

prisonnews

MARCH ISSUE 2022
CAPTAINS OF LIVES
REHAB • RENEW • RESTART

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FAMILY WORK IN CORRECTIONS

MAIN FEATURE

Some photos in this article are taken prior to COVID-19

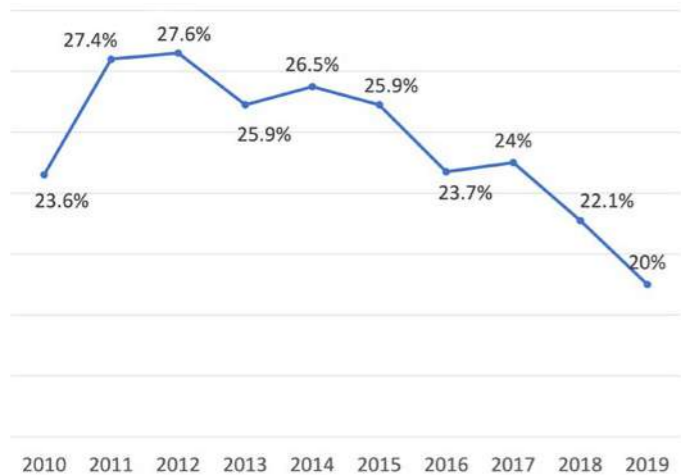


**SINGAPORE
PRISON SERVICE**

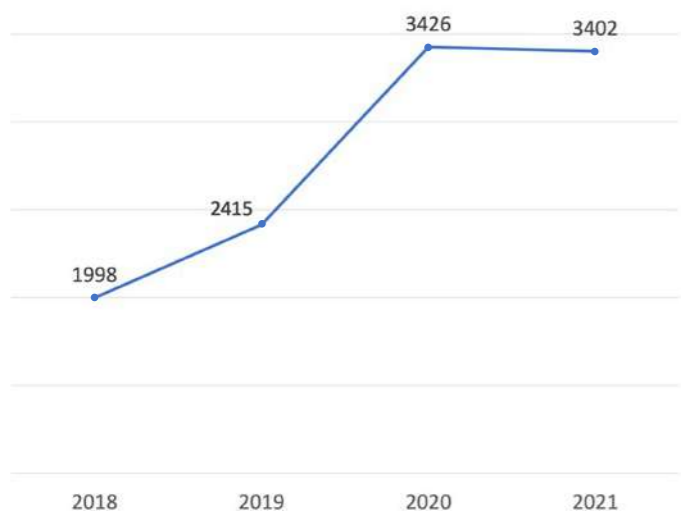
SPS ANNUAL STATISTICS | 2021

In 2021, the Singapore Prison Service (SPS) continued to keep prison safe and secure. SPS also worked closely with Yellow Ribbon Singapore (YRSG), community partners and volunteers to support inmates' rehabilitation and reintegration into society.

TWO-YEAR RECIDIVISM RATES FOR 2010-2019 RELEASE COHORTS



COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS POPULATION (2018-2021)



The two-year recidivism rate has remained low and stable, with the recidivism rate for the 2019 inmate release cohort being the lowest in the last 30 years.¹ This is a strong testament to the hard work and dedication of SPS, YRSG and all community partners.

To keep recidivism rates low, SPS will continue to develop and deliver evidence-informed rehabilitation programmes, and enhance community corrections by providing suitable inmates who are serving the tail-end of their sentences in the community, with structured support to help them better reintegrate into society. Such support includes providing them with opportunities to enhance their employability and stay employed, and supporting them in rekindling family bonds, and building pro-social networks. In 2021, the community corrections population totalled 3,402, similar to the level in 2020.



Read more about the Annual Statistics Release 2021 here!
go.gov.sg/sps-stats2021

¹ Recidivism rate is defined as the percentage of local offenders under the custody of the Singapore Prison Service, who were subsequently detained or sentenced to imprisonment or day reporting order within two years of release into the community.

EDITORIAL TEAM

ADVISOR

AC RAFIDAH SUPARMAN

EDITOR

ASP MUHAMMAD SADIQ BIN SA'AD

SUB-EDITOR

ASP CHEN SHUYI

REPORTERS

RO ALSON TAN

RO ALVIN TAN

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RO LETICIA KOH

RO RYAN CHRISTOPHER LEE

MX CRYSTAL WONG

MX MUHAMMAD HARIZ BIN HUSAINI

MEDIA SUPPORT

DIGITAL MEDIA UNIT

PUBLICATION CONSULTANT

OXYGEN STUDIO DESIGNS PTE LTD

FEEDBACK

THEPNEDITOR@PRIS.GOV.SG



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EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear Readers

Did you know that rehabilitation goes beyond working with inmates, and involves their families as well?

The Singapore Prison Service (SPS) recognises that strong family support is essential to an inmate's rehabilitation journey and it is among the key preventive factors to reoffending. Hence, SPS collaborates with community partners to conduct **various family-based programmes** and initiatives aimed at maintaining and enhancing family bonds. Through these programmes, inmates are equipped with useful information and parenting skills to prepare them for release. You'll be able to learn more about these programmes in this issue and hear from the prison officers, also known as Captains of Lives (COLs), whose mission is to facilitate the rehabilitation of inmates besides enforcing their safe and secure custody.

Inmates' incarceration may also affect their families and children. Families usually face difficulties, such as loss of income, and emotional stress, as well as childcare and parenting challenges. In this issue of Prison News, we will also look at **how families are supported** to cope with their loved one's incarceration.

