions and “high-low elements” consisting of high rock walls and low obstacle courses. Youth also participated in an adventure race infused with anti-drug elements, in the form of anti-drug quizzes and puzzles that participants needed to solve within their game missions. The anti-drug messages were also reinforced through sharing sessions, where an ex-drug abuser spoke about his drug abuse and rehabilitation to raise awareness about the harm and addictiveness of drugs.
These events also enabled the participants to build their self-confidence, encouraged team work and created opportunities for peer support. This is part of CNB’s strategy to prevent drug abuse: educate and empower youth so that they will not be drawn to drugs.

**Tackling liberal attitudes towards drugs**

PDE has become more relevant than ever, as there has been an increase in the number of drug abusers arrested who are below 30 years old. Over the last 10 years, the number of drug abusers under the age of 20 who have been arrested increased by an average of 7 percent every year, while those aged between 20 and 29 increased by an average of 11 percent every year. In 2014, more than two in three new abusers were below 30 years old.

According to NYGR Chairman Masagos Zulkifli, one concern is that young drug abusers have the misperception that drugs like methamphetamine and cannabis are less harmful. Another concern is an increasingly liberal attitude toward drugs among youth, influenced by social media.

Ms Chew Huey Ching, CNB’s Director of Policy, Planning and Research, said: “The increasingly liberal attitude toward drugs, especially among older youth, is a concern for CNB. This was one of the findings in the Youth Perception Survey commissioned by NCADA in 2013. CNB has noticed that the proportion of young abusers below the age of 30 has been increasing. We need to continue with our efforts to keep youth away from drugs. Our current low drug abuse situation did not come by accident, but by design. It is achieved through hard work and a zero-tolerance stance toward drugs.”
She added: “In addition, CNB has also observed the emergence of New Psychoactive Substances (NPS) such as K2, Spice and Bath Salts, which are created to mimic the effects of controlled drugs. These developments, together with the growing trend of legalisation of cannabis in some foreign jurisdictions and the dissemination of misinformation through the Internet and social media, may have a negative impact on the youth. There is a need for early intervention, effective enforcement and proper rehabilitation measures for youth to prevent them from being entrenched in the vicious drug abuse cycle.”

The profile of young drug abusers has also changed. Based on a research study commissioned by the Task Force on Youth and Drugs on young drug abusers, a high proportion of cannabis abusers did well academically and came from either middle or high Socioeconomic Status (SES) households.

An earlier Taskforce on Drugs chaired by Mr Masagos in 2011 had already made some recommendations to address the issues on youth drug abuse. But in light of the continuing challenge, the Task Force on Youth and Drugs was convened in November 2014, co-chaired by Mr Masagos and Ms Sim Ann, then-Minister of State, Ministries of Communications and Information & Education.

**Widening the drug prevention network**

Since 2011, CNB has proactively collaborated with various government agencies and community organisations including the MSF, Ministry of Education, Singapore Police Force, self-help groups and Voluntary Welfare Organisations, to get the drug prevention message out to the different target audiences.

In schools, for instance, teachers are provided with a drug education resource package, which equips them with the knowledge and resources to educate youth on the harm that drugs can cause, and offers useful tips on how to resist drugs. In partnership with the police, CNB has weaved stronger anti-drug messages into the police’s youth engagement programmes. CNB has also leveraged the Police-CNB-Schools-MSF (PCSM) Liaison Framework – where liaison officers from the various agencies exchange information and action plans to manage the youth crime situation in schools - to reach out to youth-at-risk since 2012. It has also worked with the MSF to reach out to probationers and residents at the Singapore Girls’ and Singapore Boys’ Homes by conducting talks and workshops for them.

Ms Chew added: “The government bodies and social service agencies have been doing good work on youth-related issues. However, it is important for us to work even more closely with other agencies as well as community partners, given the resource constraints and the complexity of issues faced by youth-at-risk and youth offenders.”

Recognising that parents play a critical role in engaging the youth, CNB produced anti-drug materials and resources targeted at parents. These
materials included brochures, articles, videos, and advertorials in magazines. Besides general outreach to parents, in 2013, CNB produced an informational handbook for the parents of youth drug supervisees and abusers to equip them with the information to help their children stay drug-free. In September 2014, CNB started to invite the parents of youth arrested by CNB and the parents of youth drug supervisees for talks to support them in the supervision of their children. CNB conducted two sessions in 2014 and reached out to 38 parents. Such talks will continue to be held every two to three months.

**Upstream interventions for young abusers**

Following the recommendations from the Taskforce on Drugs, upstream interventions for first time young drug abusers were enhanced with the introduction of the *Youth Enhanced Supervision (YES)* scheme in 2013 and the *Community Rehabilitation Centre (CRC)* in 2014. This allowed a more calibrated approach in providing targeted intervention programmes for new young drug abusers based on their different risk profiles to help address their drug addiction issues.

The YES scheme was introduced in July 2013 for young abusers. It is the result of enhancing the existing Direct Supervision Order (DSO) with compulsory casework and counselling. The YES Scheme is a diversionary programme for young abusers under 21 years of age who are arrested for abusing drugs for the first-time and are assessed to be of low risk of relapsing. MSF partners the CNB and social service agencies to administer the YES Scheme.

These young abusers undergo individual, group-based and family sessions aimed at motivating them to stay away from drugs and equipping them with relapse-prevention skills. The families of young abusers are also engaged as family support is integral to rehabilitation.

Upon the Task Force on Drugs’ recommendation, the CRC was started in May 2014 for youth aged between 16 and below 21. It provides a structured environment where new young drug abusers of moderate risk of relapsing undergo a comprehensive drug intervention programme. The CRC provides drug rehabilitation in a structured residential setting in the community, focusing on addressing the needs of the youth and his family, with minimal disruption to the lives of the youth. This is achieved by strengthening the youth’s social bonds and allowing them to continue with attending school or work in the day.

Young abusers assessed to be of high risk of relapsing would be sent to the *Drug Rehabilitation Centre (DRC)* to undergo drug rehabilitation. They would undergo differentiated programmes based on their severity of drug use and criminogenic risks and needs. These programmes not only address their drug abuse behaviour, but also mitigate their criminogenic risks and needs, such as antisocial thinking and attitudes.

While these programmes are put in place, Ms Chew emphasised that family support is crucial: “It is important to garner support from the family members of the youth-at-risk and youth offenders. This helps to ensure the youth’s commitment to the relevant intervention programmes, to help them rehabilitate and reintegrate successfully into society.”
Case Study

GUIDED BACK TO THE RIGHT PATH*

Ravi was caught stealing a bicycle when he was 15. The police offered the first-time juvenile offender an opportunity to attend the Guidance Programme to help him develop a pro-social mindset and empathy for others. The programme helped Ravi develop empathy and eventually changed his attitude towards life.

*This is a fictitious story based on a real case study. All names have been changed.
To help Ravi understand what his mother faced each day, his social worker suggested that he followed her to work.

So smelly!

Come, I help you.

This is hard work. I can’t believe how selfish I’ve been...

I was shocked to see the hard work she had to do...

At a family counselling session, the social worker asked Ravi how he felt working alongside his mother...

Sorry, Amma. I was wrong to steal. From now on, I’ll save my own money to buy what I want.

It’s ok Ravi... No matter how hard the work is... We need to work for what we want in life.

Slowly, Ravi built a closer relationship with his mother and brother.

He began to see himself as being able to contribute financially to the family.

Nothing lah. Just some money I earned from my part-time job.

What’s this?

Amma, here. Take this.

Wah, my boy has grown up. It’s ok to work, but must still remember to attend school.

Yes... I’ll go to school and study hard so you don’t have to work so hard next time.
What happens when a youth commits a crime and is arrested by the police?

