

REPORT BY THE THIRD ENABLING MASTERPLAN WORKGROUP ON

Preparing Persons with Disabilities for the Future Economy





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SECTION 1: Foreword by Co-Chairs

Much progress has been made in the last 15 years, since the introduction of the first Enabling Masterplan (EMP), on the inclusion and enabling of persons with disabilities in Singapore. But there is still more that can be done in our journey for continual improvement, especially in the post-school space. We would like to empower and enable persons with disabilities to engage meaningfully with others in the community, and to fulfil their potential. A key aspect of this is in employment for persons with disabilities.

The issue of employment for persons with disabilities is a complex one, made more challenging by rapid changes in the external environment.

The COVID-19 pandemic, which started mid-way through our group's work, shows how easily livelihoods of all, including persons with disabilities, can be disrupted and lost. The only way we can ride out the effects and adapt to the new normal is to stay agile and be open to adapting and considering new solutions.

We had brought together members from the public, private and people sectors, who used their unique perspectives and experiences to help come up with ideas to better prepare persons with disabilities for employment.

Through public engagements with stakeholders of the disability community – comprising persons with disabilities, caregivers and staff of social service agencies (SSAs) – the Workgroup has drawn up 10 recommendations centred around three key themes:

1. Improving capabilities at all life stages
2. Creating and sustaining work opportunities
3. Recognising and incentivising employers

We would like to thank Workgroup members for their efforts and contributions to the report. While the release of this report marks the conclusion of the Workgroup, we will continue with the important mission of improving opportunities for persons with disabilities to engage in work that is meaningful and fulfilling, both to them and the community in which they live, work, and play.



Mr Masagos Zulkifli
Minister for Social and Family
Development,
Second Minister for Health &
Minister-in-charge of Muslim Affairs



Ms Denise Phua
President, Autism Resource
Centre

SECTION 2: Executive Summary

In March 2019, former-Minister of State for Social and Family Development, Sam Tan, announced in Parliament the formation of a workgroup that would look into improving the employability of persons with disabilities and prepare them for the future economy. The Workgroup comprised 18 members from the people, private and public sectors, including persons with disabilities. Their work builds on the Enabling Masterplans to empower and enable persons with disabilities to engage meaningfully with others in the community, and to fulfil their potential through employment.

The Workgroup has drawn up 10 recommendations in three key areas, and has worked with partner agencies such as the Ministry of Education (MOE), the Ministry of Manpower (MOM), Central Community Development Council (CDC) and the

disability social service agencies, to jointly develop initiatives in these areas:

Improving capabilities at all life stages

Creating and sustaining work opportunities

Recognising and incentivising employers

The recommendations, and the initiatives that are being undertaken to realise them, are summarised in the following pages.

With the support and action of the public, private and people sectors, the implementation of these recommendations will lead to improved employability for persons with disabilities, and ensure they are equipped for the future economy.



Source: Ministry of Social and Family Development

Focus group discussions in 2019 with persons with disabilities, caregivers and staff from disability SSAs

KEY THEME 1: Improving capabilities at all life stages

RECOMMENDATION 1

Stronger emphasis on the development of soft skills, and training in authentic work settings, as part of strengthening vocational education curriculum in SPED schools

DETAILS

MOE will revise the vocational education curriculum in Special Education (SPED) schools to further emphasise the intentional development of soft skills for work. Ample opportunities should be provided for all students to train in authentic work settings so that they can better develop these skills.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Strengthen capability of Transition Planning Coordinators, improve the post-school transition, and provide new work preparatory initiatives for persons with disabilities as they transit from school to work

In 2020, MOE launched a course for Transition Planning Coordinators (TPCs) to enhance their capability in implementing Individual Transition Planning for SPED students towards post-school pathways.

MOE partnered the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) to prototype a Multi-Agency Transition Meeting approach in 2019 to promote person-centred handovers in students' transition to post-school pathways. This will be scaled up to involve all SPED schools by 2022.

The School-to-Work (S2W) Transition Programme has been extended from the current one year to up to two years from January 2021. This will provide students with more support to transition from school to work.

Students with disabilities in Institutes of Higher Learning (IHLs) will also be better supported by SG Enable through new work preparatory initiatives which were rolled out from 2020.

RECOMMENDATION 3

Strengthen the ecosystem for continuing education for persons with disabilities, including through increasing the number of curated courses in sectors with growth opportunities, and enhance the Open Door Programme (ODP) Training Grant to offer better support in specialised training

The ODP Training Grant was enhanced in July 2020 to provide stronger funding support to employers who send their employees with disabilities for training, as well as persons with disabilities seeking to upgrade themselves.

SG Enable is also working with training partners to introduce more new courses catering to persons with disabilities.

RECOMMENDATION 4

Build on the 'Digital for Life' movement to rally industry and the community to equip persons with disabilities with digital literacy skills that are relevant and competency-based

SG Enable will work with Social Service Agencies (SSAs), SkillsFuture Singapore (SSG) and the Infocomm Media Development Authority (IMDA) to identify the digital competencies that persons with disabilities require. This will facilitate the curation of courses for the disability community.

KEY THEME 2: Creating and sustaining work opportunities

RECOMMENDATION 5

Pilot new programmes to create work for persons with disabilities

DETAILS

Persons with disabilities could be supported to set up microbusinesses with their caregivers or other appropriate adults. Initiatives such as "Noodles for Good" indicate such models can work with the right partners.

SG Enable is trialling more projects, under the i'mable Collective¹, which provides greater visibility for social service agencies and social enterprises to effectively showcase products created by persons with disabilities.

1. The i'mable Collective is a multi-sectoral platform that fosters meaningful collaborations between artists, craft makers, designers, enterprises and persons with disabilities to develop quality merchandise, to create enterprise opportunities with a vision for a viable market of goods and services created by/with persons with disabilities, supporting their meaningful engagement and employment.

RECOMMENDATION 6

Develop Employment Hubs with accessible facilities where employers and persons with disabilities can tap on shared services like job coaches

MSF will explore the development of Enabling Business Hubs (EBH) in regional centres to offer training and employment, shared facilities and services to persons with disabilities and their employers, such as job coaches. The first EBH is expected to be operational from 2023 onwards.