We hope that this issue provides you with deeper insights on how SPS and our community partners collaborate to strengthen familial bonds and support an inmate's rehabilitation journey. Happy reading!

ASP Muhammad Sadiq Bin Sa'ad
 Editor, Prison News

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FAMILY WORK

IN CORRECTIONS

Reported by
RO Ryan Christopher Tan

The saying goes that it takes a village to raise a child. The adage holds true for inmates, as it takes the collective efforts of the Singapore Prison Service (SPS) and rehabilitation partners from the community, as well as inmates' families, to help them reintegrate successfully into society.

THE ROLE OF THE FAMILY IN REHABILITATION

Research on Desistance

Studies have shown three things:

1. Individuals need a caring and supporting environment to stay away from crime.
2. Individuals behave according to how others think of them.
3. Individuals hope for recognition from others on their efforts to change.

An inmate who has a strong family support from parents, spouses, and children who believe in them and motivate them along the way, has a higher chance of rehabilitating and not reoffending in the future, compared to others who do not have such support.

Hence, rehabilitation work also requires work in strengthening family bonds and relationships, which will in turn help inmates rehabilitate and reintegrate successfully upon their release from prisons.

FAMILY WORK IN CORRECTIONS

CHALLENGES FACED BY INMATES AND THEIR FAMILIES

Families are affected by the offending behaviours of their loved ones, and by their subsequent incarceration in prisons.

Relationships between family members may have been strained by their loved one's offending behaviour, and this can be further weakened by the incarceration. During this period, family members are separated from each other, and as a whole, the family faces challenges such as loss of income, lack of caregiving support for children at home etc.

Common challenges:



Perceived inability to play parenting role

"I cannot do much. My biggest challenge now is when I receive letters about my sons (in Boys' Home), it is so heart-breaking. Outside I can give a call. Inside (prisons), I cannot do anything."



Feeling disconnected

"Now I'm almost 5 years in prison and I feel so far from them (my children). When I left them, they were still in primary school. Now they are all big already."



Lack of confidence in parenting

"I haven't seen her (my daughter), haven't talked to her since I gave her up for foster care since she was born. I am quite nervous to see her and the things she is going to ask me. She has yet to see how her mummy looks like."

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BUILDING STRONGER FAMILIES

SOCIAL SKILLS TRAINING PROGRAMME (SSTP) AND FAMILY REINTEGRATION PROGRAMME (FRP)

What

Introduced in 2019 for inmates to acquire the necessary skills and competencies to help families reconnect.

Target Group

All newly admitted inmates in prison. For those who had attended SSTP and were assessed to have familial needs and/or require further support to rebuild family ties, they would be scheduled to attend the FRP.

Objectives

- Raise inmates' awareness of the impact of crime and incarceration on the family.
- Equip inmates with communication and relational skills, and other personal skills such as conflict resolution and emotion regulation techniques.
- Provide opportunities for inmates and family members to reconnect and discuss on issues to facilitate rehabilitation.

DID YOU KNOW?

The SSTP and FRP programmes are run by Fei Yue Community Services and AMKFSC Community Services.

'FAMILY FIRST' INITIATIVE

What

Introduced in 2018 as the Family Interventions and Reintegration Support Team (FIRST) initiative.

Today, the initiative has been renamed to 'Family First'. In close collaboration with SPS' various community partners such as social service agencies, government agencies and schools, Family First offers a range of programmes and initiatives in prisons to help strengthen family bonds.

For whom?

Generally open to all inmates in prisons, especially those with young children.

Objectives

- Strengthen inmates' relationships and commitment to their families.
- Inculcate pro-social familial identities in inmates.
- Leverage families to motivate inmates towards positive change.

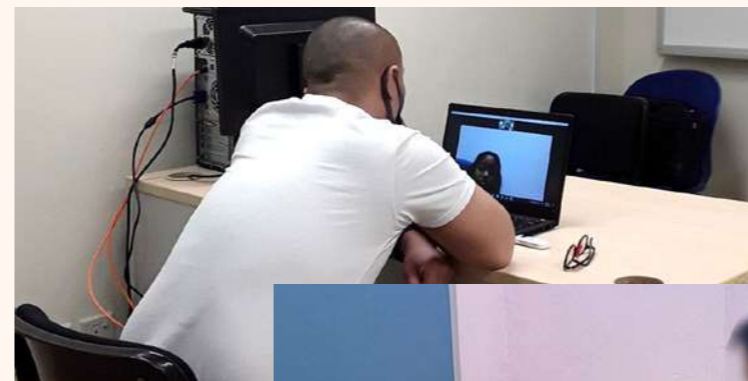
FUN FACT

The Family First initiative is affectionately known as 'F1' by inmates.