In the past, the youth would either have been administered a stern warning or have been charged, and put through the criminal justice system. Over the years, numerous agencies in Singapore have worked together to divert suitable youth offenders from the criminal justice system. By diverting these youth offenders, especially those with a lower risk of re-offending, they are given a chance to be rehabilitated and not face the stigma and effects of the criminal justice system at a young age.
REHABILITATION AND REINTEGRATION

Rehabilitation and reintegration efforts over the years have geared towards adopting evidence-informed practices, collaboration with community partners and more upstream work.

“Rehabilitation of youth offenders should as much as possible be community-based,” said Mr Lee Kim Hua, Senior Director of the Rehabilitation and Protection Group (RPG), Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF). “This enables the youth’s risks and needs to be addressed without disruption to their family relationships, education or employment. Institutionalisation would be reserved for those who pose a high risk to public safety.”

In 2012, the Attorney-General’s Chambers (AGC) established the Sub-Committee on Pre-Court Diversion Committee for Youth Offenders to holistically review the exercise of prosecutorial discretion in respect of youth offenders. This stemmed from the recognition of the intrinsic public interest in reintegrating youth offenders into society and preventing them from re-offending. The Triage System was one of the fruits of this review.

Mr Mark Tay, a former Youth Court Judge who led the Sub-Committee as a Deputy Public Prosecutor to propose the Triage initiative, shared: “Our team implemented the large-scale enhancements to AGC’s diversionary efforts, including changing the model for decision-making in the prosecution of youth offenders. In summary, within AGC, we shifted the paradigm for youth who committed minor offences from an ad-hoc decision making process to a principled one, focused on rehabilitating youth offenders within the community.”

“Rehabilitation of youth offenders should as much as possible be community-based. This enables the youth’s risks and needs to be addressed without disruption to their family relationships, education or employment.”

NYGR Member

Mr Lee Kim Hua
Senior Director, Rehabilitation and Protection Group
Ministry of Social and Family Development
Other enhancements to the diversionary efforts included the development of a special team of prosecutors who had a keen understanding of the issues relating to youth crimes, including their rehabilitative needs. These prosecutors, amongst other factors, assisted in formulating appropriate approaches towards youth crime within AGC, and worked with other stakeholders on youth crime matters.

Identifying and diverting offenders early

The Triage System – Early Identification and Diversion of Youth Offenders – is expected to roll out to all police divisions in 2016. It is envisaged to transform the youth offender scene in Singapore by bringing services upstream with early identification and diversion of youth offenders from the criminal justice system. This enhancement to the decision-making process for arrested youth involves provision of additional information on the youth’s social background and exploration of alternatives to charging a youth offender in Court. A social worker (termed “triage officer”) interviews the youth offender and his or her caregivers in the police station as part of the investigation process. The triage officer integrates the information that has been gathered from the youth, family, school and the results of the risk assessment administered. Where needed, the triage officer would make referrals to relevant support services or programmes to support the youth or family members.

The Triage System was piloted in two Police Divisions from September 2012 to March 2013. Given their experience in conducting risk assessments and working with youth offenders, Probation officers from MSF performed the role of triage officers during the pilot. This resulted in 95 percent of youth being diverted from the criminal justice system.

“Within AGC, we shifted the paradigm for youth who committed minor offences from an ad-hoc decision making process to a principled one, focused on rehabilitating youth offenders within the community.”

NYGR Member

Mr Mark Tay
Director (Prosecution), Legal Services Division
Ministry of Manpower from 1 Feb 2015
Guiding offenders back on the right path

The Guidance Programme (GP) is one of the diversionary programmes available for youth offenders. It is a six-month community-based programme for youth offenders who have committed minor offences such as theft. If the youth complete the programme and do not commit further offences within a stipulated period, they are given a police warning and are not prosecuted in court.

GP aims to help youth offenders develop a pro-social mindset and empathy for others. The programme comprises individual, family and group-based sessions. Youth are guided to be accountable for, and to understand the impact of their actions on others. In addition to equipping them with lifeskills to make the right choices in life, GP also engages the youth and their family members through outdoor activities, community service projects and family bonding sessions. Since 2012, efforts have been made to increase collaboration with the schools.

Since its inception in 1997, GP has evolved over the years (refer to fig. 6.1 on the milestones of GP). Since 2012, efforts have also been made to increase collaboration with the schools. About 600 youth are referred for GP annually, of which an average of 88 percent complete the programme.

Turning youth away from gangs

The Streetwise Programme (SWP) is a six-month voluntary programme for youth found to be associating with gangs. It aims to change the youth’s mindset of associating with gangs, help the youth

Figure 6.1. GP Milestones

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GP</td>
<td>GP Plus</td>
<td>GP ID</td>
<td>GP for peddling of duty-unpaid cigarettes</td>
<td>Expanded list of offences eligible to be considered for GP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For youth aged 10 to below 16 years</td>
<td>For youth aged 16 to below 19 years</td>
<td>For youth with mild intellectual disabilities (IQ 50 to 70)</td>
<td>Customised to better suit the learning needs of the youth and consists of mainly individual and family sessions</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>For youth with minor offences (mainly theft-related)</td>
<td>Catered to meet the needs of older youth such as engaging in employment or tertiary education</td>
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* Anna*, a 16-year-old Secondary 4 student, had committed a theft offence. The interview revealed that she had been diagnosed with mild depression and suspected to have an eating disorder. It was apparent that Anna’s mother was struggling and helpless during the interview with the triage officer. The triage officer connected with Anna’s school counsellor and psychologist from MSF to help and support the family.
Xavier* busted his first chance.

The former gangster, who was caught on camera “bashing” his victim in a shopping mall, was ordered by the Court to attend SWP as a condition of his Probation Order.

Xavier shared that he was young and ignorant then. “Just wanting to get myself out of everything, I signed on the dotted line without reading or asking much about the programme,” he said.

Xavier found the programme more demanding than he expected. He had to attend it at least twice a week and adhere to a curfew. As such, Xavier had to make adjustments to his lifestyle and spend less time with his friends. He also needed to be accountable to his mentor for his behaviour at home and in school. Nonetheless, Xavier said that he enjoyed the programme. Apart from the counselling sessions, he participated in sports activities and was given the opportunity to travel to Malacca to refurbish a school and teach English to the children.

“Rendering help to the less fortunate and in turn receiving their gratitude for our work were fruitful experiences which I never thought I would have the chance to go through,” he said.

Despite the positive experience, Xavier did not mend his ways and was soon arrested for assault and drug consumption. This time, he was ordered to reside in the Singapore Boys’ Home for two years. This happened just a day before he graduated from SWP. “While inside (Singapore Boys’ Home), I reflected. I regretted my actions and decided to change for the better,” he said.

During his home leave, Xavier got in touch with his mentor from SWP who welcomed him back with open arms. During the years of mentorship thereafter, Xavier’s mentor challenged Xavier to contribute to society by helping other youth involved in gangs to leave their gangs and realise their dreams.

“I got to understand their problems, provided them with feasible solutions to their problems and answers to their struggles after understanding their character and the way they think. I also helped them to view things from a positive perspective,” said Xavier.

“I am really thankful that I was given an opportunity to use my experience as a lesson for the troubled youth, and be alongside them in their growing and learning process.”

* not his real name
understand the social and legal consequences of gang association and build up the youth’s resiliency to dissociate and stay away from gangs.

Following an evaluation of SWP, NYGR made improvements to it and re-launched SWP in November 2010. The programme comprises a combination of individual, family and group-based sessions with increased emphasis on intervention with the family and adoption of gang-specific intervention approaches. Since 2012, SWP has seen an average of 90 youth referred annually, with close to 90 percent completing the programme successfully.