RECOMMENDATION 7

Build up capabilities of Disability Employment Professionals to serve broader spectrum of needs and disabilities of students from both SPED schools and Institutes of Higher Learning

SG Enable is working with SSAs and IHLs, to build up the capabilities and industry knowledge of Disability Employment Professionals (DEPs). These include job coaches, IHL Special Educational Needs (SEN) Support Officers, HR professionals, and therapists.

SG Enable launched a Training Roadmap for DEPs in August 2020.

KEY THEME 3: Recognising and incentivising employers

RECOMMENDATION 8

Increase recognition of inclusive employers

DETAILS

SG Enable launched the Enabling Mark on 8 October 2020. The Mark is a national-level accreditation framework that benchmarks and recognises organisations for the best practices and outcomes in disability-inclusive employment.

RECOMMENDATION 9

Enhance wage offsets to employers of persons with disabilities

MOM has introduced the Enabling Employment Credit (EEC) from January 2021, which will provide wage offsets of up to 30% for eligible employers of persons with disabilities.

RECOMMENDATION 10

Build up a library of resources that employers and co-workers can tap on to create an inclusive workplace

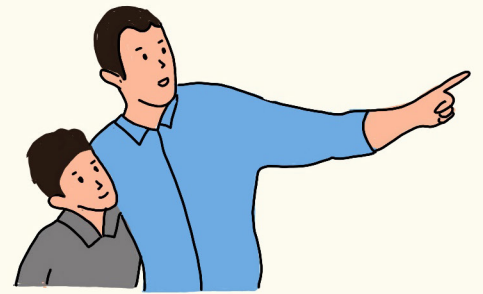
SG Enable will continue to engage and raise awareness among employers and co-workers, to build a more inclusive work environment and culture. This will include featuring success stories of inclusive employers and employees contributing and thriving at work.

Improving the Employability of Persons with Disabilities

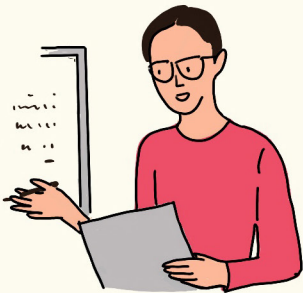
1 Improving capabilities at all life stages



Stronger emphasis on the development of soft skills, and training in authentic work settings, as part of strengthening vocational education curriculum in SPED schools



Strengthen capability of Transition Planning Coordinators, improve the post-school transition, and provide new work preparatory initiatives for persons with disabilities as they transit from school to work



Strengthen the ecosystem for continuing education for persons with disabilities, including through increasing the number of curated courses in sectors with growth opportunities, and enhance the Open Door Programme Training Grant to offer better support in specialised training



Build on the 'Digital for Life' movement to rally industry and the community to equip persons with disabilities with digital literacy skills that are relevant and competency-based

2 Creating and sustaining work opportunities



Pilot new programmes to create work for persons with disabilities



Develop Employment Hubs with accessible facilities where employers and persons with disabilities can tap on shared services like job coaches



Build up capabilities of Disability Employment Professionals to serve broader spectrum of needs and disabilities of students from both SPED schools and Institutes of Higher Learning

3 Recognising and incentivising employers



Increase recognition of inclusive employers



Enhance wage offsets to employers of persons with disabilities



Build up a library of resources that employers and co-workers can tap on to create an inclusive workplace

SECTION 3: Overview

The Workgroup recognises that with training and support, more persons with disabilities can participate in work and employment. Work is one avenue through which persons with disabilities can be engaged, and improve their quality of life.

Through employment, persons with disabilities are able to earn wages or an allowance, while honing skills, knowledge, and abilities that they have developed over the years. Participation in social activities through the workplace, whether full or part-time, or in paid, stipend or voluntary capacities also provides an avenue for them to remain active and integrated within the community. For employers, studies² have shown that organisations that employ persons with disabilities have higher staff retention rates and that a diverse workforce benefits all employees. On a broader level, the participation of persons with disabilities in the economy contributes to the economic growth of the country.

Based on the Ministry of Manpower's (MOM) Comprehensive Labour Force Survey, the average employment rate³ for resident persons with disabilities in the working ages of 15 to 64 has been sustained at around 29%. The average employment rate⁴ of persons with disabilities aged 15 to 64 was 11.7%, higher than the unemployment rate of 4.7%

for non-persons with disabilities. There is scope to do more to encourage and support persons with disabilities to find meaningful employment.

There is a complex interplay of personal, family, economic/structural, and societal factors that must be taken into account when we look into the issue of employment. For employment to be sustainable, there needs to be an overlap between the economic needs, the needs of employers, and the abilities and preferences of the person with disability. To this end, the Workgroup consulted extensively with different stakeholders on their concerns, challenges and aspirations pertaining to employment for persons with disabilities.

The rise of the digital economy has severely disrupted the nature of daily living and work. Just as technological advancements have already transformed our day-to-day activities, they have and will continue to reshape jobs and how businesses operate. There are opportunities and challenges for persons with disabilities in this shifting environment. Technology can help bridge barriers to employment. We need to ensure that persons with disabilities are ready to take advantage of technology to continue to secure employment.

2. Accenture, 2018, 'Getting to Equal: The Disability Inclusion Advantage' https://www.accenture.com/_acnmedia/PDF-89/Accenture-Disability-Inclusion-Research-Report.pdf.

3. Based on MOM's Comprehensive Labour Force Survey, the average resident employment rate for persons with disabilities aged 15-64 was 28.2% in 2018-2019 and 29.0% in 2019-2020. The use of two-year moving averages is to smoothen out year on year fluctuations due to the relatively small number of persons with disabilities. Data is not seasonally adjusted.

4. Based on MOM's Comprehensive Labour Force Survey, the average unemployment rate for resident persons with disabilities aged 15-64 who was 11.2% in 2018-2019 and 11.7% in 2019-2020. The use of two-year moving averages is to smoothen out year on year fluctuations due to the relatively small number of persons with disabilities. Data is not seasonally adjusted.