PROGRAMMES & INITIATIVES UNDER 'FAMILY FIRST'

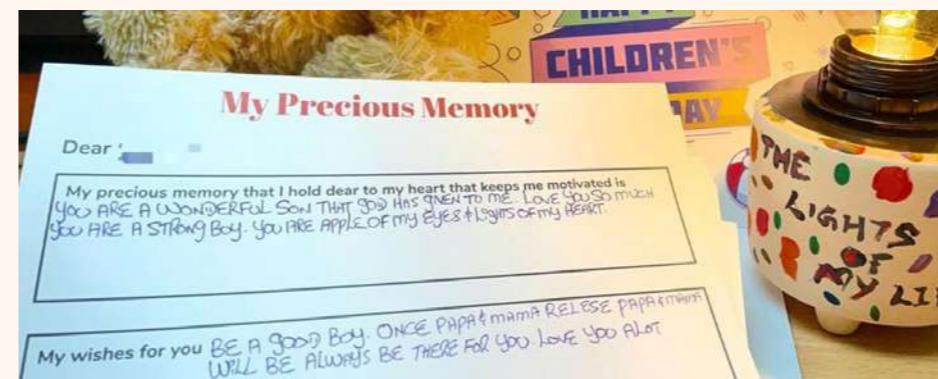
- **Video conferencing (VC) between inmates, community partners and their families**
 - » Increase touchpoints for inmates to connect with community partners, such as The Salvation Army and Centre for Fathering.
 - » Inmates also leveraged on VC to connect with their school-going children.

“The best (part) about having this (VC) is that my kids are behaving well knowing that I am coming out and we make promises with each other to behave so that all of us will be outside and be united.”



- **Family bonding events**

- » Collaboration with community partners to organise family bonding events, such as Children's Day celebration (organised together with SINDA and Centre for Fathering) where inmates get to write personal messages to their children, among various other activities.



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• **Monthly peer-facilitated inmate support groups**

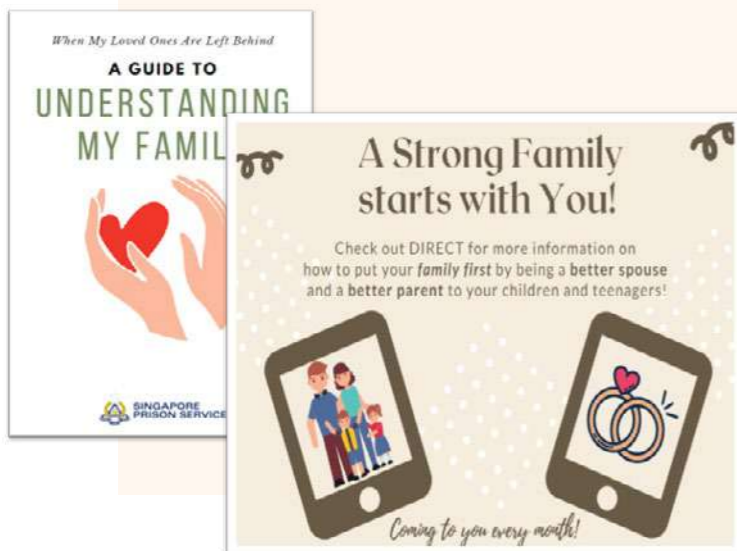
» Supported by prison officers and staff from the Psychological and Correctional Rehabilitation Division (PCRD), inmates meet in monthly support group sessions to learn on family-based topics and express their goals and aspirations.

GOAL 1

I want to spend more quality time with my wife and daughter upon my release, to make up for all the lost time that I have lost whilst inside prison. I want to bring my daughter to different places to explore and make the most out of her childhood, something that has been greatly disrupted due to my absence and the prevailing corona virus pandemic.

• **Parenting workshops**

» Various workshops conducted by community partners, such as the fathering workshop conducted by Centre for Fathering for incarcerated fathers in Institution B3.



• **Family resources for inmates**

» Resources provided to inmates, such as articles and contents contributed by Focus on The Family which are downloaded into the inmate's tablet for self-learning.

OTHER FAMILY-BASED PROGRAMMES

SPS works with various community partners to run family-based programmes for inmates and their families such as the following:



Singapore Children's Society

'Project Relate' initiative conducts group session on parenting for inmates and helping caregiver cope with incarceration at home.



New Life Stories

Family Strengthening Programme for both incarcerated mothers and fathers.



SINDA

Mothering workshop to provide inmates with necessary tools to build closer relations with their children.



Association of Muslim Professionals (AMP)

Development and Reintegration Programme (DRP) to equip inmates with financial literacy, parenting and family management skills, as well as provide case management support for the inmates' families.



Singapore After-Care Association (SACA)

Initiative for Incarcerated Mothers and Affected Children (IIMAC) programme to provide assistance and referral support for incarcerated mothers.



Focus on The Family

Fathering workshops to equip inmates with practical parenting skills.



Centre for Fathering

iCAN programme to equip fathers with parenting knowledge and interpersonal skills.



The Salvation Army

'Kids in Play' Programme for inmates to foster stronger relations with their children and family members.

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5 TIPS TO ENGAGE WITH YOUR CHILDREN

Contributed by an incarcerated mother from Institution A4 who had attended some of the family programmes in prisons. The information is printed as a poster and pasted in Institution A4, for the benefit of other inmates.



An inmate engaging in a family bonding activity with his daughter as part of the family programme conducted by Focus on The Family.

TRANSFORMING LIVES IN PRISONS

As a correctional agency, SPS aspires towards a society without reoffending. SPS has transformed over the years from being just a physical space where individuals serve their time behind bars, to being a transformational environment that seeks to change inmates' lives for the better.

While in prisons, inmates will have opportunities to transform not only their lives, but the lives of their loved ones. We hope that inmates can move on from their past mistakes and leave prisons to be better individuals than when they first entered prisons.

5 TIPS TO ENGAGE WITH YOUR CHILDREN

"Hi, I'm a drug inmate and mother of 7 beautiful children. I used to have problems communicating with my teenage boys but having multiple video calls with them was helpful and I'm thankful to prison for giving me this chance. I hope to share 5 tips on how to better engage with your children so that it may encourage you parents to face any challenges in connecting with your kids."

