

Annex A: Recap of Key Moves to Transform the Early Childhood Sector

Since 2012, the Government has undertaken several key moves to give every child a good start in life and support families with young children. The key moves are summarised in the following table, with updates indicated in **bold**:

Quality	<p><i>Uplift Early Childhood Standards</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A new Early Childhood Development Centres Act took effect from Jan 2019, bringing childcare centres and kindergartens under the same regulatory framework to ensure more consistent and higher quality standards across the preschool sector.• The Singapore Preschool Accreditation Framework (SPARK) has been continuously enhanced to better provide quality assurance for preschools. For example, the Quality Rating Scale (QRS) for ages 0 to 6 was introduced in Jan 2020. This is an expansion from the initial QRS for ages 4 to 6. Today, around 50% of preschools are SPARK-certified. <p><i>Enhanced Early Childhood Resources</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• MOE has developed Nurturing Early Learners curriculum resources since 2012 to help early childhood educators create quality learning experiences for children aged 4 to 6; MOE Kindergartens were introduced in 2014 to catalyse quality improvements in the sector.• More Anchor Operator (AOP) preschools are offering Malay and Tamil Language education in preschools, with enhanced training and support for Mother Tongue Language teaching. <p><i>Strengthen Early Childhood Professional Growth and Development</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The National Institute of Early Childhood Development (NIEC) was set up to oversee training and professional development for the sector, and welcomed its first batch of teacher trainees in 2019.• A Skills Framework for the Early Childhood sector was introduced in 2016 to provide greater clarity on the career pathways and opportunities for early childhood professionals.• Training Awards, a Professional Conversion Programme for Preschool Teachers, Place-and-Train Programme for Educators
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	<p>and Professional Development Programmes have been rolled out to attract and develop early childhood educators.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECDA launched a National Campaign for the Early Childhood sector in 2018 to foster greater respect and recognition of the early childhood profession.
Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More full-day preschool places have been built, from 90,000 in 2012 to around 190,000 today. This will increase to over 200,000 by 2023. • Large standalone childcare centres have been developed in estates with demand for preschool. • AOPs are setting up Early Years Centres for tie-up with nearby MOE Kindergartens in estates with demand for preschool. • More affordable and customised Early Intervention (EI) programmes were introduced in 2019.
Affordability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional Subsidy for childcare services was introduced in 2013. The monthly household income ceiling was raised from \$7,500 to \$12,000 in 2020, along with an increase in the subsidy amount for each eligible tier. • Kindergarten Fee Assistance Scheme (KiFAS) was enhanced in 2015. This was enhanced again in 2020, with the monthly household income ceiling raised from \$6,000 to \$12,000, along with an increase in the subsidy amount. • With the enhancements to the Additional Subsidy and KiFAS in 2020, around 78,000 children now receive means-tested preschool subsidies, up from around 48,000 children in 2019. • Subsidy support under the Special Approval Framework was enhanced in Apr 2019 for non-working mothers looking for a job or who are full-time caregivers to their younger children. • From Aug 2020, families under HDB's Public Rental Scheme and MSF's ComCare schemes are automatically eligible for maximum preschool subsidies, regardless of the mother's working status. Lower-income families pay \$3 per month for full-day childcare

Affordability

and \$1 per month for half-day kindergarten at Anchor Operator preschools.

- The Child Development Account (CDA), which can be used to pay for preschool expenses, was enhanced in 2016 with the introduction of the CDA First Step, which does not require parents' co-savings.
- The AOP scheme started in 2009 to increase access to affordable quality early childhood services. AOPs are subject to monthly fee caps for preschool services, required to invest in improving quality for all centres through SPARK certification and in headquarter capabilities, and must support continuing professional development and career progression opportunities for early childhood educators.
- The Partner Operator (POP) scheme started in 2016, resulting in a fall in median childcare fees in the sector, which have stabilised at that level since then. **The POP scheme was expanded in Jan 2021** through the appointment of more operators and further lowering of fee caps.
- The Government will continue to enhance the accessibility of affordable, quality preschools. By around 2025, 80% of preschoolers will have a place in government-supported preschools, up from **almost 60 percent today**.
- As the capacity of government-supported preschools grows over the medium term, fee caps at government-supported preschools will be lowered so that working families with a child in full-day childcare will pay around the equivalent of primary school fees plus after-school student care fees, which currently total around \$300 per month, before means-tested preschool subsidies.
- KidSTART was piloted in 2016 to provide upstream, holistic support to children aged 0 to 6 from low-income families, and will expand further to benefit 5,000 more children by around 2023.
- Early Intervention (EI) subsidies were enhanced in 2019 and income criteria were broadened, to allow more families to qualify for means-tested subsidies and make EI services more affordable for families of children with developmental needs. After subsidies, fees for Singapore Citizen children range from \$5 to \$430 per month.

