

Submitted by: Singapore Ministry of Health

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Response to Questionnaire

1. Name of practice:

Action Plan for Successful Ageing under the Ministerial Committee on Ageing

2. Areas concerned:

- ✓ Discrimination (e.g. access to (legal) facilities and services)
- ✓ Violence and abuse
- ✓ Adequate standard of living (e.g. resource availability, housing, etc.)
- ✓ Independence and autonomy (e.g. legal guardianship, accessibility, etc.)
- ✓ Participation
- ✓ Social protection (e.g. social security and social support)
- ✓ Education, training and lifelong learning
- ✓ Care

3. Type of practice:

- ✓ Legal/ Regulatory
- ✓ Policy / Programme / strategy / action plan on ageing
- ✓ Institution
- ✓ Training Programmes

4. Level of implementation

- ✓ National
- ✓ Local (community)

5. Please describe the practice, including a) its purpose, b) when and how it was adopted; c) how long it has been used / implemented and d) its geographical scope.

Overview

- a) Ageing is Singapore's key demographic challenge. Our population will age rapidly over the next two decades. Today, one in nine residents is over the age of 65 years; by 2030, this number will increase to one in five residents.
- b) Singapore adopts a whole-of-society approach to prepare for population ageing. The **Ministerial Committee on Ageing (MCA)** was formed in 2007 to co-ordinate and plan strategies across different government agencies relating to population ageing. The MCA seeks to create a good environment for our seniors to age in, one where they are well taken care of and where they can age actively

and gracefully in place. The MCA is currently chaired by the Minister for Health Mr Gan Kim Yong.

Action Plan for Successful Ageing

- c) In August 2015, the MCA unveiled the **Action Plan for Successful Ageing**, a blueprint to map out a whole-of-nation strategy. This involves organisations from the government, private and people sectors as well as Singaporeans in the community. The Action Plan includes more than 60 initiatives in the following 12 areas:

Individual wellbeing and independence

- i. health and wellness
- ii. lifelong learning
- iii. senior volunteerism
- iv. lifelong employability
- v. retirement adequacy

Social compact

- vi. respect and social inclusion
- vii. protection of vulnerable seniors

Infrastructure

- viii. housing
- ix. transport
- x. public spaces
- xi. healthcare and aged care

Research

- xii. research into ageing

- d) The Action Plan aims to achieve three key objectives
- i. Empower seniors to lead meaningful and fulfilling lives by opening up new opportunities for active ageing. Seniors can embark on lifelong learning, participate in social activities actively, adopt healthy lifestyle habits and opt to work longer if they wish.
 - ii. Enable our seniors to age well in a caring and inclusive community, one where the community will look out for seniors and care for those in need.
 - iii. Ensure the needed infrastructure and hardware are in place to support an active lifestyle and enable seniors to live independently for as long as possible in the community.

e) The below table spells out the key initiatives of the Action Plan:

Opening up new opportunities for seniors	
National Silver Academy	A virtual academy comprising a network of educational institutions will offer a wider range of courses and learning opportunities for seniors to pick up new knowledge and learn for interest. This will enable seniors to remain cognitively and socially engaged, and continue to develop as they age.
National Movement on Senior Volunteerism	A national movement will be initiated to encourage seniors to take part in volunteering activities in the communities. This will empower seniors to continue contributing to their communities, and foster a positive image of our seniors as contributing members of society.
National Seniors' Health Programme	Health education and preventive health services will be systematically introduced to seniors in the community and in workplaces. This national Programme will raise awareness on the importance of nutrition and physical activities, as well as key risk factors and issues such as dementia and falls risks.
Raising of re-employment age from 65 – 67	Under the current Retirement and Re-employment Act, employers are required by law to offer re-employment to eligible workers at age 62 years, till 65 years. This re-employment age will be further raised to 67 years by 2017 to enable seniors to continue working if they are willing and able to do so.
Creating a welcoming and seniors-friendly community	
Co-location of eldercare and childcare facilities in residential community	A number of new childcare and eldercare facilities will be intentionally planned to be co-located together to allow operators to introduce innovative programmes for the very young and elderly to interact and build friendships. This will help to foster inter-generational harmony.
Working with private sectors to offer priorities to seniors via the "Passion Silver card" initiative	Every Singaporean aged 60 and above will be given a PAssion Silver card which will serve as an age identifier. Merchants and businesses will be engaged to offer privileges and benefits for card-holders, as a way for the private sector to honor and respect seniors. These benefits may include priority queues and special discounts at participating stores.

Putting in place age-friendly infrastructure	
Senior friendly public transport plan	A suite of improvements will be made to bus, train and pedestrian infrastructure to make commuting safer, more comfortable and easier for seniors. This includes providing elevators at pedestrian overhead bridges commonly used by seniors, as well as ‘Green Man Plus’ traffic junctions which provide a longer duration for seniors to cross busy traffic junctions safely.
Active Ageing Hubs	A one-stop Hub will be built within new housing estates to serve seniors. It will provide active ageing programmes (e.g. learning, volunteering and health and wellness activities), as well as day care and day rehabilitation and assisted living services to serve the needs of a wide range of seniors.
Senior-friendly amenities at public places such as parks and gardens	The National Parks Board of Singapore which oversees all public parks and gardens will upgrade the existing network of parks such as upgrading the footpaths, lightings and exercise equipment.
Research	
Ageing-related research	Up to \$200m will be set aside in a National Innovation Challenge to provide research grants to support inter-disciplinary research and innovation to transform the experience of ageing.

