



Despite Considerable Progress in the Early Intervention Sector, Professionals Call for More Support to Build Capabilities

Only 11 percent of Early Intervention professionals polled think Singapore is an inclusive society.

24 April 2018

1. An overwhelming 92 per cent of respondents, polled in a survey of professionals who work with young children diagnosed with developmental or special needs, feel that the sector has made considerable strides over the past decade -- particularly with better awareness and the availability of more centres to cater to such children. However, high burnout, unattractive pay and benefits, and a shortage of manpower were flagged as key challenges for the sector to navigate as it grows further in the years to come.
2. The Early Intervention (EI) sector provides developmental, therapy and educational support services for infants and young children aged 0 to 6 years old. It equips them with the necessary skills to maximise their developmental potential, overcome their condition or prevent further deterioration, where possible.
3. *“Turning Challenges to Opportunities: A Study on Early Intervention Professionals and their Attitudes on Inclusion”* was commissioned by Lien Foundation to support the inaugural Early Intervention Conference, a ground-up initiative jointly organised by 10 EI service providers to share practices and raise greater awareness of the importance of early intervention.
4. Miss Jean Loo, Co-Lead of Early Childhood Development at Lien Foundation said: “Early Intervention professionals play a crucial role in shaping childhood experienced by children with special needs. The study aims to shed light on ways to better support the aspirations of such professionals as Singapore ramps up efforts towards a more inclusive society. ”

5. Believed to be the first survey of its kind to be made public, it polled 423 sector professionals and also conducted in-depth qualitative interviews with 14 sector leaders. There are no official figures, but sector leaders estimate that there are 1,000 EI professionals in Singapore. Respondents include staff like teachers, therapists and social workers from government-funded EIPIC centres, hospitals and private early intervention outfits.
6. Nearly three in four professionals believe there has been increased public awareness about children with special needs, while two-thirds perceive growth and capacity of EI centres to meet demand for early intervention as an achievement. Four in 10 professionals also observed receptiveness among parents on the benefits of such services.
7. According to EI leaders, this is largely due to the formal setup of the EIPIC (Early Intervention Programme for Infant and Children) in 2003 by the Ministry of Family and Social Development. Initiatives by various social service stakeholders like the Enabling Masterplan, a national roadmap to better support persons with disabilities, The Purple Parade, a movement that supports the inclusion of persons with disabilities and ECHO Framework, an early intervention service framework that helps a child attain functional outcomes, have also helped to create more public awareness about early intervention for children with special needs.
8. Demand for early intervention is poised to grow as the number of children diagnosed with special needs rises due to greater awareness and testing. There were 4,000¹ children diagnosed with developmental issues in 2015, a 60 per cent jump from the 2,500 children in 2010, according to KK Women's and Children's Hospital and the National University Hospital, which diagnose such disorders in children. The average waiting time for a child to enrol in an EIPIC centre today is less than five months, a reduction from the six-month waiting time in 2016. The number of EIPIC centres has doubled from 11 in 2010 to 21² today, run by 10 VWOs, serving an estimated 3,200³ infants and young children.

¹ <http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/more-children-diagnosed-with-developmental-problems>

² <http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/2600-kids-helped-through-early-intervention-scheme-last-year>

³ <https://www.msf.gov.sg/media-room/Pages/Clarifications-on-EIPIC.aspx>

9. The study was conducted by Blackbox Research agency through a two-part exercise from February to April 2018. It involved qualitative in-depth interviews with early intervention organisational leaders and a quantitative survey that polled professionals on their motivations, key challenges in the sector, the government's role and societal attitudes on inclusion. The survey also sought suggestions from leaders and professionals on how to overcome these challenges.
10. Close to eight in 10 professionals joined the early intervention profession to make a difference in the lives of children with special needs and believe their work is making an impact. Two in three of them are satisfied with their work situation and have a clear understanding of their organisation's mission and clarity on their roles as professionals. Three in four professionals plan to stay in the sector for at least the next three years.

Challenges in Human Resource, Cross Centre Issues and Government Policies

11. A key part on the survey dwelt on challenges facing professionals in their work. Quick burnout (51%), unattractive salary and benefits (44%) and manpower shortage in the sector due to growing demands for early intervention (34%) came out as the top three challenges. These concerns were especially pronounced in those who were working in the sector for less than two years, as compared to those working in the sector for more than five years.