**Annex B: Certificate in
Preschool Mother Tongue Language Teaching (CPMTL)**

Existing Professional Qualifications for Preschool Chinese Language teaching

1. Currently, post-secondary students who aspire to be Chinese Language teachers in preschools can enrol in the Diploma in Chinese Studies, with a specialisation in early childhood teaching, offered by NIEC. Mid-career jobseekers who are proficient in the Chinese Language can consider undergoing a 9- to 18-month Professional Conversion Programme (PCP) in Early Childhood Chinese Language teaching, available in both NIEC and KLC International Institute. Graduates of these training programmes will be certified as L2 Chinese Language teachers and be allowed to teach the Chinese Language to children aged 18 months to 6 years old.

2. In-service educators who have completed the Diploma in Early Childhood Care and Education in English and have met the required standards in Chinese Language can also be directly deployed to teach the Chinese Language if deemed suitable by the organisation. However, as these in-service educators do not have specific training in Chinese Language teaching compared to those who have graduated from the aforementioned specialised Chinese Language programmes, they may not feel confident or fully equipped to teach the language. The new CPMTL for Chinese Language teaching therefore caters to in-service educators who wish to enhance their Chinese Language skills and be better equipped with pedagogies to help children enjoy learning the language.

Certificate in Preschool Mother Tongue Language Teaching – Chinese Language

3. The CPMTL-Chinese will be launched by NIEC later this year. Singapore Citizens and Permanent Residents who take up the CPMTL will be eligible for MOE subsidies, which will cover a substantial portion of training fees.

4. Through the CPMTL-Chinese, educators will be taught Chinese Language skills and knowledge of the local Chinese culture and heritage, and be equipped with pedagogies to help children enjoy learning the language. Educators will learn how to use local folklore, and the arts and heritage to help children connect with the language, and how to make the language come alive through dramatisation using children's literature.

5. The CPMTL is not compulsory. Educators without a Diploma in Chinese Language teaching who have an interest or have been deployed to teach the Chinese Language for young children are encouraged to sign up for the certificate. The CPMTL-Chinese will deepen educators' understanding of the local Chinese culture and heritage, and Chinese Language teaching pedagogy, and support our collective efforts to provide early exposure to and foster a love for MTL in our children during their preschool years.

Annex C: Background Information on KidSTART

Overview

1. KidSTART provides upstream support for children up to 6 years old from low-income families. It guides parents on child development, coordinates holistic services for families where needed, and monitors the developmental progress of children from birth onwards. KidSTART was first piloted in Jul 2016, and has benefitted over 1,000 children from low-income families living in the pilot regions of Kreta Ayer, Bukit Merah, Taman Jurong, Boon Lay and Geylang Serai.

2. We began scaling up KidSTART in 2020 by expanding to Woodlands and Bedok. In Oct 2020, we had also announced plans to expand to Ang Mo Kio, Sembawang and Yishun in 2021. We will now expand further to Choa Chu Kang, Bukit Panjang and Bukit Batok to benefit more families and children. To support the scale-up, ECDA has set up a dedicated KidSTART Singapore office which will partner an anchor Social Service Agency (SSA) in each region to support coordinated outreach to families and implementation of KidSTART programmes.

3. KidSTART has 3 programme components:

The infographic is divided into three vertical panels, each with an icon and a list of bullet points. At the bottom, there is a horizontal illustration of a family sitting on a sofa, a group of children playing, and a teacher at a chalkboard. A green banner at the very bottom contains the text 'Journeying with KidSTART families through multi-disciplinary support'.

- From Antenatal Stage - 3 Years Old KidSTART Home Visitation Programme (HVP)**
 - Regular home visits every 2-4 weeks; possible antenatal visits by nurses
 - Guide parents on child growth, development, health and nutrition
 - Regular screening of child growth and maternal well-being to detect and address issues early
 - Partnership with hospitals to jointly deliver the KidSTART Home Visitation Programme
- 1 - 3 Years Old KidSTART Groups**
 - Weekly supported playgroups for parents and their toddlers in the community
 - Guide parents to build up skills in child development and parent-child bonding through the use of evidence-based curricula
 - Appropriate preschool programme placements and home visits are conducted for families who need additional support
 - Increase community connectedness for families
- 2 Months - 6 Years Old Enhanced Support to Preschools**
 - In selected preschools with more children from low-income households, additional resources are provided to support parents
 - Engage parents on child growth, development, parenting, health and nutrition
 - Monitor and tackle obstacles to child's attendance and school readiness
 - Referrals to additional support programmes are given to ensure a child's developmental needs are addressed