- 01 Be mindful with your words, have some sensitivity**
 - Know that your kids have not seen you in a while and they may be feeling emotional during the visit. Be patient and kind in the things you say to them.
- 02 Be open to share your thoughts and feelings with your children**
 - This will encourage your kids to open up and share more with you as well.
- 03 Assure your children that you are ready to listen whenever they are ready to share**
 - Ask your kid: "Is there anything you want to talk about?" or "What is one fun thing you did today?"
- 04 Tell them firmly and calmly if you feel that they should not use certain words**
 - Instead of: "I'm your mum don't be rude",
Try: "Kids, I'm ok to listen to what you are sharing but I think it's not nice of you to use certain words in front of me. Please be respectful."
- 05 Control your emotions and put yourself in their shoes**
 - Give them some time to warm up to you. Try again and again. When you make effort to understand their points of view, they will eventually open up, I guarantee!



Final Message to Parents
"Don't be afraid to explore the kids' world. I tell my boys that I want to hear what they do daily, so when they open up, we must not judge. It's their story!!"

~ A family initiative by A4 and the Psychological & Correctional Rehabilitation Division (PCRD) ~



STRENGTHENING SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES

Reported by
RO Alson Tan

Families need support and assistance during their loved one's incarceration. This may include caregiving support for children, as well as support in other areas such as financial and employment assistance.

Singapore Prison Service (SPS) works with community partners to provide the following support to inmates' families:

1

FAMILY RESOURCE CENTRE (FRC)

- Managed by SPS' appointed social service partners, the FRC provides Information and Referral (I&R) services for inmates who have requested for support and assistance for their children and families.
- The FRC will conduct an assessment and link families to the appropriate Family Service Centre (FSC) or other community resources to address their needs and issues.



2

FAMILY SERVICE CENTRES (FSCs)

- SPS is working closely with the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) to proactively identify and refer vulnerable children and families to the various FSCs in Singapore for follow-up assistance.
- Linking such families with timely and proactive interventions by the FSCs helps to minimise the number of cases that fall through the cracks when inmates themselves do not actively seek help for their families.
- SPS will continue to partner MSF and the various FSCs to strengthen the coordination and information exchange among FSCs to facilitate the timely access to FSC resources for inmates' families.



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3

YELLOW RIBBON COMMUNITY PROJECT (YRCP)

- The YRCP leverages grassroots volunteers to provide befriending and social assistance to families with incarcerated loved ones.
- Volunteers will conduct home visits and render the support to inmates' families and their children.
- Today, all 93 grassroots divisions in Singapore are on board YRCP.



Be a Part and Play a Part!

For more information on how to join the YRCP and for other volunteer opportunities, please email us at pris_volunteers@pris.gov.sg



CHRISTINA AU
YRCP Volunteer,
Kebun Baru Division

I know of one lady living near me. She is in her 80s, taking care of six grandchildren. Her four children and her daughter-in-law are all in the prisons. When I heard her story, I really feel for her.

Such families need our support, not just financially, but also in providing a listening ear to hear them out, and to offer them some advice. Our presence may seem insignificant, but it helps to encourage them, to let them know that out there, there are people who do care about them and are willing to help them.



Singapore Prison Service
January 8, 2022

Boxing it out!

SGT Nurazmie first met Shakur at Tanah Merah Prison School in 2016. SGT Nurazmie would often take the time to listen to Shakur and provide advice, drawing upon his own experience in practising Mixed Martial Arts. It was heartening for SGT Nurazmie to know that his advice was able to help Shakur turn his life around!



Singapore Prison Service
January 30, 2022

Meet our Yellow Ribbon Community Project (YRCP) volunteer!

Ms Yogeswari d/o Chandrasekaran has always found meaning in helping others. Her passion for volunteerism led her to join the Yellow Ribbon Community Project (YRCP) in 2011. In October 2021, Ms Yogeswari was awarded the 10-Year Long Service Award at the Yellow Ribbon Community Project Awards & Appreciation 2021! She hopes that her efforts with the families of incarcerated inmates will continue to make a positive difference in their lives.



It's about making a difference in someone's life and I enjoy that - to walk them through this journey.



Yogeswari d/o Chandrasekaran
Recipient of the 10-Year Long Service Award

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Singapore Prison Service
January 12, 2022

Passing of the Prisons (Amendment) Bill

“Research has shown that inmates will have better outcomes when rehabilitation in prison is complemented by community-based programmes. The Bill will help to improve inmates' rehabilitation and reintegration outcomes.”



The Prisons (Amendment) Bill was passed on 11 January 2022. The Bill introduces the Employment Preparation Scheme, which allows inmates to be released for skills training and education in the community, on top of work programmes. The Bill also effects other changes to enable SPS to carry out its functions more effectively and ensure the safe and secure custody of inmates.

WHAT'S THE

BUZZ?

Reported by RO Gary Loh
GET UP TO DATE WITH OUR CAPTAINS OF LIVES!

CLICK ON THE POSTS TO FIND OUT MORE!

Singapore Prison Service
February 12, 2022

An ex-offender reacts!

We invited Christopher, an ex-offender, to watch Part Two of SPS' very own film series, "Step Forward". Find out what Christopher has to say in this special reaction video!



