

# Connect <sup>2</sup> Collab

Dementia-Friendly Singapore e-Newsletter



## GOOD PRACTICES

### Persons living with dementia reconnect with the joy of exploring their neighbourhood

Taking public transport to run errands or visit loved ones can be challenging for persons living with dementia, as overwhelming schedules and routes may cause anxiety. Last year, the Agency for Integrated Care (AIC) connected Allkin Singapore and Go-Ahead Singapore (GAS), which were looking to give persons living with dementia the confidence to rediscover the joy of exploring their neighbourhood.

They conceptualised the Roving Bus Tour, a guided tour on a GAS bus of various landmarks around Punggol and Sengkang – areas served by Allkin and GAS – that engaged participants with sing-along sessions and an activity worksheet for cognitive stimulation. Let Jason Cruz of Allkin and Jessica Cheang of GAS tell you more.



**Jason Cruz**  
Programme Executive  
Mental Health Service  
Care & Integration Division,  
Allkin Singapore Ltd.



**Jessica Cheang**  
Manager, Marketing &  
Communications  
Go-Ahead Singapore (GAS)

#### What sparked this idea and collaboration?

**Jason:** AIC shared GAS' plans to support persons living with dementia and their caregivers on public transportation. Allkin's Post-Diagnostic Support (PDS) team immediately said yes to the innovative collaboration with the transport operator.

**Jessica:** Having worked with AIC on Dementia Go-To Points (GTPs) at our bus interchanges, we discussed more ways to impact commuters. The collaboration with Allkin enabled us to reach out to persons living with dementia and their caregivers to promote the use of public transport.

#### How did you go about planning the Roving Bus Tour experience?

**Jason:** We had two tour guides for English and Mandarin, and dementia-care trained volunteers to engage participants in conversations about the landmarks. Activities were planned around cognitive stimulation, social interaction and lifting moods, such as a worksheet exercise at Sengkang Riverside Park, which helped them recall the landmarks we visited, and a sing-along session on the way back. We also catered for participants' needs, such as frequent washroom breaks.

**Jessica:** We planned the route around functional landmarks such as Waterway Point, Masjid Al-Islah Mosque and Sengkang General Hospital. To make sure all the destinations were accessible and safe, we did a trial run with Allkin, our Bus Captains and our Customer Service Officers, who are all trained to assist persons living with dementia.



Participants disembarked from the Roving Bus Tour to complete an activity worksheet at Punggol Riverside Park.

#### How did persons living with dementia and their caregivers benefit from this event?

**Jason:** There was definitely cognitive stimulation as they reminisced about the landmarks. They had fun! So, they will remember with their hearts. Caregivers enjoyed a respite thanks to volunteers from Allkin's Active Ageing Centres (AAC) who facilitated meaningful conversations and supported participants.

**Jessica:** We introduced participants to Dementia GTPs at Punggol Interchange and gave them each a Helping Hand card to assist them on their trips, to reassure them and their caregivers that they could go about their public transport commutes in a safe and supportive manner. Hopefully it gives them the confidence to commute more.

#### Are there any similar initiatives in the pipeline?

**Jason:** Allkin and GAS are in discussions to continue our efforts, explore infrastructural adaptations at bus interchanges, enhance public psychoeducation and expand collaborations. Our goal is to create a truly supportive community attuned to the needs of persons living with dementia.

**Jessica:** We are looking to expand the Roving Bus Tour to cover historical sites like Chinatown, to help participants reminisce even more. Our bus interchange spaces could also host roadshows to leverage high foot traffic to drive public awareness.

#### What advice would you give to other partners looking to organise a similar activity? What is a good starting point they could consider?

**Jason:** Considering our ageing population, just do it. Start small and address the needs within your immediate neighbourhood with resources, programmes or infrastructure. Beyond the realm of public transport, there are many other ways of supporting persons living with dementia.