*"The staff burn out quickly as caseloads are high and paper work is a lot.
The private sector pays better and can hire more manpower "*
– EI Leader

*"Educators do not feel valued as their efforts are not repaid with sufficient
remuneration."*
– EI Professional Survey Respondent

12. To address the mental and physical stress that lead to burnout in their jobs, survey respondents proposed:

- Assistive measures like teacher aides, digitisation of workflow to cut down paperwork and a smaller teacher-student ratio for children with more severe needs.
- Mentorship programmes and ongoing training for junior staff to develop professionally.
- More efforts to raise awareness about the merits of working in the sector and the provision of more attractive scholarships to attract talents.

13. Said Mr J R Karthikeyan, Senior Director, AWWA, Disability and Inclusion: “It is not surprising that the findings of the survey highlighted issues associated with human resource. With contributions by the government, hospitals, social service organisations and foundations, the early intervention sector has seen significant progress over the course of the last few years. However, this rapid and dynamic growth has put a strain on recruitment and training of the professionals in the sector. With over half of the professionals being fairly new to the sector, it is inevitable that they may not see the impact of their work immediately. We have to be patient for the sector to mature and at the same time, focus on training and development to further improve, innovate and stay relevant.”

14. Said Mrs June Tham-Toh Syn Yuen, Co-Chair of the Early Intervention Conference 2018 and former Executive Director of Rainbow Centre Singapore: “We can’t change the nature of the job, but we can give more resources and necessary training to support their passion.” She added that a pressing issue faced by EIPIC service providers is a sustainable supply of trained and experienced candidates to join the sector. “Without competent and motivated professionals in service, the learning outcomes of children will be adversely impacted.”

15. The survey also highlighted weak integration between various EI service providers (21%) as a concern among professionals. Another concern was insufficient government funding to go beyond basic service delivery (27%).

“No uniformity in terms of beliefs, values, practices, training, level of experience and how they use resources and services provided across the different EIPIC centers.”

– EI Professional Survey Respondent

“When we look for funding for therapists, we don’t know the real demand and supply. Data is missing to convince the funders of our needs.”
– EI Leader

16. Ideas they had to uplift standards of early intervention service standards across organisations included incentivising collaboration, developing standard practice guidelines in working with children and creating a shared pool of community resources.

Call for One Central Authority

17. Three in four (75%) EI professionals saw the need for one central authority to govern and support the sector to enhance collaboration and facilitate the transition for children from EI centres to mainstream schools.

18. Of all the professionals surveyed, 57 per cent of them are of the view that the Ministry of Education (MOE) should take up this role to ensure “better allocation of resources and fairer chances” for children with special needs, while 19 per cent believe that the Ministry of Family and Social Development (MSF) should continue to oversee the sector as early intervention is “more than just education” and should be about building the family’s ability to adopt quality of life with a child with special needs. Another 21 per cent of EI professionals support a collaborative approach between both MOE and MSF as this would help raise the education quality for children with special needs while addressing their social needs.

19. In separate interviews with 14 EI leaders, most felt that MSF needed stronger integration of services and stakeholder engagement to have more impact. They believed there should be a similar agency like the Early Childhood Development Authority (ECDA), which serves as the regulatory and developmental authority for the early childhood sector in Singapore, to oversee the EIPIC sector. ECDA manages key aspects of children’s development below the age of seven, across both kindergartens and child care centres. Some leaders also felt MOE had a stronger foundation and capacity to run EIPIC.

*“Currently agencies compartmentalise the child (medical, financial).
We need to look at the child and family holistically,
we need the agencies to talk to each other.”
– EI Leader*

*“There is minimal control of the standards and quality of services.
VWOs pursue their own agenda instead of adhering to a common one.”
– EI Professional Survey Respondent*

20. As the Government’s plans to centralise early childhood training for preschool educators roll out with the setup of the National Institute for Early Childhood (NIEC) in 2019, Mrs Tham-Toh hopes that early intervention professionals will not be left out of the picture and have access to relevant professional development programmes.

21. She said: “Preschool educators should receive necessary training to work with children with developmental needs, so as to identify children at risk for early diagnosis and intervention. There is a need to foster and synergise partnerships within and across education, health and social services so that the children and their families receive holistic support and improve their quality of life.”