**Enhanced efforts against youth gang participation**

Implemented in 2012, the Enhanced Streetwise Programme (ESWP) differs from SWP in that it caters to youth who have been arrested for playing a minor role in gang-related offences. The programme was modelled after SWP to help the youth dissociate from their gang while developing more pro-social mindset and problem solving skills. Similar to GP, youth who successfully complete ESWP and do not commit further offences within a stipulated period, would not be charged in Court.

Aside from attending the programme, other conditions such as reporting to the Secret Societies Branch periodically, keeping away from gang haunts, and ceasing association with gang members are imposed on the youth.

**Continued support for youth**

The Central Youth Guidance Office (CYGO) introduced the “light touch” post-programme support system named Extra Mile in April 2013. The three-year pilot project ensures that youth who have completed their diversionary programmes will have a shoulder they can lean on until they turn 21.

The youth workers make it a point to keep in touch with the youth after their programmes have ended. They help them with issues they may face in searching for jobs, meeting academic needs, or accessing counselling and training opportunities. Over 450 youth have benefited from Extra Mile.

**COURT-ORDERED INTERVENTIONS – PROBATION**

Probation provides the courts with an alternative sentencing option in dealing with offenders who may otherwise be committed to a Juvenile Rehabilitation Centre, Reformative Training Centre or prison. It aims to instil in offenders a strong sense of social responsibility and self-discipline to enable them to lead a crime-free life. Social investigation and the risk assessment tool, the Youth Level of Service/
Case Management Inventory (YLS/CMI), are used to assess the offender’s suitability for probation and design intervention strategies. The rigour in the risk assessment approach enables probation officers to state the offender’s risk of re-offending with greater confidence and address the factors that contribute to offending. To enhance outcomes for the offender, the intervention provided is also matched to their abilities and learning styles.

As part of the Probation Order, the Court may attach conditions that are necessary to ensure good conduct of the offender and prevent the commission of further offence. These could include observing a curfew, being on the electronic monitoring scheme, performing community service, residing in a hostel, amongst others. Evidence-informed approaches are also used to shape attitudes, values and behaviours of the offenders.

**Engaging the family**

Strengthening the family is a significant factor in the rehabilitation journey. In working with probationers, the Probation Service holds the belief that the family should remain an important support for the individual. Parenting programmes and interactive workshops are conducted to equip parents with effective parenting and communication skills in order for them to strengthen the family bonds and better manage their children, including siblings of probationers. The Probation Service has also garnered the support of community partners in assisting families to overcome interpersonal or socio-economic challenges that may prevent parents from fulfilling their roles in their children’s rehabilitation. This approach of co-case management enables swifter and holistic response to their difficulties and paves the way for the continuing presence of community support for the family beyond the Probation Order.

**Creative partnerships**

The Probation Service has continually sought to involve the community in the provision of support and services for better integration of offenders into mainstream society. Volunteer probation officers complement the work of the probation officers in the management of offenders. Collaborations with social service agencies, organisations and the private sector are ongoing to create opportunities for probationers to perform community service and learn new skills in the area of arts and sports. A key part of offender rehabilitation is to ensure that they are engaged in constructive education or employment. Collaborations with schools and agencies like the Youth Employment & Advancement Hub (YEAH!) lend great support for school-going and unemployed probationers.
**Meaningful community service placements**

Introduced in 1996, the **Community Service Order (CSO)** began as a condition of probation. Since 2012, the Service Learning Model (see fig. 6.2) was adopted in the planning and designing of the community service experience. This is to maximise learning and enhance the probationers’ rehabilitation process.

Probationers are involved in meaningful tasks that meet the needs of the beneficiaries. These give them an opportunity to harness their strengths and interests, learn valuable skills and inculcate positive values. Making amends through serving the community also aids in developing a sense of responsibility towards others and encourages pro-social behaviours.

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**Figure 6.2. Service Learning Model**
Residential care

The Singapore Boys’ Home and Singapore Girls’ Home provide stability and safety for youth offenders placed in residential care. The aim is to reintegrate the youth into the community as assets, and for them to lead a meaningful and pro-social lifestyle.

There is a rigorous risks and needs assessment, individualised care plans, interventions to address the risks and needs issues, close guidance and supervision, and regular review of the offenders’ progress.

The youth offenders have structured daily routines, undergo programmes (including cognitive-behavioural skills training to address offending behaviour, therapy, education, sports, visual arts and music) for their holistic development, and are taught habits and skills to help them lead a good way of life. Family and community engagements are also harnessed to support the offenders’ rehabilitation.

For each offender, there are three key groups of staff who work closely with them:

- Youth Guidance Officers, who work with the offenders on daily living habits and self-management skills;
- Caseworkers, who build and strengthen the offenders’ socio-emotional development, and relationships with family or significant others; and
- MOE-trained teachers and qualified instructors from the industry, who equip the offenders with educational preparation and/or relevant certification for their future learning pursuits. This also opens career pathways for them.

As part of their Community Service Orders (CSO), probationers worked with volunteers and staff from the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) to care for the animals as well as design personalised items like feeding bowls and leashes for the animals. The project gave the probationers an opportunity to be exposed to the needs of the animals and foster compassion through caring for them. Designing the items for the animals also tapped the probationers’ creativity and resulted in them feeling a sense of accomplishment. This project was especially meaningful for one of the female probationers diagnosed with depression. Initially reserved and quiet, she began to open up to her probation officer after interacting with the animals. The good feedback she received on her performance in the project also boosted her self-esteem and gave her confidence to work through her difficulties.

This project was especially meaningful for one of the female probationers diagnosed with depression. Initially reserved and quiet, she began to open up to her probation officer after interacting with the animals. The good feedback she received on her performance in the project also boosted her self-esteem and gave her confidence to work through her difficulties.
Education is an important lever to get the offenders focused back on their studies and give them a renewed hope that they can achieve through education and learning. Since 2013, MOE-trained teachers have been either hired or seconded to the Homes to provide quality education to the youth. Mr Lee, Senior Director of RPG, MSF, said: “These youth offenders are able to continue their education in the Homes and have a smoother transition back to education institutions.”

With progress, restored relationships and seeing success, these offenders will be better equipped and prepared to reintegrate back to the community - through school or vocational training and constructive leisure pursuits, with possibilities and aspirations for themselves and their families.

**Meeting individual needs**

Every youth offender is different, and the intervention of each individual has been customised over the years to better meet their needs.

MSF has been providing specialised treatment for youth offenders. These include programmes for those who had committed sexual and theft offences and those at risk of violent behaviours. In 2014, MSF introduced the Functional Family Therapy, a short-term, family-focused behavioural intervention designed to address family dysfunction in at-risk youth and youth offenders. The results speak for themselves: for instance, offenders who did not participate in the theft intervention programme were 8.47 times more likely to steal again.

The Singapore Prison Service (SPS) has concluded its review of the **Reformative Training (RT)** regime in 2014. Said Ms Lee Kwai Sem, SPS’s Director of Rehabilitation & Reintegration Division: “One of the key recommendations include the implementation of differentiated regimes, which will tailor to the RT inmates’ assessed risks and needs. As a Captain of Lives, I strongly believe that everyone possesses the ability and desire to turn their lives around. Through targeted programming and aftercare support, we will inspire these young offenders, at every chance, towards becoming a contributing citizen.”

**Supporting inmates’ academic dreams**

Since it opened in 2000, Kaki Bukit Centre (Prison School), now known as **Tanah Merah Prison School** has been a beacon of hope for youth and some adult offenders who show an aptitude for book work. Backed by a tireless team of officers, teachers and even volunteers, the offenders’ academic confidence is restored from within the four walls of the Prison School, which is situated in the Changi Prison Complex.

The youth are prepared for ITE General Education, GCE ‘N’, ‘O’ and ‘A’ levels, and vocational training.

Between 2005 and 2014, an average of 99.2 percent of Prison School students who sat for the GCE ‘O’ level examinations attained at least one ‘O’ level pass. In 2008, the school produced Singapore’s top ‘O’ level private candidate.