Overview

At the same time, technology can also put the jobs of persons with disabilities at risk. MOM's Comprehensive Labour Force Survey shows that, on average, 57% of employed resident persons with disabilities aged 15-64 work in Community, Social and Personal Services, Manufacturing, Administrative and Support Services, and Food & Beverage (F&B) Services⁵. Some of the roles taken up by persons with disabilities in these industries are more manual, structured and repetitive in nature. As technology drives greater innovation and automation, these jobs that are simpler and more repetitive in nature will progressively be automated. Jobs that remain may require individuals to increasingly manage more complex issues and design solutions to solve complex problems. Persons with intellectual disability and persons with autism who thrive on routine and structure are likely to find it more challenging to adapt to the new nature of work and reinvent themselves. Therefore, solutions to employment of different groups of persons with disabilities may have to be customised to each of their needs, in order to prepare them for the future economy.

Apart from this, the Workgroup recognises the volatility of the employment landscape when met by unforeseeable circumstances that present new challenges. The year 2020 saw global economies battered by the COVID-19 pandemic. Such external shocks to the economy affect every person, and the consequences for vulnerable groups such as

persons with disabilities can be even more severe. While the rise of work-from-home arrangements can be a silver lining that benefits persons with disabilities who are less mobile, work that can be shifted online can also be more easily lost to competitors overseas.

A holistic and nimble approach is needed to respond effectively to such new and emerging challenges to the employment of persons with disabilities. In January this year, the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) announced the creation of new job and training opportunities for persons with disabilities, as part of the workstreams under the National Jobs Council. The Place-and-Train, Attach-and-Train, and Skills Development Programmes customised for persons with disabilities will provide employers and persons with disabilities with salary support, training allowance and course fee support, to continue to encourage the hiring and upskilling of persons with disabilities amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. (Details on the support offered by each of the schemes can be found in Annex A.)

The COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced the need and urgency to better prepare persons with disabilities for the future economy. Hence, the Workgroup's recommendations aim to improve the employment and employability of persons with disabilities, and to minimise potential disruptions brought about by future challenges that may arise.

5. Based on resident persons with disabilities employment data for 2019-2020 (two-year average).

SECTION 4: Insights from the Public and Agencies

The Workgroup held extensive consultations with persons with disabilities, caregivers and staff from disability SSAs. Close to 300 participants took part in 15 engagement sessions over 2019 and 2020.

During these engagement sessions, participants were asked to share their concerns, challenges and aspirations pertaining to employment of persons with disabilities. Their views were sought on the support needed at various life stages to prepare for and to find and stay in a job, and the

support they hope to see from other stakeholders such as employers and government agencies. The findings from these engagement sessions are discussed further in the following sections. A full summary of the findings can be found in Annex B.

The Workgroup also drew on the experience of members in the private sector, through in-depth interviews, to understand the challenges of the future of work for persons with disabilities, and to validate the recommendations.



Source: Ministry of Social and Family Development

Focus group discussions in 2019 with persons with disabilities, caregivers and staff from disability SSAs

SECTION 5: **Workgroup Recommendations and Co-Solutioned Next Steps**

The Workgroup recognises that the employment journey for persons with disabilities is challenging and complex. Changes in the economic outlook and work environment can have a larger negative impact on persons with disabilities than on others. The challenge is to create institutional and social structures that lead to a positive spiral of continual learning and employment. This will enable them to cope with economic and structural shocks when they occur.

The Workgroup took into consideration insights from the focus group discussions, and data and operational experiences from agencies to recommend a set of initiatives targeted at the different stages of a person with disability's

employment journey. The Workgroup has also worked with various agencies to develop initiatives in response to these recommendations. The Workgroup focused its attention on paid forms of employment and the recommendations are organised into three key themes.

Some of these recommendations such as the introduction of the Enabling Employment Credit (EEC), the enhancement of the Open Door Programme (ODP) Training Grant, and the launch of the Enabling Mark, have already been implemented ahead of the submission of this report, in order to ensure that persons with disabilities can receive the support they require, especially over the past year.

**Improving capabilities
at all life stages**

**Creating and sustaining
work opportunities**

**Recognising and
incentivising employers**



KEY THEME 1:

Improving capabilities at all life stages**CURRENT STATE & ISSUES**

Over the years, much effort has gone into establishing programmes to prepare persons with disabilities for employment, supporting them to continuously learn and pick up new skills at all life stages – schooling years, transition from school into the workforce, and as working adults. Majority of children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) are enrolled in mainstream schools, those who need more customised support can choose to enrol in Special Education (SPED) schools. Whether they are from mainstream schools or SPED schools, there are opportunities for those who perform well academically to progress on to Institutes of Higher Learning (IHLs). All persons with disabilities are eligible for lifelong learning support available to all Singaporeans. Those who

are unable to access these are supported through customised programmes at all levels.



Source: APSN

Schooling Years

Most SPED schools use a vocational education curriculum that is guided by the Ministry of Education's (MOE) vocational education framework, though some also offer the national mainstream curriculum. The vocational education curriculum is offered to all students from the age of 13 and aims to prepare students who have the desire and capability to work, to become work-ready. A key feature of the curriculum

is work experience, where students progress from work exposure within the school, in the community and beyond, at workplaces. Students get opportunities for working in actual work sites, supported by school-based job coaches, to build work habits and skills in a range of sectors which include F&B, housekeeping and retail.

Feedback from EMP3 engagements suggest that what students are exposed to in SPED may not sufficiently mirror the realities of open employment. It may not adequately equip them with the soft skills or familiarise them with the associated daily routines and practices that are required when they transit into the work environment. The curriculum can strengthen its focus on soft skills which are crucial for students to function effectively at the workplace. Such soft skills include cultivation of work habits, self-regulation, social skills and communication.

The Workgroup also heard feedback that students with disabilities in mainstream schools might also benefit from some of the customised programmes or support offered to students from SPED schools. Where relevant, measures proposed for SPED schools should also be considered for those educated in the mainstream school system. For example, students with disabilities from mainstream schools and IHLs may also benefit from customised support for job placements and job coaching.