Journeying with KidSTART families through multi-disciplinary support

Growing Together with KidSTART

4. Even as the Government continues to enhance upstream support for low-income families, the community plays an important role in supporting those in need. The **Growing Together with KidSTART** initiative aims to deepen partnerships between the community and the Government by providing a more systematic way for corporates, community groups and individuals to foster deeper and sustained giving relationships with KidSTART children and families. These groups may also choose to partner a specific local KidSTART community through regular volunteering and/or contributions.

5. Since the initiative was launched in 2019, interested corporates and individuals have stepped forward to contribute **\$1.85 million** in donations and more than **\$343,000** worth of in-kind sponsorship of items including connectivity devices, books and toys. Monetary donations will go towards providing families with essential items such as milk and diapers, transport for children to attend preschool or KidSTART programmes, learning resources and Child Development Account (CDA) top-ups.

6. Some of these corporate partners have also provided additional support to KidSTART families amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. For instance,

a. Prudential Singapore, EtonHouse Community Fund and Singtel sponsored digital devices, mobile routers and SIM cards to KidSTART families to help them stay connected with KidSTART practitioners during the Circuit Breaker. Such efforts helped ensure service continuity and enabled families who lacked digital access to ease into the new normal.

b. In late 2020, ECDA collaborated with Prudential Singapore to launch the Healthy with KidSTART programme. About 800 KidSTART families received healthy food packs and resources on early childhood nutrition to support them in ensuring that health and nutrition remain a priority for their children.

c. While face-to-face volunteering efforts were suspended due to COVID-19, volunteers from Prudential Singapore delivered the financial awareness programme (“Cha-Ching”) online for older siblings in KidSTART families to learn more about saving. Volunteers also supported families in their health journey by connecting them to Pulse Communities, an online portal by Prudential Singapore, which provides information on health and nutrition, videos of simple recipes and tips on buying nutritious food for children.

d. The Association for Early Childhood Educators (Singapore) (AECES) raised over \$40,000 which was distributed as grocery vouchers to help 500 KidSTART families alleviate living expenses.

e. Under Shopee’s #ShopeeGivesBack 11.11 Campaign, Shopee garnered the community’s involvement through a dollar-for-dollar matching for every donation made via Shopee. Shopee raised over \$7,000 through its campaign and sponsored more than \$6,000 worth of toys and dental items.

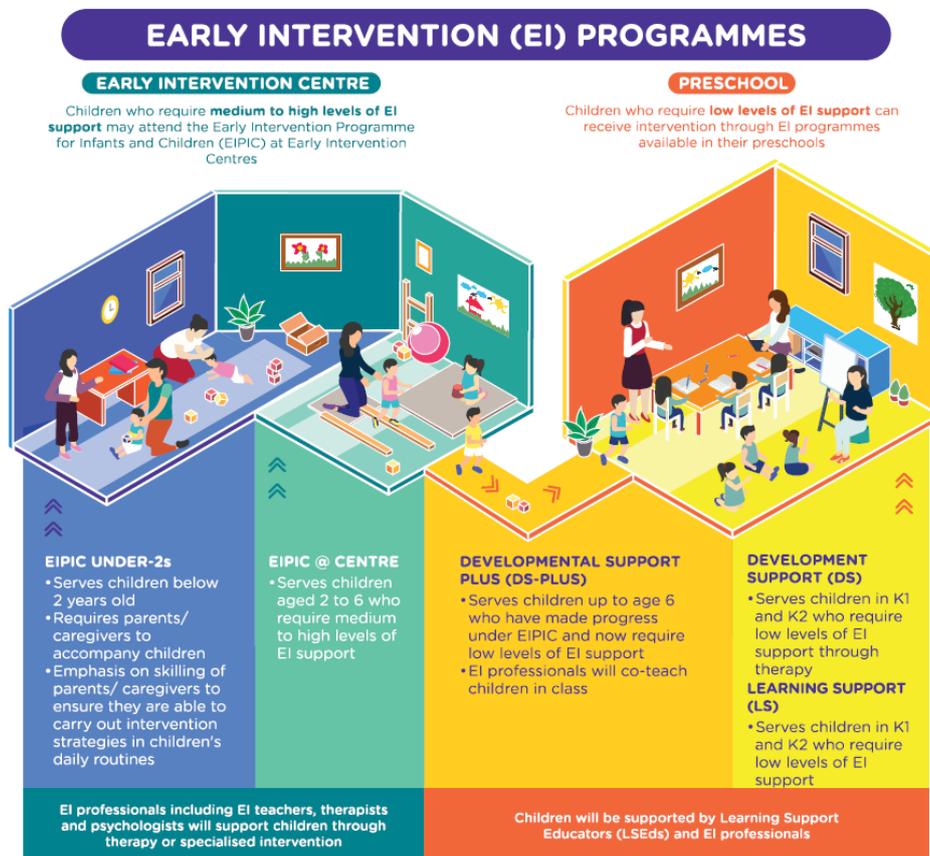
7. As KidSTART expands, we have also formed new partnerships with corporates such as SP Group and The LEGO Group. Building on initial efforts, SP Group aims to contribute more to KidSTART through staff volunteerism and funding, with a strong focus on children’s learning and development. The LEGO Group has been supporting KidSTART through their Build to Give campaign. It provided 395 LEGO sets to KidSTART children and conducted a Learning Through Play workshop for KidSTART practitioners, to enable them to engage families on the importance of learning through play and use LEGO bricks to illustrate how such learning can be done at home. Our partnership with The LEGO Group continues to grow. This year, we are exploring making LEGO Duplo sets accessible to all KidSTART children.

