



Seniors having fun playing video games at the Agency for Integrated Care's Life Unstoppable roadshow at Nex on Aug 24. More than 1,000 people visited the roadshow, which aims to encourage seniors to embrace ageing as a fulfilling and active stage of life. ST PHOTO: BRIAN TED

# Age Well Neighbourhoods scheme to integrate four existing initiatives

Scheme is 'next level of ambition' for nation's healthcare system: Ong Ye Kung

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The Age Well Neighbourhoods scheme announced at the recent National Day Rally will integrate four ongoing programmes and focus them on communities here that are ageing quickly, so seniors can age in place in vibrant neighbourhoods, Health Minister Ong Ye Kung said on Aug 24.

While it will be rolled out at Toa Payoh and other older towns for a start, the plan is to learn from these estates and eventually take Age Well Neighbourhoods island-wide, he added.

Mr Ong said the Age Well Neighbourhoods will harmonise active ageing centres that provide activities for the elderly, the construction of senior-friendly infrastructure as well as health services in the community and at home.

"Instead of spreading all these initiatives thinly around the island, we feel it is more effective

and will make a bigger impact if we... implement them in a consolidated way in communities with a higher density of seniors," he added.

Mr Ong, who is also Coordinating Minister for Social Policies, said the Age Well Neighbourhoods scheme is the "next level of ambition" for Singapore's healthcare system in its ongoing push to shift care away from hospitals and clinics into the community and residential homes.

The multi-year project will address the growing, unsustainable demand for nursing homes with the long-term solution of letting seniors age in neighbourhoods where they are surrounded by friends, community activities and healthcare support, he added.

Laying out his vision for the neighbourhoods, Mr Ong said the scheme has four pillars.

First, the network of active ageing centres will be expanding, and projecting their activities deeper into the community by even orga-

nising activities in parks within private estates.

Second, community health posts will do a lot more, such as helping to manage chronic illness, rehabilitate patients and improve their fitness.

Next, the Government is conceptualising a permanent post for home personal care that allows staff to respond to emergencies even after office hours, relieving the burden on caregivers.

Lastly, the ministries will continue to make the environment friendly for seniors through upgrading programmes like pedestrian-friendly streets.

The scheme will be piloted in Toa Payoh - a neighbourhood where nearly one-quarter of residents are 65 and above - and other neighbourhoods to be unveiled later, Mr Ong said.

He was speaking to the media on the sidelines of the Agency for Integrated Care's (AIC) Life Unstoppable roadshow at the Nex shopping mall in Serangoon, where the exhibition is making its first pit stop. He was joined by Marine Parade-Braddell Heights GRC MPs Seah Kian Peng, Diana Pang and Goh Pei Ming in their capacity as

grassroots advisers for Braddell Heights, Geylang Serai and Marine Parade respectively.

Over 1,000 people visited the roadshow, which aims to encourage seniors to embrace ageing as a fulfilling and active stage of life.

Addressing the event's attendees, AIC's chief executive Tan Chee Wee said: "Too often, conversations around ageing focus on how age has led to some form of decline in terms of physical, mental and cognitive strength."

The organisation hopes to shift that conversation to what can be rediscovered while ageing instead, he added.

"This could be a new passion, deeper relationships, meaningful contributions to society or a stronger sense of self."

Among those featured at the roadshow was Mr S. Gopala Krishnan, 74, who took up volunteering as a Silver Generation ambassador in Nee Soon after four decades of working in law enforcement.

He said: "I used to work long hours - sometimes working for two days straight - so I didn't have much time for community service or social activities."

"So, when I retired in 2016, I

thought I'd spend some time contributing to society instead of idling around."

These days, Mr Gopala takes pride in checking on the welfare of his fellow seniors and explaining policies to them, an experience that has taught him to be more patient.

In his free time, he also works as a part-time assessor, travels abroad and exercises for 1½ hours on most days. He said: "My children tell me that I should just enjoy myself, do something meaningful and to keep myself busy so I don't waste my time."

Separately, Minister for National Development Chee Hong Tat said in an Aug 24 Facebook post that under the Age Well Neighbourhoods scheme, there will be more community spaces for seniors, as well as more Community Care Apartments that integrate senior-friendly housing with care services.

He announced that 200 of such apartments will be launched in October in Sengkang and another 200 near Caldecott MRT station in Toa Payoh in 2026.

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