Protecting the Rights and Dignity of Vulnerable Seniors

- f) Specifically for the vulnerable seniors, we adopt both community and legislative approaches to protect their dignity and interest. In the community, the government works with local non-government or voluntary welfare organizations to reach out to and support vulnerable seniors to stay engaged in the community and receive coordinated care via community-based social services. These networks are located within each residential area, and supported by a range of services such as Senior Activity Centres (SACs), case management teams, assisted living facilities, and volunteer services. They cater specially to the needs of low-income and frail seniors. In addition, a new Silver Support Scheme will supplement the incomes of the bottom 20% to 30% of Singaporeans aged 65 and above, who have lesser means in their retirement years. This is on top of existing schemes to help seniors afford their living expenses, health and long-term care needs.
- g) For legislation, we have two Acts to protect older persons. The **Maintenance of Parents Act** enables seniors to seek financial maintenance from their children, while the **Mental Capacity Act** lets individuals appoint a trusted person to make decisions on their behalf when they lose mental capacity. In 2016, the Singapore government will introduce a new **Vulnerable Adults Act**. It will help the State better protect vulnerable seniors who are suffering or at risk of harm due to abuse, neglect or self-neglect.

h) On the financial front, we have put in place a comprehensive system to ensure that Singaporeans of all ages have access to quality and affordable healthcare. This is done through a comprehensive system of Government subsidies, universal medical insurance and individual medical savings accounts (Medisave). The universal medical insurance covers seniors for lifetime, including those with pre-existing conditions. Additional help is also given to vulnerable seniors who are less well-off through regular government contributions into their medical saving accounts (especially in years with strong fiscal surpluses), and assistance in paying for the universal medical insurance premiums.

6. What actors are involved in the development and implementation of such practice?

a) Ageing is a phenomenon that cuts across all segment of the society. Singapore adopts a holistic approach towards ageing. The Ministerial Committee on Ageing in made up of representatives from the following Government agencies, with their respective areas of oversight as follows:

Agencies	Oversight Areas
Ministry of Health	Health promotion and wellness of seniors and provision of primary, acute care and aged care services to support seniors' care needs.
Ministry of Education	Lifelong learning to enable seniors to continue being engaged and lead fulfilling lives.
Ministry of Manpower	Lifelong employability and creating age-friendly workplaces.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth • People's Association 	Senior volunteerism and delivering the National Wellness Programme to seniors in the community.
Ministry of Family and Social Development	Social support for low income and vulnerable seniors and their families.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of National Development • Urban and Redevelopment Agency • Housing Development Board • National Parks Board 	Age-friendly housing and the built environment. This includes senior-friendly homes and housing towns, parks to promote active ageing, and town planning to ensure that seniors have access to key amenities in order to enable them to live independently for as long as possible.
Ministry of Transport	Build a senior friendly public transport system that is convenient, safe and comfortable for seniors.

- b) In addition, we work closely with various Voluntary and Welfare Organisations (VWOs), community organisations, research institutions, and private organisations to implement the Action Plan.

7. Which rights of older persons does the practice promote and protect?

8. How does the practice promote or protect such rights?

9. What groups of older persons, if any, particularly benefit from the practice?

(Collective response for questions 7-9)

- a) The Action Plan targets older persons from a wide range of age groups, and would benefit seniors from all walks of life – e.g. active agers, community-dwelling seniors, low-income families and older workers. It aims to promote the well-being of seniors in several areas. It includes initiatives that champion better access to employment and learning for seniors, enhance their access to affordable and appropriate healthcare and aged care services, protect them against abuse while enhancing retirement adequacy provisions for them. By enhancing city infrastructure, we hope that even seniors with disability can continue to move around and access amenities around our city.
- b) The development of the Action Plan was also conducted in a manner to ensure that seniors' voices were heard and their feedback taken into account. As part of the development of the Action Plan, we organized a series of focus group discussions over a year-long public consultation and involving over 4,000 Singaporeans from all walks of life (e.g. older workers, active agers, caregivers, youths). We sought their views on what successful ageing means to them, and how we can better support seniors to empower them to lead fulfilling lives.

10. How has the practice been assessed and monitored? (provide data and indicators)

- a) As the Action Plan was recently launched and will be progressively rolled out over the next few years, we will monitor the take up of initiatives through outcome-based indicators.
- b) The list below provides a summary of some of the key indicators of initiatives that various agencies have implemented over the past few to better support seniors. The full report with the details of new initiatives will be released in 2016:
 - i. **Employability:** Singapore has one of the highest older worker employment rates among OECD countries. Our employment rate for residents aged 55 to 64 grew by 19.3% over the last decade to reach a record high of 66.3% in 2014.
 - ii. **Wellness:** National Wellness Programme was introduced in 2008 to encourage seniors to go for regular health screening for chronic diseases as well as to remain physically and socially active. This has been implemented island-wide and has since reached out to more than 450,000 seniors.

- iii. **Senior-Friendly Homes:** A programme to provide retrofit feature such as grab bars, slip-resistant treatment to existing bathroom tiles, and gentle ramps to make seniors' homes safer was introduced in 2012. The programme known as the Enhancement for Active Seniors (EASE) is highly subsidized to make it affordable to seniors living in public housing. Since its launch, there have been more than 70,000 seniors who have benefitted from this programme.

11. What lessons do you believe could be learnt from this practice? How could it be improved?

12. How could this practice be a model for other countries?

(Collective response for Qns 11-12)

Singapore has referenced the best practices in different countries to put this Action Plan together. However, we would like to advocate that more countries see **Ageing as an Opportunity**. Instead of viewing ageing as a matter of liability, we view ageing as an opportunity. This is especially so when seniors of today can expect to live and enjoy more years of healthy life. With the right enablers put in place, Singaporeans can look forward to fulfilling and meaningful lives even in their silver years.