Transition to Work

Transitioning to a post-school environment is a challenging phase for all students. This is especially so for students with SEN, in view of their diverse needs and disability profiles. Careful planning and preparation are important for such students and their families for the eventual transition to post-school pathways. To support SPED schools in helping their students better plan for this transition, from 2017, MOE had shared with all SPED schools a Transition Planning guide, which provides schools with a plan to work with families and students from age 13 to develop post-school goals. An individual transition plan is developed for each student and Transition Planning Coordinators (TPCs) are appointed in schools to facilitate the process of transition planning.

For students who are assessed to be capable of working in open employment, various programmes exist to prepare them for the transition to the workplace. Students with disabilities from mainstream schools can gain practical work experience through work attachments and internship programmes, while students in SPED schools are prepared for employment through vocational certification programmes or SG Enable's School-to-Work (S2W) Transition Programme, organised in collaboration with MOE, MSF and SPED schools. Introduced in 2014, the S2W programme offers customised training pathways and work options to students who are assessed by their school to have the potential for open employment. The programme begins in the students' final year of schooling, and continues for one year after graduation with training and job support. To date, 80% of the students who have participated in the S2W programme have been successfully employed, with more than 80% of them staying employed for at least six months.

While the transition process and S2W programme have yielded positive outcomes, the Workgroup has heard feedback that some students could benefit from better transition planning and support from schools and agencies when moving on to various post-school pathways. Students with complex needs found it difficult to sustain their employment after such support ends, and typically require a longer transition time than the one-year post school support currently offered under S2W.

Working Years

Beyond school, there is customised support for persons with disabilities to continue to gain new knowledge and skills. The ODP⁶, administered by SG Enable, encourages employers to hire, train and integrate persons with disabilities into the workforce. It provides support for employers and persons with disabilities in three areas – job placement and job support services, training, and job redesign⁷.



Cheng Guang (second from left) and Ivan (third from left), with their supervisors Rasid Bin Eksan (leftmost) and Jimmy Yeap (rightmost) during their internship under SG Enable's S2W Transition Programme

The ODP Training Grant was enhanced in July 2020 to provide stronger funding support to encourage more employers to send their employees with disabilities for training. Under the enhanced Training Grant, there are more course fee subsidies (up to 95%) and training allowance (\$6 per hour), as well as a new training commitment award of \$100 per completed eligible training course for persons with disabilities from SG Enable's list of curated training courses. Employers can also receive up to 90% of funding when they send co-workers for training to build up their confidence in working with colleagues with disabilities.

But financial support for training is just one part of the solution. The Workgroup heard feedback during their engagements with persons with disabilities, about the challenges that they continue to face in accessing mainstream training courses. These challenges could be due to:

- the inability of training providers to provide suitable accommodations for the needs of the person with disability (e.g. captioning for online lessons); and/or
- the lack of courses that are suitably customised for persons with intellectual disability and persons with autism.

Such continuing education and training (CET) will only become more important in the future economy as technology drives even more rapid changes in the workplace. Hence, it is critical that persons with disabilities are given the opportunity to continually learn and re-learn. They have to be equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills such as basic to advanced digital literacy to stay relevant in the future economy. The need to ensure a wider range of CET courses are accessible to persons with disabilities through better learning support has to be addressed.

6. For more details on the ODP, please refer to <https://www.mom.gov.sg/-/media/mom/documents/budget2020/factsheet-enhanced-employment-support-pwd.pdf>.

7. The job placement and support services under the ODP are free and available to all jobseekers with disabilities and employers. To help defray the cost of job redesign initiatives, the ODP Job Redesign

Grant provides funding of up to 90% of job redesign costs, capped at \$20,000 per employee with disabilities. This may include the cost of equipment purchases, modifications to the physical environment of the workplace, redesign of job scope and processes, as well as purchase of consultancy services to facilitate job redesign.



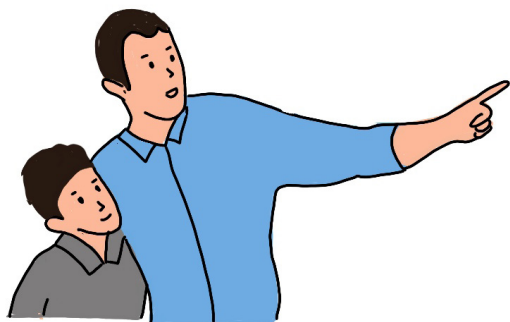
RECOMMENDATION 1

Stronger emphasis on the development of soft skills, and training in authentic work settings, as part of strengthening vocational education curriculum in SPED schools

The Workgroup recommends that the vocational education curriculum in SPED schools be reviewed to enhance the emphasis on soft skills development for the workplace, such as work habits, communication, social skills and time management. At present, the implementation of the vocational education curriculum appears to focus more on the skills and qualifications to accomplish work tasks. The Workgroup also recommends that ample opportunities be provided for students to train in authentic work settings so that they can better develop these skills. Schools should also identify vocations to train students in emerging industries.

The SPED vocational education curriculum is being reviewed by MOE and will be revised to include stronger emphasis on the intentional development of soft skills for work, and their application in authentic work settings. MOE will continue to work with SPED schools to find ways to deepen the work experience opportunities for students. This will better equip students for the workplace, both for today and the future economy. Soft skills essential for work-readiness will be identified through engagement with ground practitioners, including vocational trainers and job coaches. During such engagement sessions, skills-building for alternative and emerging industries will also be considered as part of the review of the vocational education curriculum.

The stronger emphasis on soft skills development will be supported with capacity-building of SPED school personnel (e.g. teachers, school-based job coaches) who will implement the enhanced curriculum from 2023.



RECOMMENDATION 2

Strengthen capability of Transition Planning Coordinators, improve the post-school transition, and provide new work preparatory initiatives for persons with disabilities as they transit from school to work

The Workgroup recommends that transition planning for SPED graduates moving to post-school pathways be strengthened. This can be done by systematically equipping TPCs with skills to handle the transition, and by taking steps to ensure that information about students' strengths, and strategies to manage challenging situations, is smoothly conveyed and can be effectively applied by receiving agencies.

In addition, SPED students should be provided with more support during the transition from school to work, to better prepare them for the workforce, and for a smoother transition process to the workplace. In addition to graduates from SPED schools, some students with disabilities who are enrolled in IHLs also require customised support to help them adapt to the workforce.