Apart from academics, the students, just like those in mainstream schools, are exposed to a holistic education where they benefit from enrichment activities and are given opportunities to showcase their talents and develop values and life skills like...
self-discipline, confidence, teamwork and effective communication. In this journey, volunteers from the community have stepped forward to partner the Prison School. In the past, for instance, professional basketball players conducted basketball master classes for the inmates which not only helped them to relieve the stress of studying, but also imparted values like teamwork and perseverance.

School assemblies provide platforms for sharing, encouragement and reflection for the students. External speakers, such as community partners and ex-offenders, are invited to motivate students towards their rehabilitation.

Families are also deeply involved, as the support of family members is perhaps even more crucial in the rehabilitation and re-education of these offenders. In a practice which is common for primary school pupils, but rare for older students above the age of 16, family members are invited for Parent-Teacher-Officer meetings so they can be updated on the students’ conduct and academic progress.

Leveraging on Family Programmes, the school attempts to mend and strengthen relationships between the youth and his family members. The Programme also helps prepare the youth and his family for his eventual release.

**RESTORATIVE JUSTICE**

Restorative Justice is an approach that focuses on the restoration of relationships and reparation of harm caused by the offence(s). Community service is one of the ways that allow offenders to give back to the community and facilitate their integration to the society. In recent years, restorative practice has also been weaved in as part of intervention plan for offenders in both community-based and institution rehabilitation.

Healing rifts

A youth’s behaviour cannot be divorced from his emotions. A youth offender may behave the way he does because of past hurts and conflicts, which affects his self-esteem and distorts his world view.

Therefore, rehabilitation has focused increasingly on gently resolving and healing emotional injuries, which can powerfully enable the youth offender to turn his life around.

In the Youth Court, family conferences are convened as a platform for the youth’s family, the community
and various agencies to work together to resolve familial issues. With the changes in the profile of the juveniles over the past 10 years, family conferencing has evolved to be more comprehensive in addressing family problems and their strained relationships between the youth and parents or family members which may impact rehabilitation. Issues of family dysfunction can also be confronted while steps can be agreed upon by the youth and family to reduce the acrimony.

Efforts are made to reconcile youth offenders and their victims with the objective to facilitate emotional closure. In the conference, the youth offender acknowledges that his actions had hurt many others and develops a plan to make amends. Such face-to-face meetings are part of the Youth Court’s Project HEAL (Healing, Empowering and Linking) and are known as Heal Juvenile Case Conferences.

“These conferences are a platform for the youth’s family, the community and various agencies to collaborate in a manner that allows the multiple problems facing the youth and his family to be dealt with holistically for the benefit of the youth’s rehabilitation,” said District Judge Edgar Foo, Youth Courts.

Remarkably, not only have offenders, victims and family members expressed that these sessions helped them to move on, some victims even went on to encourage the offenders to complete their Orders and work toward a bright and crime-free future.

**Empowering the youth**

A key aspect of rehabilitation is to encourage the youth to take personal responsibility.

**Progress Presentation Reviews (PPR),** started in late 2010 at Family Justice Courts, require youth offenders to make presentations on their own progress, in the presence of parents, a school representative and a probation or supervising officer. In the past, an officer would have made the presentation. These reviews are targeted at juvenile probationers or Beyond Parental Control supervisees, whose orders were given before the age of 16. The number of cases that had undergone PPR has steadily increased from 18 in 2011 to 53 in 2014.

“The objective of PPR is to promote a greater sense of ownership and responsibility over the youth’s progress whilst under probation or supervision,” said District Judge Foo “It is hoped that the youth will make use of this opportunity to reflect on his or her past, present and future.”

Similarly, from 1 September 2014, the **Progress Accountability Court (PAC)** was introduced in the State Courts to give emphasis to its post-sentencing role in supporting rehabilitation, especially among youthful offenders who have been sentenced to probation and reformative training, and other offenders undergoing community sentences. The Court oversees the progress of selected high-risk offenders through reviews which enable the Court to monitor the offender’s progress and reinforce his sense of accountability for positive and lasting change. During these reviews, offenders are also encouraged to express their thoughts on their progress and aspirations for change. The PAC judge chairs the review and a court psychologist provides inputs on the psycho-social aspects of the offender’s behaviour and progress. These reviews would not only be attended by the offender but also the case officers and the offender’s parents.
The objective of PPR is to promote a greater sense of ownership and responsibility over the youth’s progress whilst under probation or supervision.

NYGR Member
Mr Edgar Foo
District Judge/Assistant Registrar
Family Justice Courts

The process sees the sentence as a change agent, a means to motivate the youth offender to address the underlying problems that led to the crime, and it provides a forum where good choices and progress could be affirmed so as to support the offender’s rehabilitation endeavours.
CHAPTER 7

BUILDING YOUTH OF TOMORROW

MEETING FUTURE NEEDS
Case Study

ADVANCING YOUTH EMPLOYMENT*

Due to family circumstances, Jing Jing and her younger sister grew up in a Children’s Home. Despite this, Jing Jing went on to fulfil her dream of working in the nursing sector with the help of Youth Employment & Advancement Hub (YEAH!), a pilot programme started in 2013 to assist job seekers who are Singaporeans or Singapore Permanent Residents between the ages of 16 and 21, who are not engaged in school, training or employment.

*This is a fictitious story based on a real case study. All names have been changed.
Anxious about her future, Jing Jing started to lose sleep.

To help Jing Jing, the Children’s Home arranged a career coach from YEAH! to give her career guidance.

...It would be useful to take up Life Skills training first... After that you can go on to do a WSQ Certificate in Healthcare Support...

Yes... but it’s better to continue to study for a Higher Certificate.

A month after getting her Higher Certificate in Healthcare Support, Jing Jing managed to get a job through YEAH! as a hospital Healthcare Assistant.

With a Higher Cert, you can work as a Healthcare Assistant. After 2 years of working, you can study for the Advanced Cert and become a nurse!

Okay... I can apply for a job after this?

Okay Ma.

Ma, Jie Jie is nugging for her exam! Very kan ehoong! Better don’t disturb her!

How to take care of patient if she is so skinny? Haha!

A few weeks later...

Jing Jing, eat, eat.

Jing Jing, ate, ate.

Welcome to our ward, Jing Jing!

Thanks! I’m glad to be doing what I’ve always wanted! YEAH!
Singapore has stayed at the forefront of youth rehabilitation by anticipating, adapting to and meeting future needs.

Apart from continuing to ensure that youth offenders are able to succeed in life, the challenge is in how to engage our youth more effectively through new strategies. We also need to embrace and leverage technology in a balanced manner to positively influence the lives of youth.

Keeping up with emerging needs of our youth-at-risk has placed increased demands on those who work with them. To that end, Singapore’s youth workers have tirelessly bettered themselves to understand the changing nature of youth, learn new skills and create innovative programmes, for changing the course of a youth’s life is no easy but definitely worthwhile task.
Many pathways to success

In 2013, the Central Youth Guidance Office (CYGO) piloted a career facilitation and vocational training service for youth aged 16 to 21 who are not in school or employment. The Youth Employment & Advancement Hub (YEAH!), which is run by the Singapore Institute of Retail Studies, attracted over 500 youth in two years. Youth undergo a career suitability assessment facilitated by experienced Career Coaches who examine the youth’s interest and inclination for desired careers. Thereafter, they will undergo life skills and vocational training before being matched with a job in their chosen career. After job matching, the Career Coaches will continue to provide support for another six months while the youth starts on his or her career. To ensure that the youth gain qualifications recognised by the industries, they would be sent for vocational training to attain various levels of qualifications under the Singapore Workforce Skills Qualifications (WSQ) frameworks.