**Jessica:** Our proud collaboration with Allkin to improve journeys for persons living with dementia and their caregivers through this meaningful initiative shows that partners can consider tapping on their unique areas of expertise to create experiences that benefit everyone in the community.

**The Helping Hand Scheme provides commuters who require assistance with identifiers indicating their needs, such as 'May I have a seat please', 'Please alert me when I am approaching my stop' and 'This is a wheelchair'.**



Partners looking to support or collaborate with Allkin Singapore may contact Allkin Mental Health Service at [mentalhealthservice@allkin.org.sg](mailto:mentalhealthservice@allkin.org.sg).

Partners who wish to learn more about how to start similar initiatives with Go-Ahead Singapore may contact [media@go-aheadssingapore.com](mailto:media@go-aheadssingapore.com).



## CASE STUDY

The Cognitive Wellness Programme (CWP) brought attendees in the community together for weekly sessions at the HDB pavilion space.

### The Cognitive Wellness Programme brings dementia peer support to doorsteps

Sengkang residents with early dementia or cognitive impairment bonded in a 12-week evidence-based Cognitive Wellness Programme (CWP) conducted by the Community Outreach Team (CREST) SAGE Counselling Centre @ Anchorvale & Buangkok. The first-of-its-kind programme in the area ran as a pilot from February to April 2025, and brought dementia peer support closer to home.

The weekly Wednesday morning programme at a community Housing and Development Board (HDB) Pavilion space offered cognitive engagement activities for persons living with dementia. It focused on improving motor skills and executive functions through group-based exercises, nature walks, arts and crafts and reminiscence storytelling to promote cognitive, social, and physical well-being.

#### Right after each session, the countdown to Wednesday would begin

Not even the roar of an overhead aircraft could drown out the joyous laughter that filled the outdoor pavilion near Sengkang MRT Station. For persons living with dementia and their caregivers, the thoughtfully put together one-hour sessions were a weekly highlight.

A warm-up to focus participants' attention was followed by activities tailored to the group's feedback from previous sessions. This involvement strengthened their connection to the programme and built trust. "Our core principle of person-centred care was at the heart of CWP, ensuring the voices of persons living with dementia were heard and understood. That's the most important part," explained Leonard, Programme Lead and Facilitator of CWP.

When one participant brought up the idea of childhood toys, the team sprang into action to source for pictures and vintage items that participants recognised and allowed them to reminisce together. Preparing props each week was sometimes challenging but always worthwhile. "The items created the experience and helped with the interest in the session, participants' mood, and contributed to social dynamics which encouraged greater communication," shared Zhi Yew, Co-facilitator of CWP.

#### CWP as an extension of comfort zones

CWP created an inclusive community space that promotes dignity and empowers participants to learn, share and reminisce together. While the first sessions were expectedly quiet, the team's passion for building a safe space made an immediate impact.

Leonard recounted how Mr Wong, previously socially isolated, eagerly anticipated the weekly sessions. "He was so excited, he brought his old photo albums and shared stories about his past as a carpenter."



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Case Manager &  
Counsellor  
SAGE Counselling Centre



**Leonard Lee Jian Guo**  
Senior Social Work  
Associate  
SAGE Counselling Centre



**Tang Zhi Yew**  
Social Work Executive  
SAGE Counselling Centre

#### Growing a support network organically

Five weeks into the programme, the team discovered that friendships had formed naturally. Some participants began meeting for breakfast or chats at nearby coffee shops, demonstrating how the programme helped restore their sense of independence and community connection.

The programme's success was not accidental. The team had been preparing for the pilot since September 2024, training in evidence-based practices at Dementia Singapore (DSG) while coordinating with the local Town Council to secure the comfortable pavilion space.

CREST SAGE prioritised quality, limiting the group size to 10 participants to optimise attentiveness and group dynamics. They established ground rules, such as using gestures rather than verbal interruptions when someone else was speaking, to make sure everyone had equal opportunities to share.