The Government recognises the need to strengthen the support for SPED students to transition to post-school pathways, and will be introducing more support for this. In 2020, MOE launched a course for TPCs that aims to equip them with knowledge and skills in key areas such as: Person-Centred Planning, Self Determination, Working with

Families, Developing an Individual Transition Plan and Working with External Agencies. The course ran from July to November 2020, and was completed by all TPCs from the 17 SPED schools serving secondary-aged students. MOE will continue to systematically offer similar training for TPCs.

MOE has started a Multi-Agency Transition Meeting approach in 2019 in collaboration with MSF, SSAs and some SPED schools to promote person-centred handovers in students' transition to post-school pathways. These meetings allow all parties to share and clarify information on the student's strengths,



Source: SG Enable

Chong Wan Shuen (left), with her supervisor Ms Cherie Leong (right) during her internship under SG Enable's S2W Transition Programme

Workgroup Recommendations



Source: SG Enable

Phua Jia Yi (left) with her supervisor K Thanalechimi during her internship under SG Enable's S2W Transition Programme

preferences, behaviours, learning goals and learning plans for a more balanced assessment of the student. MOE will scale up this approach from 2021 to interested disability agencies serving in the post-school space and to eventually involve all SPED schools by 2022.

To provide students with more support to transition from school to work, the S2W Transition Programme, which is a multi-agency collaboration involving MOE, MSF, SG Enable and SPED schools, has been extended from the current one year to up to two years from January 2021. Extension of the S2W programme will give these students from SPED schools more time to learn to adapt to the new work environment with support from job coaches.

Students with disabilities in the Autonomous Universities (AUs), Polytechnics and ITE will also be better supported by SG Enable through the provision of new work preparatory initiatives, such as the Career Coaching Programme and Strengths Finder workshop.

- The Career Coaching Programme aims to help students with disabilities in AUs, Polytechnics and ITE get personalised and practical advice on planning for their jobs and transition to work.
- The Strengths Finder workshop enables students with disabilities in AUs, Polytechnics and ITE to learn and gain deeper understanding about their strengths, and focus on their abilities.

Students with disabilities who are interested in participating in these initiatives can indicate their interest via <https://employment.sgenable.sg/>

IHLs will continue to work closely with agencies and community organisations to organise internship and job readiness training to ease the transition from school to work for students with disabilities.



RECOMMENDATION 3

Strengthen the ecosystem for continuing education for persons with disabilities, including through increasing the number of curated courses in sectors with growth opportunities, and enhance the Open Door Programme (ODP) Training Grant to offer better support in specialised training

Persons with disabilities should have access to continual education and training throughout their lifetime to ensure that they can maintain their functional skills and continue to develop skills and knowledge that is relevant to the changing needs of the future economy. The Workgroup recommends that the ODP be enhanced to increase the affordability of courses and provide better support for training for persons with disabilities. More support should also be given to the curation and development of courses that are suitable for persons with disabilities so that they are a part of the SkillsFuture movement.

After consulting the Workgroup, the Government enhanced the ODP Training Grant in July 2020 to provide stronger funding support to employers who send their employees with disabilities for training, as well as persons with disabilities seeking to upgrade themselves. Under the enhanced Training Grant, there are more course fee subsidies (from 90% to 95%) and training allowances (from \$4.50/hr to \$6/hr), as well as a new training commitment award of \$100 per completed eligible training course from SG Enable's list of curated training courses. SG Enable is working with training partners to introduce more new courses catering to persons with disabilities. SG Enable is working with relevant stakeholders to consider ways to provide more support to the curation and development of courses that are suitable for persons with disabilities so that they are a part of the SkillsFuture movement.



Source: SG Enable

Open Door Programme training courses



RECOMMENDATION 4

Build on the 'Digital for Life' movement to rally industry and the community to equip persons with disabilities with digital literacy skills that are relevant and competency-based

Digital technologies are increasingly prevalent in our daily lives (e.g. rise of social media) and workplaces (e.g. SingPass and TraceTogether). To adapt to an ever-changing employment landscape, the Workgroup recommends that persons with disabilities be given opportunities to learn new skills throughout their lifetime, including digital literacy skills that are relevant and competency-based. These can be amplified by leveraging national movements such as the 'Digital for Life' movement by the Infocomm Media Development Authority (IMDA) to rally the industry and community to step forward to help equip persons with disabilities with basic digital skills.

SG Enable will work with SSAs, SkillsFuture Singapore (SSG) and IMDA to identify the digital competencies that person with disabilities require. This will facilitate the curation of courses for the disability community to equip persons with disabilities with the relevant and current digital literacy skills.

IMDA will also work with MSF to reach out to disability SSAs and support educators to acquire digital skills through train-the-trainer sessions, so that they can support persons with disabilities in picking up these skills.



Source: St. Andrew's Autism Centre

Similarly, to enable SPED schools to teach basic digital skills to their students, and to develop digital tools to aid learning, e.g. cyber-wellness virtual reality game, IMDA is also working with SPED schools to organise train-the-trainer sessions for SPED teachers. In 2020, MOE introduced Baseline Digital Literacy Skills training to support SPED students in acquiring basic digital skills (e.g. cyber wellness, cyber security, information literacy, using digital technologies in day-to-day activities) needed in this digital age. In tandem, SPED schools are developing customised Digital Literacy Programmes to strengthen students' digital literacy with the use of Personal Learning Devices.

KEY THEME 2:

Creating and sustaining work opportunities

CURRENT STATE & ISSUES

Work and employment opportunities for persons with disabilities exist along a continuum from sheltered to open employment, based on the level of work support that the person with disability requires. These can be divided into three broad categories:

Work Opportunities and Training

Persons with disabilities with high work support needs may be trained and engaged in work activities in Sheltered Workshops. Sheltered Workshops offer work opportunities, training and self-enrichment activities to adults with disabilities who do not yet possess the skills required for open employment. For example, SPD partners Keppel Care Foundation to set up an apprenticeship programme for trainees with higher support needs on leather crafted work that is commercially appealing, leading to good sales in the E-shop. Similarly, SPD also collaborates with Muji Singapore and Singapore Airlines' KrisShop to curate a book binding collection. Sheltered Workshops also allow participants to practice and train in jobs or tasks where the processes are either simple or broken down into simpler steps. Today, MSF provides funding for eight Sheltered Workshops that can accommodate up to 1,700 persons with different disabilities.