Ex-offender Reacts to "Step Forward"

Singapore Prison Service
February 14, 2022

Love begins at home

This Valentine's Day, we find out how love blossomed for RO Charlvi Tan and ASP Toh Siew Choo, who shared their experiences as a married couple and prison officers.



Singapore Prison Service
January 21, 2022

You asked, we answered!

SUPT Jim Ang, Officer-in-Charge of Housing Unit at Changi Prison Complex, answers some of your questions about inmates' recreation time, food and more!



Each issue, we select trending posts from our @SingaporePrisonService social media accounts to provide a peek at what our Captains of Lives are up to. #ICYMI
Follow us! @SingaporePrisonService



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Singapore Prison Service
February 18, 2022



Virtual Graduation Ceremony for NITEC in Business Services Programme

The inaugural Virtual Graduation Ceremony for inmates who completed the NITEC in Business Services Programme was held on 11 February 2022. During the programme, inmates attended training on topics that enhance their employability upon their release. Congratulations to the pioneer batch of inmate graduates!

Singapore Prison Service
March 1, 2022



Reflections of an ex-offender on Restorative Practices

Watch how SPS' Empathy Programme, which uses concepts of Restorative Practices, has helped Louis (not his real name) in his rehabilitation and reintegration journey.

Communication and understanding to make better decisions

Singapore Prison Service
March 3, 2022



John's story

A conversation in 2007 between John (not his real name) and his then 10-year-old son had made a deep impression on the once hardened secret society member. Since his release in 2014, John has supported other inmates who are facing similar struggles and challenges. As an Industrial & Services Co-operative Society Ltd (ISCOS) Titan volunteer and Outreach Coordinator, John counsels inmates and supports them in their journey of change.

"I was determined. I also chose to extend my stay at the halfway house after my release because I wanted to be sure this time. I was done with my past!"

Singapore Prison Service
February 19, 2022

Then vs Now: Evolution of inmates' family visits in prisons

Family support is one of the key factors that contribute towards inmates' successful rehabilitation and reintegration into society. Watch how SPS has leveraged technology to make visits more convenient for inmates' families.



Since 2004


- Prison Link Centres (PLC)
- Community Televisit Facilities
- Singapore Anti-Narcotics Association (SANA) StepUp Centre
- Singapore Children's Society
- ISCOS iCosy Hub
- Selang Park
- Changi
- Tanah Merah
- Lakeside Family Centre
- Gaylen's Babu
- Kampung Ubi Community Centre

With community support, inmates and their families are able to maintain familial bonds.

Singapore Prison Service
March 8, 2022

Our women Captains of Lives!


On International Women's Day, join RO Wong Tian Lee and CW Premilla d/o Gunasekaran as they meet Mdm Noriah Bte Sapari, a retired Prison Officer, to walk down memory lane and share how SPS has evolved over the years as a correctional organisation.



Singapore Prison Service
February 23, 2022

Jason's GCE A-Level results

On 22 February 2022, 17 inmate students from the Tanah Merah Prison School received their GCE A-Level examination results. Amongst them was Jason (not his real name), who scored four 'A's and a 'B'. Today, Jason aspires to attain a law degree and become a lawyer, where he hopes to use his knowledge to help others like him.



DAC LOH TECK EN

Director, Logistics & Finance Division (L&FD)

Reported by
MX Muhammad Hariz bin Husaini



The good work of the Singapore Prison Service (SPS) and its Captains of Lives (COLs), together with our community partners, is made possible with the relentless support from the staff of the SPS' Logistics & Finance Division (L&FD).

We speak to the man at the helm, DAC Loh Teck En, to find out more about him and how he has steered L&FD to support SPS in its work of enforcing the safe and secure custody of inmates and rehabilitating them, for a safer Singapore.

Q1 WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO PURSUE A CAREER AS A COL?

When I was 18 years old and applying for the Public Service Commission (PSC) Local Merit Scholarship, I had already made up my mind to apply for SPS. I recall that the interviewers asked me the reason for choosing SPS. My response was that unlike other law enforcement agencies, SPS would allow me to be part of the offender's change process, and I viewed that as a very meaningful career.

Fun Fact!

DAC Loh joined SPS in 1996 and has assumed various leadership roles ever since. His previous postings include being the Commander of Cluster C and Director of the Transformation and Technology Division, which oversees the formulation and implementation of the SPS' transformation plans through leveraging technology.

Q2 WHAT ARE YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES AS DIRECTOR, L&FD, AND HOW DOES THE DIVISION SUPPORT CAPTAINS OF LIVES IN THEIR WORK?

As the head of the division, I am responsible for ensuring that the division provides good service support to the other branches and divisions in SPS. Within L&FD, there are three branches, namely the Logistics Branch (LB), Infrastructure Development Branch (IDB) and Finance & Administration Branch (FAB).

LB oversees the policy development, planning and provision of logistical support and services for SPS during peacetime and contingencies, such as the COVID-19 pandemic situation in prisons. IDB is responsible for the planning, implementation and management of infrastructural projects and building maintenance of SPS facilities.

For FAB, it is responsible for the administration and management of all financial matters and also provides general administration support for SPS. The main functions of FAB include the preparation, allocation and utilisation of financial resources, and the provision of financial and administrative corporate support.

Q3 WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR LESSONS LEARNT IN NAVIGATING THE CHALLENGES BROUGHT ABOUT BY COVID-19?

I have learnt three lessons from this experience, and that is teamwork, teamwork, and finally, teamwork! I believe that with good teamwork, we will be able to overcome any challenges and obstacles that come our way.