On the YEAH! website, youth can access a listing of specific jobs in the food and beverage, retail and other industries.

Another similar project YMCA’s Project Bridge Vocational and Soft Skills Programme (VaSSP) has also been providing youth-at-risk with training in hairdressing, make-up, hospitality in food and beverage, and baking since 2012.

Sports and arts engagement channels

An effective strategy to engage youth-at-risk has been through structured sports and arts programmes. Not only does the activity help youth develop their skills professionally, it also keeps them occupied with pro-social activities and allows them to flourish in a supportive community of like-minded friends.

To enable the implementation of the Sports and Arts (SPAR) Framework effectively, CYGO had organised its first Youth Arts Symposium in 2012, where overseas speakers were invited to share their experiences in using the arts to engage youth-at-risk. The result was closer ties between arts groups and social service agencies, which set the foundation for further future collaboration. CYGO later held its inaugural Youth Sports Symposium in 2013. Similarly, guest speakers from government agencies, schools and youth organisations shared their experiences of how they changed lives through sports.

Apart from the respective symposiums, some of these ideas to engage youth through sports and arts were adapted from what has been done overseas. When the NYGR team visited the United States in 2011, for instance, they saw that there was a clear structure in place to ensure that sports coaches were also trained to mentor youth. CYGO is currently working on contextualising the Game for Life toolkit developed by Sport Singapore for at-risk youth.
Much knowledge has been gleaned from overseas study trips, where representatives from the various agencies not only look and learn from their foreign counterparts, but also bring back new ideas to implement. In the past decade, visits have been made to Hong Kong, the United States, Canada, Sweden and the United Kingdom and these trips helped to spark off initiatives including YEAH!, the Youth GO! programme and the Triage System.

Engaging youth online

Besides using sports and arts to engage youth, knowing how to engage youth – digital natives born in the Internet age – in their “comfort zone” is crucial. Hence, online engagement has taken off in the last decade. It is now necessary to harness digital tools to reach out to youth who are adept online users, preferring to search and access information from myriad sources independently.

Said Police DAC Jarrod Pereira, 1 Deputy Director (Operations): “These youth may be less receptive to face-to-face interactions of which our engagement strategies have been primarily centred on over the years. One way to overcome this is for us to engage with this new reality and work to ensure that our programmes and initiatives are tailored to accommodate this. While it does not mean that all our activities will be carried out online, we need to recognise the impact of social media and technology on our youth, and tailor our measures accordingly.”

“The manifestation of risk behaviour may vary as youth are exposed and therefore very influenced by what is the fad and leisure of the time.”

Former NYGR Member

Ms Ang Bee Lian
Director of Social Welfare
Ministry of Social and Family Development
on mobile technology, the challenges ahead may congregate around what the technology may bring in the next decade,” said Ms Ang Bee Lian, Director of Social Welfare at the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF), who was formerly a member of the NYGR.

To this end, CYGO launched a youth support website called www.whatbothersyouth.sg in October 2013. Youth can access a one-stop directory of services and obtain helpful nuggets of information. For example, an article which describes the symptoms of gaming addiction is accompanied by a help box of numbers to call.

The information on the website also benefits professionals working with youth including school counsellors and youth support workers.

The National Council of Social Service works with a community of Voluntary Welfare Organisations to reach out to youth online through different programmes. One that has taken off well is cyber counselling, where youth “talk” to and confide in counsellors who provide advice, remotely via the Internet.

Fei Yue Community Service runs such a cyber counselling service called eGEN, meant for troubled youth aged 13 to 25. The opening page reads: “Need to talk to someone quick?” There is a virtual chat room that is open at specific hours, so the youth can simply “drop” in. Youth who blog anonymously about their innermost thoughts – on dieting, boy-girl troubles, feeling suicidal or depressed – also share their posts with the community.

**Net-aware youth**

However, the Internet is a double-edged sword, and this is an area of great concern to those who work with youth.

Cyberbullying and Internet addiction are just two of the growing issues that threaten the mental well-being of youth. In 2014, the enactment of the Protection from Harrassment Act provided greater scope to prosecute youth for cyberbullying and related offences.

For instance, social media can be used as an accessible means to recruit gang members and runners for unlicensed moneylenders. The challenge lies in involving the community, such as schools and parents to educate and equip youth with the necessary skills to navigate social media safely and not be adversely influenced by it.

Agencies are offering programmes to help youth deal with the potential fall-out from being connected. **MeToYou Cyber Care** is a cyber wellness agency founded by Montfort Care, to focus on cyber addiction-related issues for youth aged 12 to 18.
Various training courses and programmes are in place to equip these youth workers with the necessary knowledge and skills, so they can better engage youth-at-risk.

When it comes to social media, for instance, youth workers have been provided with the Social Media Resource Kit—a user-friendly step-by-step guide that is available online—on how they can help the youth they are working with to navigate the social media minefield. The kit keeps youth workers updated on the different social media platforms, like Vine, Tumblr and Instagram. It even delves into the specifics of what to say when chatting with youth and their parents on the pitfalls of social media.

Forums are organised where youth workers can gather en masse to share ideas and solutions. One such forum is Conversations on Youth, a biennial symposium jointly organised by the Ministry of Home Affairs, MSF and Ministry of Education for school leaders, teachers-in-charge of student discipline, social and youth workers, law enforcement officers and participants from the organising Ministries. These representatives come together to talk about trends and strategies in youth delinquency and offending.

In 2014, the event titled “Youths of Generation Z” was attended by about 600 people who met to talk about social media, how youth perceive drugs and other pertinent issues affecting our youth today.

MeToYou runs workshops in schools on topics like cyberbullying and how to balance Internet usage, and youth projects to get the teenagers thinking about their relationship with technology. For instance, students were once asked to interview the elderly, to understand how ingrained technology has become in the present day. Even parents are involved in a monthly support group meeting, where they come together to share and solve problems if their children were, say, addicted to online gaming.

Building up youth worker capabilities

In leading youth toward the right path, it is the supporting hand of the guide which is crucial.

In Singapore, numerous programmes are run for youth-at-risk by passionate and competent youth workers—whether they are social workers, teachers, police and even reformed delinquents who dedicate themselves to mentoring work.

Continually adapting

For youth workers, their work has become increasingly challenging.
“The profile of offenders is becoming increasingly complex with more presenting multiple risks and needs,” said Mr Lee Kim Hua, Senior Director of the Rehabilitation and Protection Group, MSF. “In addition, a larger proportion of offenders are being placed on more intensive grades of probation due to their higher risks or needs. Such offenders require more intensive monitoring and intervention, which place greater demands on rehabilitation work than before.”

In the wider community, changing family structures are a potential source of concern. Ms Nancy Ng, Director of CYGO, said: “In Singapore, divorce rates are increasing and when families break up, there is an impact on children.”

In response, the agencies that make up the NYGR continue to look ahead and prepare for oncoming challenges, by working together closely to come up with innovative and effective programmes.

“To me, the challenges themselves are not new,” mused NYGR veteran Mr Mark Tay. “The real challenge is to keep our adaptive edge, to deal with the changing circumstances that the youth face. We will need to continue to be cognisant to the evolving trends involving youth around the world. Our approaches must be innovative, impactful and viable.”

Superintendent Benjamin Chia, Director of the Strategic Planning Division, Singapore Prison Service, added: “Today’s youth is not tomorrow’s youth. What was successful in the past may not be as successful in the future as youth is a transient group. While our purpose remains the same, the strategies of engagement and intervention need to be calibrated every few years.”

“Today’s youth is not tomorrow’s youth. What was successful in the past may not be as successful in the future as youth is a transient group.”

NYGR Member
SUPT Benjamin Chia
Director, Strategic Planning Division
Singapore Prison Service
It is important for the youth sector to keep abreast of youth issues. To this end, NYGR encourages knowledge sharing across the sector and supports the production of resources that will help youth developers better understand youth and effectively reach out to them.