Supported Employment

For persons with disabilities with moderate work support needs, a customised work environment with on-site job support may be needed. This could take the form of workplaces where long-term on-site job support is provided by job coaches, or where the work environment is customised to the needs of persons with disabilities such as Professor Brawn or Foreword Coffee.

Open Employment

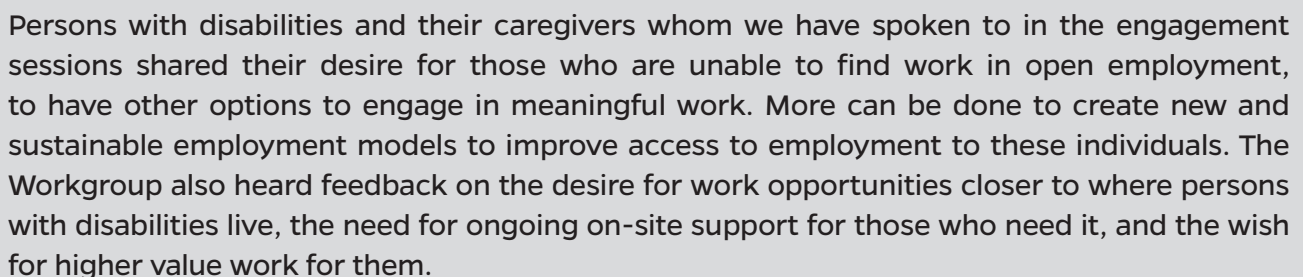
Persons with disabilities who have little to no work support needs can find work in the open employment market. However, some may require support to help them adapt to the workplace. Under the ODP, SG Enable provides job placement and job support services (JPJS) that matches these individuals to suitable employers. Together with its Job Placement and Job Support partners, SG Enable provides vocational assessment to persons with disabilities to establish his or her job readiness, identify possible training and career options,



Source: SPD

Book binding at SPD's Sheltered Workshop

The diagram below summarises the different types of employment opportunities for persons with disabilities.



Job Coaches

Undergirding these efforts are job coaches who work with persons with disabilities to help match them with suitable employment and support them in their work. Given the essential role played by these job coaches, it is important that they have the right training and experience, in addition to the disposition needed to support persons with disabilities.



RECOMMENDATION 5

Pilot new programmes to create work for persons with disabilities

The Workgroup recommends that new programmes be created to sustain supported employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. One such programme could be setting up microbusinesses with their caregivers or other appropriate adults (who can support and complement the person with disability). The microbusinesses can be F&B kiosks operating as standalone units; or as part of an organised chain. Facilitation may come in the form of start-up funding, product development, job design and venue sponsorship. Facilitation could also be provided by linking up persons with disabilities, SSAs and social enterprises, to produce quality merchandise for sale, alongside a viable ecosystem to ensure quality control, market and sell the products.

The Government agrees with the recommendation and will work with interested partners to explore how it can facilitate efforts by the people and private sector to develop such initiatives and scale them up to benefit more persons with disabilities. It has taken note of existing pilots such as Central Singapore Central Development Council (CDC)/People's Association's "Noodles For Good" kiosk concept which was launched successfully with corporate partner, Sze Chuan Dou Hua Restaurant, and social service partner, ARC. Another example is the employment of persons with disabilities in food kiosks as part of the Professor Brawn Express chain managed by the ARC, to serve students and staff in a school, and potentially corporate setting. The Government is in favour of adopting a collaborative approach, tapping on the strengths and expertise of each partner, in the set up of such micro businesses. MSF will work with SG Enable, Central Singapore CDC, other relevant ministries, social agencies and corporate partners to facilitate the scaling of the model to create more job openings for persons with disabilities.

SG Enable has embarked on trials to innovate new businesses and develop sustainable business models. Through its programmes, the i'mable Collective launched in 2019 supports the enabling of persons with disabilities and SSAs in several ways, viz. a) helping to increase the skills and capabilities of persons with disabilities/SSAs in gift-making; b) creating a viable market for merchandise made by and/or with persons with disabilities; and c) expanding the network of like-minded partners to enable persons with disabilities/SSAs to support their meaningful engagement and vocational work. The Collective has in place omni-channel strategies including e-commerce, to drive branding, marketing and sales.



RECOMMENDATION 6

Develop Employment Hubs with accessible facilities where employers and persons with disabilities can tap on shared services like job coaches

The Workgroup recommends that Hubs for employment of persons with disabilities be created with inclusive employers. The hubs should provide persons with disabilities with a supportive environment in which they can perform at their fullest potential. Such hubs can benefit persons with disabilities, particularly persons with intellectual disability and autism, who may be work capable but require specialised support to work.

The Government will explore the development of Enabling Business Hubs in regional commercial hubs. The Hub could enable matching of work opportunities to persons with disabilities, facilitate the provision of support services and facilities for persons with disabilities and their employers, such as training, job coaches and calm rooms, and allow co-location of businesses for inclusive hiring. Hubs can also serve as a natural and convenient touchpoint for persons with disabilities and their caregivers to receive a suite of disability services. Different types of hubs will be explored. Those that are in areas with higher footfall can focus on retail, F&B and other businesses that are frequented by members of the public, thus also facilitating better integration of persons with disabilities into the wider community.



RECOMMENDATION 7

Build up capabilities of Disability Employment Professionals to serve broader spectrum of needs and disabilities of students from both SPED schools and Institutes of Higher Learning

Disability Employment Professionals (DEPs) such as job coaches, play an essential role in helping persons with disabilities secure, settle into, and retain their jobs. The Workgroup recommends that more job coaches be recruited into the sector, with support provided through training, attachments and other means, to deepen their skill sets. Training should include amongst others, improving the ability of DEPs to redesign jobs and processes, and deepening their knowledge of industries, especially potential growth sectors such as cybersecurity, logistics, agrifood and urban farming.



Job coach visiting an alumna at her workplace to discuss her progression with her employer

SG Enable is working with SSAs and IHLs, to reach out to industry players to build up the capabilities and industry knowledge of DEPs. These include job coaches, IHL SEN Support Officers, HR professionals, and therapists.