For example, when the COVID-19 pandemic broke out in 2020, the LB team had to coordinate and work closely with other divisions in SPS so that our ground units were equipped with the essential items to perform their duties safely.

Q4 IN YOUR OPINION, WHAT MAKES A GOOD LEADER?

In my view, a good leader is someone who must be able to do the following things:

- Be genuine to self – To be genuine is to be sincere and true to one's belief. Else trust is hard to happen between the leader and his team, as time will reveal the true nature of the leader.
- Be resilient – A good leader, when faced with a challenge of limited resources, must be able to face it calmly and inspire his team to overcome the challenges.
- Have difficult conversations with staff – It is usually not easy to sit down with staff and have difficult conversations. But such conversations are important, and sometimes, even necessary. It is thus important for leaders to have the courage to have difficult conversations, with the good intent of benefiting the staff and the team as a whole.
- Have an interest in developing staff – A good leader not only delivers results, but also ensures that the team develops and grows from strength to strength.

Q5 ANY PARENTING OR WORK-LIFE BALANCE TIPS?

I don't really have any good tips, but what I can share is that I am very fortunate to have a supportive and understanding wife by my side. It also helps that I love my work and enjoy what I do. Hence, I never felt that I needed to juggle between work, personal or family commitments.

I have two boys at home and to be honest, I am still adjusting my parenting style as my boys are growing up. I think at different stages of their lives, different parenting styles are needed. Personally, I just think that it is better not to nag at your kids, as I don't think they are receptive to the nagging – but that is just my view!



DAC Loh (left) with his family on a holiday trip to China in 2017.

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A DAY IN THE SHOES OF...

OFFICER-IN-CHARGE OF HOUSING UNIT (OCHU)

Reported by
MX Crystal Wong



When inmates are in prison, most of their daily activities are conducted within the Housing Unit (HU). We interview two OCHUs, DSP Benjamin Tan from Institution B3, and DSP Kannaki D/O Srinivasagan from Institution A4, to find out more about their roles in leading a team of staff to manage the inmates in their respective HUs.

▶ WHAT IS YOUR ROLE AS AN OCHU?

DSP Benjamin: As an OCHU, our role is to lead a team of officers in running the day-to-day operations of the Housing Unit (HU). We supervise and oversee the team in running the operational routines and inmates' rehabilitative activities, while ensuring the overall order and discipline in the HU. The rehabilitative activities include the psychology-based rehabilitation programmes which are conducted by our Correctional Rehabilitation Specialists and also religious counselling by our community partners and volunteers.

▶ WHAT IS A TYPICAL DAY LIKE FOR YOU?

DSP Kannaki: I usually start my day at the Housing Unit Control Centre, or HCC in short. This is where I get an update on the overall inmate population in the HU and the various activities scheduled for the day, such as inmates' releases, rehabilitation programmes, and fire drills training.

Thereafter, my day is occupied with engaging inmates and attending to their requests, conducting my rounds in the HU, engaging and coaching my staff on work-related matters, and attending meetings.

DSP Benjamin: For me, no single day is ever the same. Different groups of inmates have different routines as their rehabilitative needs differ. We have to take into considerations these factors into the planning and management of the daily operational routines in the HU, which can be quite challenging. We have to remain vigilant when we are on duty and always be ready to respond to an emergency or contingency in the institution.

That being said, I must say that I do enjoy the work because it keeps me alert and on my toes.

▶ WHAT ARE SOME FAMILY PROGRAMMES/INITIATIVES THAT ARE BEING RUN IN YOUR HOUSING UNIT?

DSP Benjamin: Institution B3 is currently running the Family First initiative for our inmates who are fathers. The family programme and activities include classes and workshops aimed at enhancing their roles as fathers, and also fathering 'circles', where inmates

share about their learning experiences, as well as their personal stories, with each other. We also facilitate video conferences with their family members to strengthen their familial bonds.

Under this initiative, we have also appointed suitable inmates as 'Fathering Champions'. Their roles are to share their experiences and provide mentoring and guidance to other inmates. We hope that through this initiative, inmates are better able to perform their roles as fathers, even while they are in prison, and motivate them to be better citizens after they complete their sentences.

DSP Kannaki: Institution A4, which is the women prison, also runs a few family-based initiatives to strengthen the family ties of inmates who are mothers. One example is our collaboration with The Salvation Army (TSA). Before COVID-19, we partnered TSA to conduct open visits between inmates who are mothers and their children during the school holidays. During these open visits, inmates are able to physically meet and hold their children to strengthen their connection and bonds with their children.

Such programme also emphasises to the children that while their mothers are not physically with them at home, their mothers do love them and are concerned for their well-being and development. Through such programme, we hope the inmates are motivated to be better mothers when they are released into the society.

Due to COVID-19 situation, and to ensure the safety of both inmates and their families, we have temporarily suspended these open visit sessions. Instead, we facilitate letter writing and phone calls for inmates to remain connected with their children. We hope to resume such initiatives when the COVID-19 situation is better.

▶ HOW DO YOU KEEP STAFF MORALE HIGH AMIDST THE BUSY WORK SCHEDULE AND CHALLENGES BROUGHT ABOUT BY COVID-19?

DSP Kannaki: I try to keep the energy high by always maintaining a cheerful and positive attitude. I also engage staff regularly through casual conversation whenever we have some pockets of time and check in on their well-being at work and also beyond work. Teamwork is key in the management of the HU.