This listing provides an outline of some of the resources produced and supported by NYGR agencies.

**Title:** A Guide to Programme Planning and Evaluation  
**Agency:** NCSS, Students Care Service  
**Year published:** 2008

Students Care Service is a Centre of Specialisation in school social work. To ensure quality and effective delivery of school social work services that are consistent with the standards set by the Singapore Association of Social Workers, the agency has developed a guide on programme planning and evaluation. This guide is targeted at school social work practitioners to impart knowledge and build capability in programme planning and evaluation, especially in working with schools.

**Title:** A Guide to School Social Work  
**Agency:** NCSS, Students Care Service  
**Year published:** 2007

This study provides an overview of the school social work sector in the following areas – profile of school social work practitioners, types of school-based services, students’ issues of concerns, key stakeholders’ perceptions of roles of school social work practitioners, and programme planning and evaluation.
workers and school counsellors, and recommendations for future developments in school social work. It is developed for the school social work practitioners, and school counsellors.

Title: A Guide to Youth Drop-In Centres
Agency: NCSS, Singapore Children’s Society
Year published: 2011
This guidebook aims to introduce the concept of a non-profit Drop-In Centre and how to set up one, as best fits the Singapore need. It includes areas such as manpower and staffing, where to apply for funding, and case-studies on successful Drop-In centres. It aims to help people in the counselling, social services or education business get started on opening their own drop-in centre, by introducing their basic structures, operations and activities.

Title: Brief Intervention Manual for Internet and Gaming Disorder
Agency: NAMS, MOH
Year published: 2015
This manual is for use by youth workers working with children and adolescents who are suffering from internet gaming disorder. The manual is to be used in conjunction with NAMS training programme on brief intervention for internet and gaming disorder.

Title: C-Quest
Agency: MOE
Year launched: 2014
C-Quest is a mobile game app designed to facilitate meaningful parent-child conversations on their online experiences. Through the game, students will also learn to be safe, respectful, and responsible users of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). To complete the cyber quest game, children will converse with their parents and answer questions related to cyber wellness to earn points. The game also provides useful tips to the players to manage their online activities and complements the cyber wellness curriculum in schools.
This handbook is for teachers and educators, to provide them with a common understanding of how to support children who are at risk or prone to risk.

Objectives:
1. Provide understanding of children with problems relating to family, mental health and/or delinquency;
2. Provide knowledge to help identify and manage children who are at risk/prone to risk;
3. Provide information to make referrals to appropriate agencies.

CONFESSIONS is a film produced to discourage youth from committing crime. The film adopts a hard-hitting approach to highlight the harsh and gruelling existence in prison and post-prison life. The impact is communicated effectively through strong visuals and the experiences of real-life characters. Using their accounts, the film portrays the harshness of prison life, the social cost to an individual when he/she is sentenced to prison, as well as the social stigma attached to the inmate after his/her release from prison. By portraying these consequences vividly, the film conveys the message that crime is not an option.

CONFESSIONS 2 is a sequel to the well-received CONFESSIONS video which features non-scripted interviews with ex-offenders who recount how a moment of folly had cost them the most precious years of their youth when the law finally caught up. The film portrays the consequences of criminal offending behaviour - the punishment as well as its impact on personal and family lives of ex-offenders.
What began as a community liaison project soon developed into a youth amateur football league that continues to grow in size and stature. The Delta League, introduced in June 2011 has helped over 10,000 teenagers from various backgrounds island wide, providing them with a sporting platform to keep them away from crime-related activities.

The book chronicles how the League began, and how it rapidly expanded over its first two years. Through the twice-yearly football tournament as well as specially designed programmes – including mentoring, community involvement activities and even free tattoo-removal services – the League helps youth realise that they can do more with their lives.

The Development Framework for Youth Workers (DYW) was developed by CYGO, Social Service Institute (SSI) and Workforce Development Agency (WDA) with inputs from the practitioners and youth organisations to build up the capacity and capabilities of youth workers.

DYW outlines the core competencies, knowledge and skills required in youth work for providing holistic social services to youth-at-risk and youth offenders. It builds on previous frameworks such as the Professional Development Pathway for Youth Workers (NCSS/ SSTI/ NYC, 2006) and the Community and Social Services Workforce Skills Qualifications framework (WDA, 2006). The framework comprises “Youth Development” as the Foundation Tier and seven competency domains consisting of Intermediate and Advanced levels.
Title: **Essential Parenting Resource Kit**  
Agency: MSF  
Year published: 2013

The Essential Parenting Resource Kit was introduced by MSF in 2013. This kit is a set of three booklets tailored to meet the different needs of parents with children of various age groups:

- The Foundation Years (1 to 6 years old)
- The Discovery Years (7 to 12 years old)
- The Teenage Years (13 to 19 years old)

The booklets provide parents with strategies on building a strong parent-child relationship, covering topics such as effective communication, building children’s self-esteem and character building.

Title: **National Report on Youth Crime**  
Agency: MSF  
Year published: 2015

A joint publication by agencies of NYGR, the National Report on Youth Crime provides information on youth delinquency and crime in Singapore from 2007 to 2013. The report also provides insights into juvenile justice and rehabilitation processes for youth offenders as well as upstream measures NYGR agencies have undertaken to strengthen youth guidance.

Title: **Parents-in-Education (PiE) Website**  
Agency: MOE  
Year launched: 2012

The Parents in Education (PiE) website contains articles on educational news, information on the school curriculum. It also contains parenting tips and resources for parents to better support their children’s growth and development, such as in the areas of parent-child communications, food and nutrition, cyber wellness, coping with stress, values inculcation, education and career guidance, outdoor education, sexuality education and special needs.  

parents-in-education.moe.gov.sg
Title: Please Listen to Me: Transformation of At-Risk Youth – A Documentary Video, Discussion Guide
Agency: NCSS
Year published: 2010

“Please Listen To Me” was funded by NCSS as CARE Singapore’s inaugural Centre of Specialisation project and is meant as a training resource for schools, organisations or volunteer groups helping at-risk youth.

In addition, a discussion guide was developed together with the video as a resource for youth practitioners and educators in helping them relate with youth more effectively.

Title: Positive Youth Development
Agency: MENDAKI
Year published: 2011

Aimed at professionals from Malay Muslim Organisations, Family Service Centres and Voluntary Welfare Organisations who are working closely with Malay youth and their families.

The booklet was available for all participants at the Engaging Hearts Seminar, 2011. It serves as a reference to incorporate Positive Youth Development into our youth programmes. It challenges youth workers to examine the way they interact with youth, to look at our individual actions and/or practices and question whether they are asset building or merely reinforcing what we do not want. It is about delivering and designing programmes for youth and with youth by providing them with real time opportunities to engage in leadership and decision making.
Title: Preventive Drug Education Resource Package for Teachers
Agency: CNB
Year published: First published in 2010, updated in April 2015
A Preventive Drug Education Resource Package developed by CNB (in consultation with MOE’s Education Programmes Division and Curriculum Planning & Development Division) to equip teachers in primary and secondary schools with useful drug prevention information. It includes materials like PDE videos, suggested activities and news articles for classroom discussion, refusal tips, general information on the types of drugs, dangers and penalties of drug and inhalant abuse. A softcopy of the kit is available on MOE’s One Portal All Learners (OPAL). An abridged version is also available for download.

Title: Probation Annual Reports
Agency: MSF
Year published: Published yearly
The Probation Services Branch of MSF publishes annual reports that outline the principles and programmes for rehabilitation of probationers in Singapore. The reports review trends and forecast challenges in the community-based rehabilitation of offenders.