8. Since the inception of KidSTART in 2016, more than 350 individuals have volunteered with KidSTART. This includes corporate volunteers, tertiary students, working professionals and even parents who have graduated from KidSTART. Interested corporations and individuals can approach ComChest to donate to KidSTART or apply to be a volunteer via www.kidstart.sg.

Annex D: Early Intervention

1. Children with developmental needs can have a range of developmental conditions ranging from physical conditions (e.g. muscular dystrophy), sensory conditions (e.g. vision or hearing loss) and neurodevelopmental conditions (e.g. autism spectrum disorder and intellectual disability), to learning needs without accompanying disabilities (e.g. mild language developmental delays).

2. Children with developmental needs under the age of 7 can receive intervention through various Government-funded EI programmes (see diagram below). Those who require low levels of Early Intervention (EI) support are supported by the Development Support – Learning Support (DS-LS) and Development Support Plus (DS-Plus) programmes, in a preschool setting. Children who require medium to high levels of EI support are supported through the Early Intervention Programme for Infants and Children (EIPIIC), provided at EI centres.



3. Building on these efforts, MSF set up an Inclusive Preschool Workgroup (IPWG) in early 2019 to study and develop recommendations on how to better support children with developmental needs within preschools. The workgroup is currently co-chaired by Minister of State (Social and Family Development, and Education) Sun Xueling and Associate Dean (Education Research) Dr Kenneth Poon from the National Institute of Education (NIE), and involves representatives from the people, private and public sectors.

4. The workgroup's full report will be released in Apr 2021.

Annex E: Early Childhood Industry Digital Plan

Need for Digitalisation in Early Childhood Industry

1. As demand for quality early childhood (EC) services rises, digital technology can play an important role in enabling preschool operators to enhance their productivity, automate operations and manage business costs, improving not only service delivery, but also their value proposition to EC professionals.

Early Childhood Industry Digital Plan (IDP)

2. The EC Industry Digital Plan (IDP) is a sector-wide initiative that will help to guide all preschools in their digitalisation journey. The EC IDP is part of the EC Industry Transformation Map and supported by the SMEs Go Digital programme. The three-stage IDP charts out digital solutions that all preschools in the EC sector can adopt at each stage of their growth.



3. With the introduction of the EC IDP, preschool operators can look forward to support in the following ways:

a. Pre-approved solutions. To make it easy for operators to adopt digital solutions recommended in the EC IDP, IMDA and ECDA will progressively curate more pre-approved solutions that have been assessed to be market-proven, cost-effective and supported by reliable vendors. More pre-approved solutions will be offered, beyond the current SMART Solutions initiative. Preschool operators will benefit from the convenience of quickly adopting these pre-approved solutions, and save on the time and effort taken to search for solutions.

b. Funding support. To encourage preschool operators to start adopting the EC IDP, ECDA will be introducing a new sectoral funding scheme that preschool operators may apply for to defray some of the cost of adopting pre-approved digital solutions recommended in the IDP. Details on the funding scheme will be provided later this year.

4. For more details on the EC IDP, preschool operators can visit go.gov.sg/ecidp.

5. Apart from the EC IDP and the new sectoral funding scheme to be introduced in the second half of 2021 by ECDA, preschool operators can also tap on consultancy services from IMDA for business diagnosis and advisory on digital solutions relevant to their operations.