With the support of my Housing Unit Officers, we distribute and delegate tasks and responsibilities fairly to prevent taxing on a particular staff which may then cause burn out for this staff.

DSP Benjamin: I make it a priority to listen to my staff and support them in their work. We are also fortunate that the institution management is very supportive, and they often visit the HU to talk to the staff. With their presence, staff feel supported and it boosts their morale greatly.

I would like to commend my team for their hard work and dedication. They are a strong and resilient bunch. I am proud and privileged to be working alongside each and every one of them.



DSP KANNAKI D/O SRINIVASAGAN
OCHU, Institution A4

DSP BENJAMIN TAN
OCHU, Institution B3

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OUR COLs

RESTORATIVE PRACTICES (RP) ADVOCATES



Reported by
RO Leticia Koh

Since 2015, the Singapore Prison Service (SPS) has embarked on the journey of Restorative Practices (RP), which encourages inmates to take ownership of their behaviours and strengthen personal relationships through their interactions with others.

Prison News had a quick chat with two RP Advocates, Ms Karen Wong and DSP Chen Congyi on RP, and what it is all about.



MS KAREN WONG
Senior Assistant Director
(Correctional Rehabilitation Services
Branch, Penal), Psychological and
Correctional Rehabilitation Division



DSP CHEN CONGYI
Officer-in-Charge
(Housing Unit),
Institution B1, Cluster B

WHAT DOES RP MEAN TO YOU?

DSP Chen: For me, RP is a tool to improve human interactions and a way to achieve better and more positive relationships with one another. RP is beneficial for both staff and inmates. It helps us to be more aware of how we can engage in meaningful interactions with one another, strengthen our relationships, and ultimately become better versions of ourselves.

HOW DOES RP HELP INMATES TO CHANGE AND BECOME BETTER PERSONS?

Ms Wong: RP teaches inmates valuable skills, such as communication and conflict resolution, to better manage their relationships with those around them, including prison staff, fellow inmates and their family members.

Through adopting RP in their daily lives, inmates also develop a sense of empathy, allowing them to see things from different perspectives. This in turn leads to other positive prosocial behaviours such as cooperating, helping, sharing, and problem solving.

AS AN RP ADVOCATE, HOW DO YOU PROMOTE THE USE OF RP AT WORK?

Ms Wong: I encourage my staff to adopt RP when interacting with inmates. For instance, staff are encouraged to engage in 'impromptu conversations' with inmates to support positive behaviours (e.g. "I am so glad that you stayed offence-free for the last month") or to address concerning behaviours (e.g. "Let's talk about what just happened earlier when you shouted those negative remarks at your cell-mate").

I also apply RP in more formal settings such as Restorative Circles, where individuals come together to resolve conflicts by reflecting on their actions and building empathy towards others.

DSP Chen: Likewise for me, I encourage my team to apply RP to everyday situations and interactions with inmates, as well as with each other. Through our actions, we hope to influence inmates to also embrace and practise RP among themselves and with others when they are released.



DSP Chen facilitating a Proactive Circle with his team of officers in Institution B1.

In my Housing Unit, I also conduct regular Proactive Circles with my staff. These sessions provide a platform for us to build trust with one another and to share on how we can better work together as a team.

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HOW DOES YOUR HOUSING UNIT INSTILL AN RP CULTURE?

DSP Chen: Let me share about the 'Empatherapy' initiative, or ETP, in my Housing Unit. ETP is a wordplay on "Empathy" and "Therapy" and aims to build a positive community amongst inmates, reduce conflicts and anti-social behaviours, and increase personal accountability for their actions through empathy.

As part of this initiative, we proactively encourage staff and inmates to adopt RP in our daily interactions. We train inmates in basic RP concepts and conduct Proactive Circles for inmates to help them improve their communication skills and maintain positive relations with each other and with staff.

We also appoint suitable inmates as ETP Peer Supporters, who are given the role of co-facilitating the Proactive Circles together with staff. It is also a way for us recognise their efforts in adopting RP and improving themselves.



Inmates in Institution B1 undergoing a Proactive Circle session.

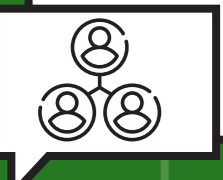
DO YOU HAVE ANY MEMORABLE EXPERIENCES TO SHARE?

Ms Wong: I have witnessed and heard many transformative testimonies of how inmates and staff were impacted by RP and the ETP initiative at Institution B1. Below are just some anecdotes from inmates:

"Empatherapy has helped build empathetic bridges between inmates and staff. We get to hear each other's personal stories and the relationship dynamics shifted. I know the staff as a person, and that makes a more peaceful prison for me. People don't act out in a safe prison."

"We build trust and respect through the circle time. They (inmates and staff) share things that we didn't expect them to share."

"My hope is that anyone who is in the prison system, will have a community to talk about decent things apart from drugs or women. This gives them a chance to be a better person, to learn life skills that they can bring into relationships."



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DID YOU KNOW?

Inmates are encouraged to self-learn via their DIRECT (Digitalisation of Inmate Rehabilitation and Corrections Tool) tablets, where information on RP principles and prosocial skills on relationship building with their families have been downloaded for their learning.

Quality Time

Examples:

- Make the best of visits/letters by having meaningful conversations
- Take time to think of topics of interest that you can discuss

Communication

Examples:

- Listen without judgement
- Be open to share thoughts and feelings
- Pay attention to non-verbal cues

Appreciation

Examples:

- Take interest in each other's lives
- Acknowledge effort to visit/write to you

Teamwork

Examples:

- Make decisions together
- Share your goals/plans to work out how everyone can best support each other

Check out the 'Who say, They say' podcast series now on building relationships in the e-Learning app!