#### A small team with big hearts is all that is needed

While a Facilitator led the sessions, a Co-facilitator supported equal participation. Angela, Case Manager and Counsellor of SAGE Counselling Centre, identified four stages in successful group dynamics: forming, conflicting, brainstorming and integrating. She recounted the importance of Leonard and Zhi Yew's roles in creating a safe space for participants that encouraged self-expression.

As participants hoped for CWP to continue on a long-term basis, CREST SAGE explored developing the programme further while balancing quality and member engagement. They emphasised the need for resources which ensured the continuity of care for persons living with dementia and their caregivers beyond the 12-week programme, such as one-to-one visits by case workers.

#### More partners make a bigger impact

Leonard reiterated the importance of a person-centred care approach when planning activities for persons living with dementia and their caregivers. He encouraged service providers to organise similar activities in community spaces for greater peace of mind and convenience.

Acknowledging how the support of partners such as Sengkang Town Council was integral to CWP's success, he urged like-minded partners to leverage one another's strengths and resources, such as those provided by DSG, to support those living with dementia and their caregivers.

Partners wishing to learn about CWP or start similar initiatives may contact **Leonard Lee** at **(O) 6422 6563 (DID) 6354 1191 (HP) 8957 5329**, or visit <https://www.aic.sg/care-services/cognitive-intervention-programme/> to explore similar programmes.



# GET PERSONAL

Through performances and panel discussions, over 200 participants experienced firsthand what it means to enjoy life with dementia.



Persons living with dementia were involved in panel discussions, and shared their perspectives on enjoying life with dementia.

## Dementia Symposium 2025: Broadening perspectives, emboldening voices

The Dementia Symposium: Fostering Connection in Dementia Care took place on 18 Jan 2025 at Tzu Chi Humanistic Youth Centre. It brought together over 200 persons living with dementia, care partners, and care professionals to celebrate life beyond a dementia diagnosis. Conceptualised by Dementia & Co and supported by the Agency for Integrated Care (AIC), the symposium displays the talents and perspectives of persons living with dementia and their care partners, and seeded conversations about empowering persons living with dementia.

We speak to Ms Alison Lim and Ms Jamie Lynn Buitelaar, the Co-founders of Dementia & Co to learn more about the inspiration behind this event.



**Alison Lim**  
Co-founder  
Dementia & Co



**Jamie Lynn Buitelaar**  
Co-founder  
Dementia & Co

### What sparked the idea for the Dementia Symposium?

**Alison:** I have been thinking about an event like this for a long time. When I was first diagnosed, I was shocked to realise many care professionals did not know my type of dementia, Primary Progressive Aphasia. Jamie and I saw a need for care professionals, persons living with dementia and care partners to learn from, hear from, and better understand one another outside a care setting and felt a symposium was the best way to bring everyone together for a three-way sharing.

I met with Yen Theng, Chief of AIC's Caregiving and Community Mental Health Division (CCMHD) and someone whom I regard as an advisor. I said, "Hey, Dementia & Co is planning to do a symposium" and Yen Theng immediately said, "Okay, why don't we do it together?"

### What did you want to achieve through the Dementia Symposium?

**Alison:** People misunderstand dementia. They think it is a memory issue, or that persons living with dementia are all wheelchair or bedbound. I wanted to debunk the idea that having dementia means you are in bad shape, and to showcase the joy we have. That is something hard for people to understand but I think it came through quite strongly at the symposium from the way the Dementia & Co community gave positive energy and supported one another. When we started our dancing and singing, the participants can feel the joy and energy and gave themselves the permission to join in.

Additionally, there are many with impactful stories within the Dementia & Co community and I wanted to create a platform for them. Back in the day, Serene, care partner to her husband Kim Han, was really soft spoken and I had to ask her to stand far from the wall to shout. It was wonderful to watch her as a

confident panellist and witness how she touched the audience through her love and care journey for Kim Han.

