

The new infrastructure prototypes in Yio Chu Kang include a community space called the Blue Court. Within it, there are activity corners created to engage seniors in cognitive games.



Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong mingling with residents at the Blue Court. The dementia-friendly features were unveiled by PM Lee and Yio Chu Kang MP Yip Hon Weng on Dec 2.

Yio Chu Kang becomes dementia-friendly

Nadine Chua

Upgrades to make Yio Chu Kang more dementia-friendly have come at the right time for Madam Ng Pang Hoi, whose 95-year-old mother started showing signs of dementia a few months ago.

Madam Ng, 76, who works as a part-time cleaner, has been living with her mother in a two-room rental flat in Yio Chu Kang for more than 40 years.

She said: "Because of her dementia, my mother struggles to remember even the simple things, like where she put her belongings a few minutes ago."

Pointing to the bright signs on the ground leading to the market, Madam Ng said: "I'm usually with her, but I taught her that if she ever gets lost as she goes to the market alone, she can follow the signs to find her way there."

To help residents with dementia live and age well, colourful, distinctive and easily recognisable features have been added in some parts of Yio Chu Kang, with more to come throughout the neighbourhood.

These dementia-friendly features were unveiled on Dec 2 by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and Yio Chu Kang MP Yip Hon Weng.

The inclusive features were rolled out following a community-based research study that looked into those living with dementia, their caregivers and how they live in Singapore's predominantly high-rise and high-density environment.

The Dementia-Friendly Neighbourhood Study, helmed by the



Madam Pek Eng (left) and her daughter, Madam Ng Pang Hoi, walking near Block 646 Ang Mo Kio Avenue 6, with the wayfinding markers on the ground. To ensure that residents with dementia can recognise key areas in the neighbourhood, bright yellow circles that resemble buoys were put up. ST PHOTOS: CHONG JUN LIANG

Agency for Integrated Care (AIC), the Centre for Liveable Cities (CLC) and the Singapore University of

Technology and Design, was based on feedback gathered from more than 100 Yio Chu Kang residents

and caregivers of those with dementia, including Madam Ng. A range of methods such as visual

aids and sensory stimulation were used in the study for researchers to grasp the needs, experiences and

considerations of those living with dementia as well as their caregivers.

The aim of the study was to ensure that those living with dementia can be active and independent as they make their way around their neighbourhood.

The new infrastructure prototypes in Yio Chu Kang include a community space called the Blue Court, a distinctive location designed to promote the kampung spirit in the neighbourhood.

Within the Blue Court, there are activity corners created to engage seniors in cognitive games and other activities such as getting a ring through a simple maze to promote hand-eye coordination.

To ensure that residents with dementia can recognise key areas in the neighbourhood, bright yellow circles that resemble buoys were put up.

Set up outside a chess corner and Thye Hua Kwan Active Ageing Centre to remind those with dementia of the familiar spaces in Yio Chu Kang, these "buoys" also indicate the directions to key neighbourhood areas, such as the nearby market.

The signs used on the buoys have simple designs and recognisable symbols, such as a fork and a spoon to indicate the way to the nearest hawker centre.

Residents at other centres in Singapore can expect such features to be set up in their neighbourhoods as well.

Speaking to The Sunday Times, Ms Elaine Tan, director of research at CLC, said: "We are working with AIC to roll out some of these dementia-friendly communities and neighbourhoods across Singapore."

She added that work is under way to determine which neighbourhoods would benefit the most from such features.

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