Check out the 'Who say, They say' podcast series now on building relationships in the e-Learning app!

Apologising

Share responsibility for something that you may have done wrong

Affective Statements

Use "I" statements to share feelings

Getting Support

Learn to share and seek help

Empathy

Put yourself in the shoes of others

Proactive Approaches

Take initiative to connect to others



Interview with Father-Son Duo

CW Teng Jan Kim and RO Teng Pang Ann | *Reported by RO Jasmine Oh*

In line with the family theme of this issue, Prison News interviews father-son duo, CW Teng Jan Kim and RO Teng Pang Ann, on their experiences in being Captains of Lives (COLs).

CW TENG JAN KIM, *Chief Personal Supervisor, Institution A2*

HOW DIFFERENT WAS PRISON WORK WHEN YOU FIRST JOINED SERVICE?

I joined the Singapore Prison Service (SPS) in 1990 and was deployed to work in the former Queenstown Remand Prison after graduating from the Prison Staff Training School. A typical day back then consists of running operations and supervising inmates as they go about their daily activities.

Today, thanks to technology advancements, I would say that prison operations have become more efficient now compared to the past, where almost everything had to be done manually. The biggest advantage from leveraging technology is that it allows prison staff to spend more time engaging in meaningful interactions with inmates.

AS A PERSONAL SUPERVISOR (PS) TO INMATES, HOW DO YOU INSPIRE INMATES UNDER YOUR CARE?

We are role models to inmates, and it is not enough that we simply provide words of encouragement and advise them. It is also important for us to walk the talk and translate our words into actions. If we want to instil good behaviours within inmates, then our own actions and behaviours would also need to reflect this. Inmates will then look up to us as an example for them to follow.

SHARE WITH US A MEMORABLE EXPERIENCE WITH AN INMATE

I once bumped into an ex-inmate outside of prisons. He came up to me and shared that he was doing well. He was working as a provision

shop assistant and shared that his pillars of support were his wife and young daughter. This may seem like a simple gesture, but I was touched that he actually remembered me and took the time to chat and share about his well-being with me. This gives me a sense of satisfaction, knowing that I had helped this person to change for the better.

ADVICE FOR YOUNGER AND ASPIRING CAPTAINS OF LIVES

As COLs, we need to stay true to our purpose of making a positive difference in the lives of inmates, as they go through their rehabilitation journey. The work can be tiring and difficult at times, but if we remain guided by this purpose, everything else will fall in place.

RO TENG PANG ANN, *Staff Officer (Resource Planning), Strategic Planning Division*

WHY DID YOU JOIN THE SERVICE?

I was actually inspired by my father, and I remember this one particular incident where we were once walking together as a family when one stranger came up to my father and said 'Hi'. He turned out to be an ex-offender who shared that he was happily married and has a stable job. He then thanked my father for the guidance and support when he was in prison. This made me realise that the work as a prison officer was indeed meaningful as well as impactful.

HOW IMPORTANT IS FAMILY SUPPORT TO THE INMATES?

Family support is very important to the success of the inmates' rehabilitation and reintegration journey. During my stint as a Housing Unit Officer at Institution B1, there was an inmate who renounced from his gang because he wanted to be a good role model to his son. It heartened me to see that he wanted to change, for the sake of his family. Thus, for those without strong family support, we need to find opportunities to help them mend broken relationships and strengthen them. It will be more challenging for

inmates to overcome their reintegration issues and difficulties if they do not have support from their own family.

AS A COL, HOW DO YOU INSPIRE EVERYONE TOWARDS A SOCIETY WITHOUT REOFFENDING?

For me, it's the small things that count. I believe every small action by COLs to help inmates goes a long way. For example, just providing inmates with words of encouragement and advice will give them the much needed moral support during their incarceration.

As COLs, we can also contribute in our own ways and in our own capacities as friends, neighbours, and family members. For example, I help spread the message of giving second chances to my friends and encourage them to volunteer!

WHAT ARE YOUR HOPES FOR THE FUTURE?

For Singapore's 5-year recidivism rate to reduce further, the support from our community partners, volunteers and society at large is key!

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ALL EPISODES OUT!



IMAGE SOURCE: CNA

**ALL FOUR EPISODES OF CNA INSIDER'S
"INSIDE MAXIMUM SECURITY" IS NOW
AVAILABLE ONLINE!**

Get an intimate look at the work of our Captains of Lives, and how they enforce safe and secure custody of inmates and rehabilitate them to become good citizens, for a safer Singapore.



Check out the full series in the link below:

<https://www.channelnewsasia.com/watch/inside-maximum-security>



EIGHTEEN STEPS

*A three-part video series by the
Singapore Prison Service*



89 steps to the yard.

167 steps to the workshop.

112 steps to the counselling room.

Jason instinctively remembers it all from his routine behind bars while grappling with the guilt towards his family, the uncertainty about his future and the undercurrent hostility from his cell mates.

Find out how a Captain of Lives (COL) lights the path as Jason meanders through his mistakes and emotional baggage to shoulder the weight of his sentence.



Catch all the videos on SPS' Youtube channel here:

<https://www.youtube.com/c/SingaporePrisonService/videos>

WITH YOU, EVERY STEP OF THE WAY

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