Only 1 in 10 Early Intervention Professionals think Singapore is Inclusive.

22. The survey also assessed early intervention professionals’ attitudes towards inclusion. Only 11% of those polled think Singapore is an inclusive society. This is significantly lower than the parents of children with special needs (28%) and the general public (30%), who were polled earlier in the Lien Foundation’s 2016 Inclusive Attitudes Survey. According to Ms Arunima Bhardwaj, Associate Research Director at Blackbox Research, this could be due to higher expectations early intervention professionals have of Singapore society, given their constant exposure to children with special needs. These professionals are likely to have a clearer understanding of inclusion, which is different from physically integrating children into common spaces.

23. To these professionals, inclusion is about accepting children with special needs for who they are and giving them equal opportunities to learn, develop their full potential and live meaningfully.

“ Singaporean community is not open and has this mindset that being special is different in a negative light”.

“There is no acceptance, there is merely tolerance at best.”

– EI Professional Survey Respondents

24. Eight in 10 of them think inclusive education plays a critical role in creating an inclusive society. This means all children with and without special needs are welcome and well-supported to learn and participate in a non-segregated environment, with the aim of achieving their full potential.

25. 71 per cent are also of the view that both sets of children gain equally from inclusive education, while 22 per cent believe that typically-developing children stand to gain more from attending school with peers with special needs. Only six per cent of them feel children with special needs would benefit more.

26. But there are many barriers to inclusive education in Singapore. The top three barriers identified by EI professionals include a lack of resources for mainstream school teachers to attend to children with special needs (66%), an education system that places high emphasis on standardised assessments like the Primary School Leaving Examination (58%) and insufficiently trained mainstream teachers (58%).

27. Mr Karthikeyan, who oversees Kindle Garden, Singapore’s first inclusive preschool which Lien Foundation conceived with AWWA, said: “Early childhood teachers in mainstream preschools can be trained to work with children with special needs as a stepping stone to creating inclusive education. For Singapore to inch closer to being an inclusive society, we need to shift mindsets to accept and celebrate diverse abilities. Having able-bodied and persons with special needs in an institution does not mean it is inclusive. More importantly, we need to adopt a culture of inclusion, which entails embedding inclusive values such as having one’s identity affirmed, accepted and valued for oneself.”

28. Miss Loo added: “What we should aspire towards nationally are more inclusive preschools, where children can grow up with typically-developing peers and still receive early intervention within the preschool setting. Early childhood is the best time to cultivate inclusion and shape the attitudes of typically-developing children, who are more open to accept and befriend peers different from them. This would be impossible to achieve without early intervention professionals, whose work empower children with special needs to access their environments and form connections with community.”

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ANNEX A: Survey Findings

ANNEX B: Factsheet

The annexes can be downloaded at <https://tinyurl.com/LFsurveyonEI>

MEDIA CONTACTS

Joanne Sng-Lee
Qeren Communications
joanne@qeren.biz
+65 9002 7696

Genevieve Kuek
Qeren Communications
gen@qeren.biz
+65 9763 3110

ABOUT LIEN FOUNDATION

www.lienfoundation.org | <https://www.facebook.com/JourneywithGeorge/>

The Lien Foundation is a Singapore philanthropic house noted for its model of radical philanthropy. It breaks new ground by investing in innovative solutions, convening strategic partnerships and catalysing action on social and environmental challenges. The Foundation seeks to foster exemplary early childhood education, excellence in eldercare and effective environmental sustainability in water and sanitation.

In the area of early childhood development, the Foundation aims to open up opportunities for children from low-income families and those with special needs. In its push for inclusivity in education, the Foundation set up Singapore’s first inclusive preschool, *Kindle Garden*, with AWWA. It spearheads *Circle of Care*, a child-centric model of care where teachers, social workers and therapists look after preschoolers from less privileged families in an integrated care approach to mitigate the impact of poverty on their potential.

To advocate greater access to quality early childhood education, the Foundation commissioned a study, *Vital Voices for Vital Years*, that examined leaders’ views on improving Singapore’s preschool sector and *Starting Well*, a global benchmark study by the Economist that ranked 45 countries on their provision of preschool education. In 2009, it developed a community-based model of care, *Mission I’mPossible*, where specialists go into mainstream preschools to help children with learning difficulties. Its success has since inspired a scaled-up version nationwide.