Title: Programme Evaluation Compendium
Agency: MSF
Year published: 2011
In 2011, the Clinical and Forensic Psychology Branch (CFPB), MSF embarked on a journey to develop a programme evaluation framework to systemically evaluate the effectiveness of all the therapeutic interventions. This compendium is the fruit of CFPB’s labour over the past few years. It documents the efforts of the psychologists in designing the evaluation plan, as well as the findings from the initial evaluation. The compendium has been shared with stakeholders as well as our community partners.
Title: Resource booklet on Excessive Internet Use  
Agency: NAMS, MOH  
Year published: 2013  
These booklets are given out to parents of adolescent patients to help them manage and support their children in treatment for internet gaming disorder.

Title: Social Media Resource Kit  
Agency: MSF  
Year published: 2014  
The Social Media Resource Kit was created by Dr Lim Sun Sun (Associate Professor and Assistant Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the National University of Singapore) and her team under the ambit of NYGR’s New Media Taskforce. The resource kit provides tips and information on the use of social media among at-risk youth, highlights the risks involved and provides guidance on how youth and parents can overcome the challenges. It was distributed to professionals who work closely with youth and at-risk youth. This includes school counsellors, social workers, youth workers and probation officers. The resource kit is available for download on the MSF website.

Title: **Staying Drug-Free**  
Agency: **CNB**  
Year published: **First published in 2013, updated in March 2015**  
A handbook for parents of youth drug supervisees, aimed at equipping these parents with useful information and tips to guide their children to remain drug-free. MSF and NAMS contributed articles for the handbook. The handbook comes in four official languages. It is also available for download.  
www.cnb.gov.sg/PDE_PDFs/Staying_Drug_Free_English_v2.pdf

Title: **What Bothers YOUth website**  
Agency: **MSF**  
Year launched: **2013**  
Whatbothersyouth.sg is a youth support website which provides one-stop access to all youth-related services and programmes, and bite-sized information on key youth issues. The information provided on the website also benefits professionals working with youth. A mobile-friendly version of the website has also been created.  
www.whatbothersyouth.sg

Title: **What You Need to Know About Drugs & Inhalants**  
Agency: **CNB**  
Year published: **Updated in early 2015**  
A brochure informing the general public about the commonly abused drugs and inhalants in Singapore, their effects and the penalties for drug offences, the telltale signs of drug abuse and useful helplines.
Title: Moving targets: The practice and evaluation of street outreach for at-risk youth in Singapore

Agency: MSF

Year published: 2015

Youth GO! is a community-based outreach programme for youth who are out of school and not working. It focuses on youth and their families and aims to coordinate assistance and services at community level. This report describes the experiences the service providers faced when starting this new service as well as the evaluation process.
Proactive prevention

Camp EVO (Empowerment, Vibrancy, Outreach) was a stay-in camp run between 2007-2009 for selected secondary school students to develop crime prevention awareness, become proactive learners and build self-esteem and interpersonal communication skills.

The Crime Prevention Proficiency Badge Scheme awards badges to students in four main Uniformed Groups – Girl Guides (including Brownies), National Police Cadet Corps (NPCC), Scouts (including Venture) and St John Ambulance Brigade – who complete theory and practical tests on crime prevention.

The Youth Crime Prevention Ambassadors (PYA) programme is a three-year programme which develops NPCC cadets as PYA and role models in spreading crime prevention messages at school and in their communities.

School Assembly Talks and Crime Prevention Exhibitions are regularly organised by the Singapore Police Force (SPF) to educate youth against crime and remind them that crime is a matter of choice.

Youth Hanging Out Late (YHOL) letters have been sent by the police since 2006 to the parents of youth found loitering in public areas or are exposed to “at risk” situations late at night. SPF also sends such letters to the youth’s school principals as well as the Commanding Officers of the Neighbourhood Police Centres (NPCs) where the youth’s educational institutions are located.

School-based approaches

School Counsellors are a critical part of the Ministry of Education (MOE)’s student support system

The NYGR of today started out in 1995 as the Inter-Ministry Committee on Juvenile Delinquency (IMJD). In 20 years, the many people in the committee, who hail from various government agencies and institutions, have worked hand-in-hand to conceptualise, operationalise and run a raft of programmes which have effectively steered countless numbers of youth to the right path in life.

On the ground, each of these programmes – categorised into seven areas – form an important piece in Singapore’s collective approach toward youth-at-risk.
and every mainstream secondary school is served by a school counsellor who helps students, who are identified early, manage their social, emotional and behavioural problems.

The **Time Out Programme (TOP)** comprises ground-up initiatives by secondary schools focusing on academic, character and development, and counselling aspects, to ensure that students who are at risk of dropping out of school complete their education.

**Enhanced STEP-UP (ESU)** is a support programme for students at risk of dropping out of school as well as out-of-school youth. It is an initiative by the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) to support MOE schools and is delivered by appointed Voluntary Welfare Organisations (VWOs).

The **Honorary Voluntary Special Constabulary (VSC)** scheme in schools places eligible school staff to be Honorary VSC (School) officers where they serve as advisors to the school on delinquency and police procedures, counsel delinquents and enforce law in the school context, and build and enhance localised partnerships to address youth crime.

The **Scaffold Programme** is a school social work programme by the National Council of Social Service (NCSS) where social workers provide holistic care for students who face difficulties in their socio-emotional development process or in adjusting to school life.

Outreach and training programmes are run by the Youth Court – first for students under its **Peer Group Advisers** programme between 1996 and 2011, then for key stakeholders from organisations like MOE and SPF – so they have the relevant knowledge to contribute toward the restoration of youth offenders.

### Changing group influences

The **Youth GO!** programme is a community-based street outreach programme where Youth GO! teams hit the streets to observe and subsequently engage youth to assess their risks, so that these youth remain positively engaged in their studies, training or work.

The **Youth Engagement Programme (YEP)** is a platform for SPF to directly engage and act as mentors to youth-at-risk, usually after school, as well as transmit crime prevention and anti-drug abuse messages.

**Delta League** is a soccer league aimed at keeping youth meaningfully occupied during the school holidays in June and December, and raise their awareness of the consequences of being involved in crime.

The **Youth Community Outreach Programme (COP)** is a strong partnership between National Crime Prevention Council, secondary schools, Students Care Service, NPCs, and supported by NCSS, which trains students in a three-year programme to become Crime Prevention Ambassadors who serve, protect, and care for the community.

The **Guidance and Mentorship Programme (GAME)** by SINDA is a volunteer-based mentoring programme which seeks to motivate disadvantaged Indian youth through enrichment activities, mentoring and community-based projects.

**Max Out** (2005-2015) by MENDAKI helped out-of-school youth to return to mainstream school by preparing them academically to enter post-secondary institutions.
Community-based mentoring programmes supported by NCSS include the Experiential Learning and Mentoring Programme by Youth Guidance Outreach Services and Evergreen Bees by Care Corner Teck Ghee Youth Centre.

Friends of Children and Youth (FOCY) run by Life Community Services Society, and Kids In Play (KIP) run by Salvation Army Prison Support Services, are both programmes overseen by NCSS to provide befriending support and transition care for children and youth whose parents are or were imprisoned.

Youth mental wellness

Community Health Assessment Team (CHAT) by Institute of Mental Health (IMH) is an outreach and assessment programme for young people to raise awareness about mental health issues, provide mental health checks for young people aged 16 to 30, and provide access to mental health information and resources via the CHAT Hub facility located at *SCAPE.

Forensic Rehabilitation Intervention Evaluation Network Development Services (FRIENDS) is a multidisciplinary team within the IMH’s Child Guidance Clinic which provides assessment, treatment, education and outreach services to children and adolescents aged seven to 19 who have engaged in or are at risk of offending, victims of child abuse, as well as families involved in complex custody and access disputes.

The National Addictions Management Service (NAMS) treats patients who are suffering from drugs, alcohol, gambling, and other types of addictions.