**Jamie:** Dementia is a heavy topic, and it is easy to be afraid to share. We wanted to encourage our members that they do not have to hide away or feel ashamed. We worked with our members to coach them and run through what they wished say to the attendees. It was rewarding for us that they got to be themselves on stage and I think their stories came out authentically and beautifully.

### The Dementia Symposium certainly felt like a party among friends. Can you share how the Dementia & Co community came to be?

**Alison:** Dementia & Co started because we could not find any peer-to-peer groups to join so we created our own. As more people joined, we found that many were in what I call "stage one", where I was at when I was first diagnosed. I was depressed and prepared to say goodbye. Eventually, I found myself and discovered different ways to find joy. I sought to share this with others and one way was through our Tea Dances.

While dancing and singing engage us cognitively, it is also about building confidence, trust, and allowing self-expression. When Dan first joined us, he was really shy. Over time, he opened up and even engaged others to dance. His wife and care partner Sally said that while this was unexpected, it became his form of relaxation. This is why we do what we do, to befriend, connect and create community for other persons living with dementia.

### What is an important key message from the symposium you would like to leave readers with?

**Alison:** To know that we can still enjoy life with dementia, have fun, develop newfound hobbies. Families actually grow stronger together.

**Jamie:** It was important for care professionals in the audience to see how persons living with dementia can still communicate. That was why we wanted them in the panel discussions. The message of listening to and following the lead of the person living with dementia is crucial.



**Founded by Alison and her daughter Jamie in 2016 after Alison's diagnosis of Primary Progressive Aphasia (PPA), a rare type of dementia, Dementia & Co provides persons living with dementia and their families with peer support and a safe space for interaction. The former hospitality executive's challenge became her calling to empower others, evolving intimate forums into a vibrant support network with regular social activities as well as public talks and partnerships with care agencies to raise awareness.**



Montage Video



Symposium Video

Go to [for.sg/dfsg-montagevideo](https://for.sg/dfsg-montagevideo) to watch the inspiring stories of persons living with dementia. If you were not at the symposium, check out [for.sg/dfsg-symposiumvideo](https://for.sg/dfsg-symposiumvideo) to watch the symposium's highlights. Connect with Dementia & Co at [dementianco@gmail.com](mailto:dementianco@gmail.com) or [linktr.ee/dementianco](https://linktr.ee/dementianco).



# HELPFUL RESOURCES

## CARA's Dementia Go-To Point (GTP) Locator: Reuniting families

Dementia Singapore's (DSG) CARA app now features a Dementia Go-To Point (GTP) Locator to reunite lost persons living with dementia with their loved ones seamlessly. With close to 800 dementia GTPs available in the community – including bus interchanges, MRT stations, supermarkets, malls, and community centres – this feature enables the public to bring lost persons with dementia to the nearest GTP, ensuring they can be safely reunited with their loved ones.

Be a part of the #DementiaFriendlySG network. Sign up to be a CARA member and download the CARA app today!



**Download CARA SG app now!**



You may also access this link for step-by-step instructions on how to search for the nearest Dementia GTP near you <https://for.sg/dementiagtp>

## Transition of DFSG social media platforms

With effect from 1 April 2025, the Dementia-Friendly Singapore Facebook Page and HeyGiffy Instagram account will transition to the Agency for Integrated Care's (AIC) official Facebook and Instagram.

We seek your support in sharing this update with your network of clients and caregivers to follow AIC and sign up as a CARA app member to ensure that they continue to receive useful dementia-related information.



@AICSingapore



@AIC\_Singapore

**Sign up to be a CARA member** <https://cara.sg>

## Stay in Touch

Be part of our caring community and keep up-to-date with the latest happenings.

**Join Us in the #DementiaFriendlySG Movement Today!**

Learn: [www.DementiaHub.SG](http://www.DementiaHub.SG)

Email: [enquiries@aic.sg](mailto:enquiries@aic.sg)

@AICSingapore

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Ask: **1800-650-6060 (AIC Hotline)**

Share your feedback with us at [for.sg/dfsg-feedback](http://for.sg/dfsg-feedback)



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