Turning Challenges to Opportunities

A Study on Early Intervention Professionals and their Attitudes on Inclusion

24 Apr 2018

Study Background

Commissioned by Lien Foundation to support the inaugural Early Intervention (EI) Conference 2018, a ground-up initiative jointly organised by ten EI service providers to share practices and raise greater awareness of the importance of early intervention.

The study aims to shed light on ways to better support the aspirations of such professionals as Singapore ramps up efforts towards a more inclusive society, and is believed to be the first survey of its kind to be made public.



Understanding Early Intervention

01



Early Intervention Programme for Infants & Children (EIPIC)



Introduced in 2003 to provide developmental and therapy services for children with moderate to severe disabilities

02



Aimed at maximising their developmental potential and minimising the risk of secondary disabilities developing



21⁽¹⁾ EIPIC Centers, run by
10 Voluntary welfare organisations (VWOs)



3,200⁽¹⁾
places for children in EIPIC centres in 2018



Less than 5 months⁽²⁾ is the average waiting time for enrolment in EIPIC centres in 2018, a reduction from 6 months in 2016

Source:

(1) <https://www.msf.gov.sg/media-room/Pages/Clarifications-on-EIPIC.aspx>

(2) As reported by the sector insiders

Methodology: Mix of Qualitative and Quantitative Research

PHASE 1: QUALITATIVE



EI LEADERS (N=14 In-depth Interviews)

Objective:

- To gather feedback from the EI leaders, uncovering their perspectives on the sector's development and key issues it is facing

Who we spoke to:

- Leaders of EI organisations, including school principals, policy makers, and directors in social service associations

PHASE 2: QUANTITATIVE



EI PROFESSIONALS (N=423 Online Surveys*)

Objective:

- To validate the qualitative findings with a larger pool of respondents, examining the issues from the grassroots' point of views, and deep-diving into specific areas of interest

Who we spoke to:

- Professionals currently working in EI sector including private and public EI centers and other supporting organisations

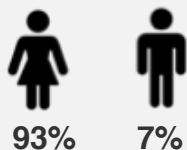
**Margin of error: 3-4% at 95% confidence level*

Profile of the EI professionals we surveyed

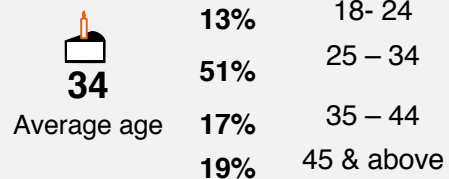


Demographics

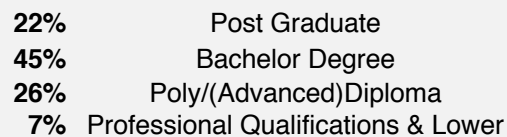
Female Skewed



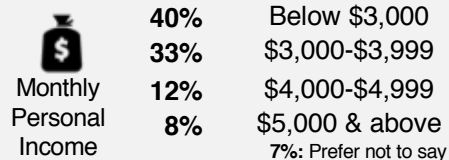
Relatively Young



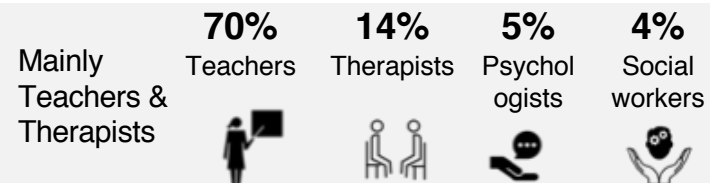
Well-Educated



Moderate Income

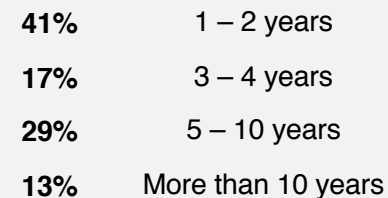


Experience in EI Sector



7% Include other occupations such as doctors, nurses, admin staff, etc.