Besides running a Specialist Outpatient Clinic and providing inpatient care at IMH, NAMS also conducts addiction awareness talks for the community, training for healthcare and social service professionals and has a dedicated team conducting research on addictions.

Drug addictions

Preventive Drug Education (PDE) materials such as videos and anti-drug journals are specifically produced for youth-at-risk, so they are equipped with useful knowledge such as refusal tips and coping skills should they be approached by their peers to take drugs. These are also produced for parents, via brochures, articles, videos, and advertorials in magazines, so they can help their children to stay drug-free.

PDE activities including talks, sharing sessions, workshops, exhibitions, sports and outdoor activities, are regularly organised by Central Narcotics Bureau (CNB) working in partnership with other organisations to educate youth about the consequences of drug abuse as well as build up their self-confidence.

The Community Rehabilitation Centre (CRC) was set up to provide drug rehabilitation for youth aged 16 to below 21 in a structured residential setting in the community, and it accepted its first batch of youth in May 2014.

The Youth Enhanced Supervision (YES) scheme is a diversionary programme for youth under 21 who are arrested for abusing drugs for the first time. MSF partners CNB and social service agencies to administer the YES scheme. This programme
strengthens the current urine test regime with a compulsory casework and counselling component.

**Rehabilitation, reintegration and restorative justice**

The **Triage System** that was piloted between 2012 and 2013 gave law enforcement agencies and prosecutors greater insight into determining a youth offender’s amenability for rehabilitation, by creating an avenue for social work trained Triage officers to provide inputs.

The **Guidance Programme (GP)** is a six-month counselling and rehabilitative programme for young offenders who have committed minor offences. GP allows them to make amends for their offences without going to court. In 2012, the scope of GP was expanded to allow a greater portion of youth offenders who are amenable to rehabilitation, to be diverted away from the criminal justice system.

The **Tanah Merah Prison School** has since 2000 equipped inmates with academic qualifications including ITE General Education, GCE ‘N’ levels, GCE ‘O’ levels and GCE ‘A’ levels, as well as life skills, so that they can rebuild their lives once they are out of prison.

The **Reformative Training** regime, a form of strategic early intervention in the offending cycle for young offenders, was reviewed to better address rehabilitation needs. Improvements include the implementation of differentiated regimes tailored to assessed risks and needs, and the expansion of the day release scheme to allow the youth to be released for employment, education or vocational training.

An inter-ministry **Working Group to deal with Youth Gangs (WGYG)** was formed in December 2010 to formulate measures to deter youth from joining gangs and to disrupt youth gangs. The recommendations announced in November 2011 called for greater investment in diversion and rehabilitation, increased co-ordination amongst stakeholder agencies, and enhanced anti-gang legislation to disrupt youth gangs.

**Progress Presentation Reviews (PPR)** by the Family Justice Courts require the youth to make a presentation on his own progress on the date of review, in the presence of parents, a school representative and probation or supervising officer, so he takes greater of ownership of his own progress.

**Progress Accountability Court (PAC)** by the State Courts is based on the post-sentencing involvement of the courts in monitoring the progress of offenders through PAC reviews, so that offenders are held accountable for their own progress in their rehabilitation.

**Project HEAL (Healing, Empowering and Linking)** by the Youth Court assists offenders and victims to come to a closure about the offence that was committed through the facilitation of a victim-offender dialogue called Heal Juvenile Case Conferences.

**Youth Court Family Conferencing** are conferences which bring together the youth’s family, the community and various agencies so they can collaborate in a manner that allows the multiple problems facing the youth and his family to be dealt with holistically.
Buddy Care by the Youth Court is a positive peer mentoring programme where older youth aged 18 to 30, who have been through a process of careful selection, screening and training, can restore the lives of their mentees by helping them to build productive relationships with families, schools and the community.

The Youth Family Care (YFC) Programme run by Counselling and Psychological Service and the Singapore Children’s Society matches volunteer mentor families to delinquent youth. These families befriend, mentor, support and encourage youth as well as provide hope and modelling for healthy families that work.

Treatment Programmes for specific offences including theft, violent offending behaviour, sexual offences are run by the Clinical and Forensic Psychology Branch of MSF’s Rehabilitation and Protection Group (RPG). They also run a Family-focused Treatment Programme.

The Streetwise Programme (SWP) is a voluntary rehabilitation programme for non-offending wayward youth aged 13-19 who have participated in illegal gang activities or who are gang members.

The Enhanced Streetwise Programme (ESWP) is a pre-court diversionary programme devised to rehabilitate youth who have committed any criminal offence with gang connotations.

Counselling and Intervention Unit (CIU) of RPG, MSF provides services which are part of the intervention for child and family welfare cases, including systemic family therapy.

Youth Residential Service was improved in 2013 as qualified teachers were seconded to teach in the Singapore Boys’ Home and Singapore Girls’ Home. The enhanced focus on education contributed to a holistic rehabilitation experience for the youth offenders.

Extra Mile provides post-programme support for youth who have completed GP, SWP or ESW. Staff from VWOs periodically establish contact with these youth from the time of completing their original programmes, until the age of 21.

Building youth for tomorrow

Youth Employment & Advancement Hub (YEAH!) is a pilot programme started in 2013 to assist young job seekers aged 16 to 21 by providing employment and job advancement services.

Cyber wellness programmes run under NCSS provide support for youth-at-risk and educate them on cyber addiction-related issues.

Project Bridge VaSSP (Vocational and Soft Skills Programme) helps early school leavers and youth-at-risk aged 13 to 19 to integrate back into society by learning quintessential job skills.

Conversations on Youth (COY) is a biennial symposium jointly organised by the Ministries of Home Affairs, Social and Family Development, and Education, to bring together school leaders, teachers-in-charge of student discipline, social and youth workers, law enforcement officers and other participants for a dialogue on youth delinquency and offending.
Youth Sports Symposium was first organised by CYGO in 2013 to introduce discourse about engaging youth-at-risk through sports.

Youth Arts Symposium was first organised in 2012 for participants to gather, share ideas and learn about using arts to engage youth.

Study trips for those working with youth-at-risk have been made to countries including Hong Kong, the United States, Canada, Sweden and the United Kingdom, and these trips have inspired new initiatives.
The NYGR would like to thank our present and former members and all our partners for their efforts and valuable contributions in providing support for youth-at-risk over the past decade. The NYGR would also like to give special thanks to the following organisations and individuals for their contributions to The Right Side 2.

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- National Council of Social Service
- National Crime Prevention Council
- National Youth Council
- Singapore Indian Development Association
- Singapore Police Force
- Singapore Prison Service
- State Courts
- The Eurasian Association
- Yayasan MENDAKI

- Mr Masagos Zulkifli
- Associate Professor Ho Peng Kee
- Ms Ang Bee Lian
- SUPT Benjamin Chia
- Ms Chew Huey Ching
- Mr Edgar Foo
- DAC Jarrod Pereira
- Mr Lee Kim Hua
- Ms Lee Kwai Sem
- Mr Mark Tay
- Ms Nancy Ng
- Mrs Ng Ai Lin
- Ms Tina Hung
Formed in 1995, the National Committee on Youth Guidance and Rehabilitation (NYGR) addresses problems and issues related to juvenile delinquency in Singapore by:

- working with partners to support youth-at-risk and help them find positive alternatives to crime and anti-social behaviour
- coordinating and reviewing existing intervention programmes to identify gaps
- leading collaborative research on youth-at-risk issues and the effectiveness of programmes
- developing a central system to facilitate data sharing across agencies
- working with social service agencies, self-help groups and other community organisations to develop programmes and build capabilities

The NYGR comprises agencies with a stake in reducing juvenile delinquency and youth crime. The Central Youth Guidance Office (CYGO) is the secretariat to the NYGR.
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