SG Enable and Social Service Institute jointly organise training for DEPs such as the Advanced Certificate in Supported Employment and Independent Travel Training for Professionals Supporting Persons with Disabilities. Caregivers are also important in providing employment support to persons with disabilities. Hence, SG Enable is partnering Rainbow Centre Training and Consultancy to offer functional competency training for job coaches so that they can better work with caregivers to support the employment and employability of persons with disabilities.

SG Enable also engages experts to train DEPs on how to provide employment support and strategies of discovering clients' strengths, interests and skills, starting with the Online Masterclass on Career Development Techniques for persons with disabilities. Through this online Masterclass, DEPs can learn about the use of person-centred planning, career assessment tools and frameworks to develop comprehensive employment plans for persons with disabilities.

SG Enable launched a Training Roadmap for DEPs in August 2020. It serves as a first-stop guide with course recommendations to upskill and deepen DEPs' competencies. It seeks to encourage DEPs to go for functional competency trainings so as to better support the employment and employability of persons with disabilities.

KEY THEME 3:

Recognising and incentivising employers

CURRENT STATE & ISSUES

The support of employers is essential for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in employment. While it is critical for employers to recognise the value of persons with disabilities and be recognised for their inclusive hiring efforts, it is equally important that employers have access to the support needed to hire and develop persons with disabilities.

Over the years, SG Enable has put in place initiatives to build capabilities and support employers through employer training and education. These include Disability Awareness and Disability Management workshops for employers and colleagues without disabilities to learn about their colleagues with disabilities; the ODP Job Redesign Grant to defray the costs of job redesign for employees with disabilities; the ODP Training Grant to provide stronger funding support to employers who send their employees with disabilities for training; and access to Job Placement and Job Support services under the ODP for up to one-year for employers of persons with disabilities. SG Enable also holds the biennial Inclusive Business Forum which brings together inclusive employers to hear and share best practices on inclusive hiring and a biennial Enabling Employers Awards (EEA) to recognise the efforts of inclusive employers. From 2021, the EEA has been replaced by the Enabling Mark Awards to recognise the efforts of organisations and individuals for their best practices, outcomes and commitment in disability-inclusive employment.

Employers also receive wage offsets under the EEC for each Singaporean person with disability earning below \$4,000 per month that they employ. Employers of Singaporean persons with disabilities aged 13 and above and earning below \$4,000 per month will receive a wage offset of up to 20%, capped at \$400 per month. In addition, employers hiring persons with disabilities who had not been working for the past 6 months prior to being hired will receive an additional wage offset of 10%, capped at \$200 per month, for the first 6 months.

However, more can be done to bring on board employers who have not or are hesitant to hire persons with disabilities. The Workgroup heard from its focus group discussions that many employers remained unaware of the abilities of persons with disabilities and/or were concerned about the additional costs required to hire and support them. For persons with disabilities who managed to get a job, they reported facing difficulties in communicating with their co-workers and supervisors within their workplace.

Workgroup Recommendations



RECOMMENDATION 8

Increase recognition of inclusive employers

The Workgroup recommends that inclusive employers be more systematically and formally recognised, and lauded for their efforts.



SG Enable launched the Enabling Mark on 8 October 2020. The Mark is a national-level accreditation framework that benchmarks and recognises organisations for the best practices and outcomes in disability-inclusive employment, and will be for employers, what the Building Construction Authority (BCA) Green Mark is for the built environment sector.

Screenshot of participants in the virtual launch of the Enabling Mark



RECOMMENDATION 9

Enhance wage offsets to employers of persons with disabilities

The Workgroup recommends enhancing the support provided by the Special Employment Credit (SEC) and Additional SEC (ASEC) which expired in end-2020 to provide strong financial support and incentives for employers who wish to hire and retain persons with disabilities. This could encourage employers who may be less familiar with inclusive hiring to take the first step to do so, while also ensuring that inclusive employers continue to be given appropriate support for their efforts.

After consulting the Workgroup, the Government developed the new EEC which replaced the SEC and ASEC in January 2021. Compared to the SEC, the EEC provides higher wage offsets for employers. Employers of Singaporean persons with disabilities aged 13 and above and earning below \$4,000 per month will receive a wage offset of up to 20%, capped at \$400 per month. In addition, employers hiring persons with disabilities who had not been working for the past 6 months prior to being hired will receive an additional wage offset of 10%, capped at \$200 per month, for the first 6 months.



RECOMMENDATION 10

Build up a library of resources that employers and co-workers can tap on to create an inclusive workplace

The Workgroup recommends building a library of resources for employers and co-workers to better support persons with disabilities at the workplace. This includes curating case studies and materials to show positive examples of how persons with disabilities can contribute to organisations and how best to support them so as to build a more disability-inclusive work environment and culture.



Source: Autism Resource Centre

UOB's Scan Hub hires persons with autism

SG Enable is codifying best practices in disability-inclusive employment, featuring best practices from the collective knowledge and experiences of trailblazing inclusive employers in Singapore. Developed as digestible content with practical tips and applications, the case studies serve as a blueprint for organisations seeking to learn from others on how to forge an inclusive workplace. DEPs can also gain knowledge and glean insights from these best practices and share them with other employers.



Source: APSN

A Delta Senior School graduate interacting with her supervisor at work

Success stories of disability-inclusive employers and employees contributing and thriving at work will be featured and best practices in disability-inclusive employment will also be developed with the support of President's Challenge Empowering for Life Fund and Enabling Lives Initiative for public education.

SECTION 6: Walking the Next Steps Together

The Workgroup brought together members from the disability community, SSAs working with persons with disabilities, private sector leaders and public sector agencies to form an inclusive Workgroup. Discussions amongst members were often debated in a spirited manner as each group brought their different perspectives and expertise to the table.

One of the perspectives offered was that while persons with disabilities with higher care needs are generally unable to join the “traditional” workforce, work therapy in some shape or form would raise the quality of life for this group of

adults by providing additional opportunities for meaningful engagement. The Workgroup recommends that this be taken up as part of a review of care services for persons with disabilities.

