

# Book details integrated approach to help poor families in rental flats

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Children yelling and running wild late into the night, shouts and screams as neighbouring family members quarrel, and even the crash of a TV set being thrown from a high-floor flat are not uncommon sights and sounds at two Bedok South housing blocks.

The flats in these blocks, which provide interim rental homes for low-income families, are the subject of a pilot project on taking an integrated approach in providing social services.

The lessons learnt by various agencies and volunteers were compiled in a book titled *How Working Together Matters: Adversity, Aspiration, Action*. The book was launched yesterday by Senior Minister of State Maliki Osman who, as

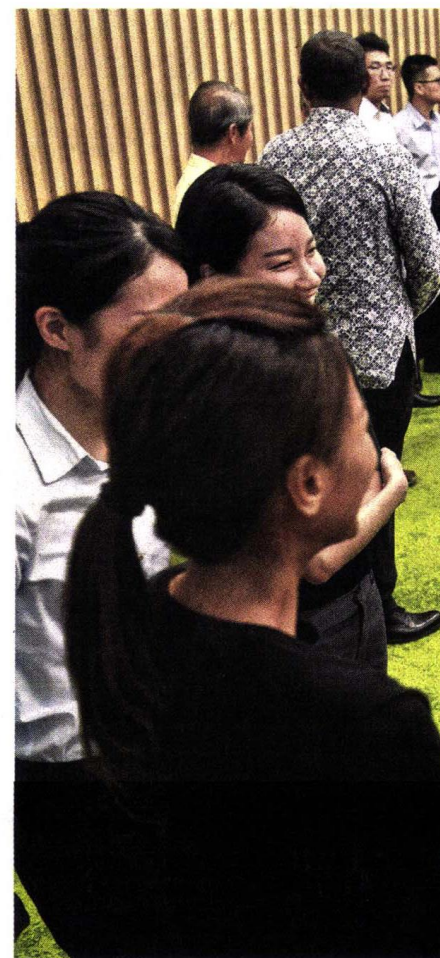
Mayor of South East Community Development Council, oversaw the ongoing effort called Project 4650, which was the name given to the two blocks.

Speaking at the launch, Dr Maliki said more than 1,100 families had lived at the two blocks since the project was started in 2012. Today, almost half had moved on to their own homes again, he added.

In July, the project made headlines as an example of how low-income residents of rental flats could get help more easily, as plans are afoot to bring social services closer to such neighbourhoods.

Deputy Prime Minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam, who was at the launch, said one lesson he gleaned from the book was that collective action and personal responsibility are not contradictions, but a compact.

"If we simply leave it to people to fend for themselves, or to develop



self-reliance on their own, it will be much less likely that we achieve what we want as a society," said the Coordinating Minister for Economic and Social Policies.

"It is everyone's responsibility to shape these norms, and help build this positive circle of aspiration and practical ambition," he added.

Mr Tharman also underlined the



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The book retails at \$36 excluding GST at all major bookstores. A digital version sells for \$14 excluding GST on publisher World Scientific's website.

Clockwise from centre:  
Deputy Prime  
Minister Tharman  
Shanmugaratnam,  
Singapore Management  
University psychology  
professor David Chan  
(editor of the book)  
and Senior Minister of  
State Maliki Osman  
speaking to social  
workers during the  
book launch.

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importance of easing the mental stress of being in financial difficulty, like simplifying access to support schemes. One example he gave was the Government's plan to integrate data from hospitals and social service offices to produce a single assessment of a person's needs.

He said he also agreed with the book's suggestion for each needy

family to have a dedicated social worker they can trust, "so they do not need to be talking, and repeating their stories, to many people".

Underlying these suggestions was the need to get people to focus on education, work and housing, which, Mr Tharman said, was a way to preserve that sense of personal responsibility.

"We must never lose that trust among people... where (people) know they have the support to help them bounce up when they run into difficulty, and they know that others deserve help because they, too, will put in the effort to help themselves," he added.

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