The responsibility for creating inclusive systems and structures needed to support the employment of persons with disabilities lies with the whole of society, not just a niche segment or by the Government alone. The Workgroup therefore calls on the broader community to support these inclusive employment efforts to the fullest extent possible.



Source: Ministry of Social and Family Development

Focus group discussions in 2019 with persons with disabilities, caregivers and staff from disability SSAs

ANNEX A

Infographic of Place-and-Train, Attach-and-Train and Skills Development Programme



ANNEX B

Feedback on Employment from EMP3 Engagement Sessions

About 300 participants (persons with disabilities, caregivers and other members of the disability community) took part in 15 engagement sessions over 2019 and 2020. Key findings from these sessions can be categorised into the following domains:

PREPARING PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES FOR WORK AT VARIOUS LIFE STAGES

- SPED and mainstream schools may not sufficiently mirror the realities of open employment and equip students with the required soft skills and associated daily routines and practices.
- SPED students may need a longer runway to prepare for the transition to work, and this may need to be customised for different developmental needs.
- Lack of preparatory courses on business etiquette and the job interview process.
- Lack of lifelong learning opportunities for persons with disabilities.
- Some persons with disabilities require lifelong support to be able to work.
- For some, meaningful, purposeful and/or safe engagement is more important than work per se. For others, strengthening resilience may help to improve their employment outcomes.

EMPLOYMENT OUTLOOK FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

- Stereotypes, misconceptions, and general lack of awareness encourage pigeonholing persons with disabilities into certain types of jobs (e.g. visually-impaired: masseuse; persons with autism: scanning) and perpetuate assumptions about incompetence, negatively affecting career and salary progression.
- Personnel and organisations that support persons with disabilities in their education/employment journey are not disability-friendly, leading to a limited choice of internships and courses for students with disabilities.
- Some employers are unwilling to employ SPED students who have no formal qualifications, leading to automatic rejection.
- Need for alternative employment models for those who are unable to work in Open Employment, and/or additional flexibility/support to enable those who might be able to.

- Not enough PMET jobs offered.
- Fear of job losses due to automation.

PERSON WITH DISABILITY'S EXPERIENCE FINDING JOBS

- Poor hiring practices are both due to the lack of awareness and discriminatory attitudes. Employers continue to focus on disabilities instead of abilities.
- Inaccessible job locations and expensive transportation prevent persons with physical disability from taking the job even if they are hired.
- Mismatches between person with disability's expectations and job opportunities.
- Job application forms often require a declaration about disability, which cuts short the hiring process and denies persons with disabilities an opportunity to be interviewed.
- Challenging to place individuals with multiple disabilities and complex needs.
- Across disability types, persons with disabilities hope for more support to find jobs, or work with employers to redesign their jobs, to match their personal aspirations and abilities.

PERSON WITH DISABILITY'S EXPERIENCE AT WORK

- Lack of opportunities and support to develop new skills required for career advancement.
- Employers' misconceptions and stereotypes can persist even after hiring a person with disability.
- Employers, supervisors and colleagues are reluctant or do not know how to effectively interact with and support colleagues with disabilities.
- Some persons with disabilities are unable to perform up to employer's expectations.

Different disability groups have specific needs at work:

Persons with visual impairment need:

- Continued and sometimes more customised support (e.g. for degenerative conditions) for assistive technology devices.
- Others to understand the limitations of their assistive technology (e.g. cannot 'read' pictures/infographics).

Persons with physical disability may face:

- Difficulty coping with the pace of work in open employment.
- Inaccessible workplaces.
- Lower wages due to perceived lack of productivity.
- Lack of support for care whilst on the job e.g. toileting, being able to recline/rest to relieve pressure from sitting upright all day.

Persons with autism may:

- Be sensitive to certain environments.
- Face difficulties coping with changes.
- Face challenges with inter-personal communication.
- Need clear, unambiguous instructions.

Persons with intellectual disability may need:

- To have tasks broken down.
- To be trained in clear and simple language.
- Emotional and communication support.

Persons who are deaf or hard-of-hearing may:

- Use a combination of different communication modes.
- Prefer communicating in quiet and brightly lit environments.
- Need support in multi-party or fast-moving meetings/events.

ANNEX C

Workgroup Members

1	Mr Masagos Zulkifli	Minister, Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) [Co-Chair]
2	Ms Denise Phua	President, Autism Resource Centre (ARC) [Co-Chair]
3	Ms Anita Fam	President, National Council of Social Service
4	Ms Jacelyn Lim	Executive Director, ARC
5	Ms Lee Hui Lin	Assistant Director, Employment and Training, SPD
6	Mr Jaieden Ace Shen	Head, Job Placement and Job Support, Movement for the Intellectually Disabled Singapore (MINDS)
7	Mr Chong Kwek Bin	Head, Advocacy, Communications, Employment and Training, Singapore Association of the Visually Handicapped (SAVH)
8	Mr Seah Kian Peng	Group Chief Executive Officer (CEO), NTUC Fairprice
9	Mr Lucas Chow	Former CEO of Mediacorp and Singtel Mobile
10	Mr Koh Chee Keat	Director, Future of Work, SingTel
11	Mr Eric Tseng	Health Strategic Initiatives
12	Prof Wong Yue Kee	Vice President (Learning Services), Singapore University of Social Sciences
13	Ms Ku Geok Boon	CEO, SG Enable
14	Prof Chua Hong Choon	CEO, Institute of Mental Health

15	Ms Lucy Toh	Divisional Director, Special Education Needs Division, Ministry of Education
16	Ms Lynn Ng	Group Director, Careers Connect Group, Workforce Singapore
17	Mr Li Jingheng	Director, Workforce Strategy and Policy, Ministry of Manpower (MOM)
18	Ms Dawn Pang	Assistant Director, Career Services, Employment and Employability Institute (e2i)

Past Members

1	Mr Sam Tan (Jul 2019 – Jun 2020)	Former Minister of State, MSF
2	Ms Ang Li May (Jul 2019 – Jun 2020)	Former Deputy CEO, Strategic Enabler Group, e2i
3	Mr Kenny Tan (Jul 2019 – Sep 2020)	Former Director, Workforce Strategy and Policy, MOM