Good Mix of Newcomers & Experienced Professionals



Top 3 Special Needs Covered

Work in Various Areas



The EI sector has made considerable progress in the last decade



92%

EI professionals acknowledge that the sector has progressed in the last 5-10 years



EI leaders share similar sentiments:

- Formalised setup of EIPIC in 2003 has brought about structured growth, more effective channelling of resources and positive attitudes towards early intervention
- Stronger branding of the sector and various initiatives such as the Enabling Masterplan, Purple Parade and ECHO Framework have probably given EI the needed traction
- However, some leaders do feel that the sector has yet to achieve its full potential

Generally there's a **heightened awareness**, people are **kinder**

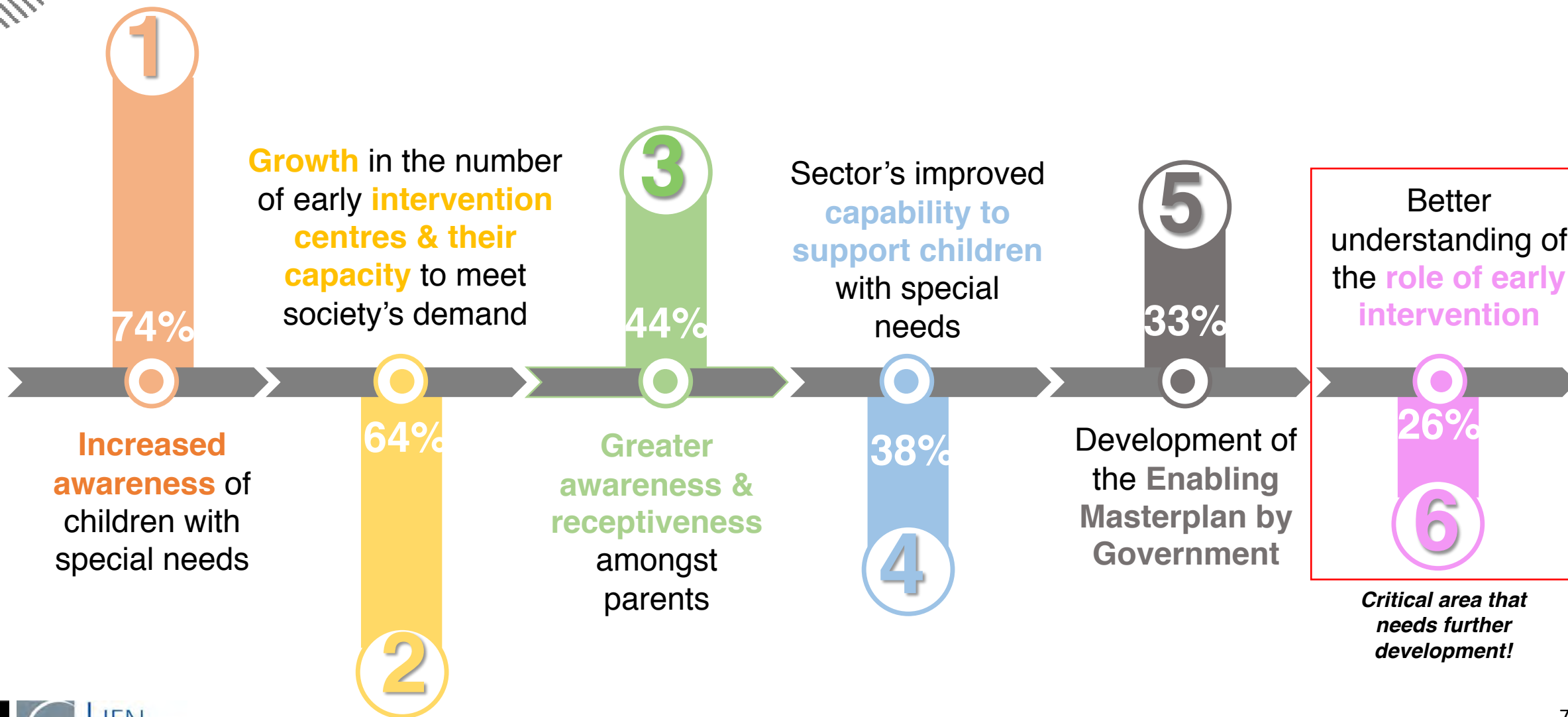
PM Lee's speech 'Let's make Singapore an inclusive society' was a **turning point**.

There seems to be **more attention** paid to the **accomplishments of special education schools**

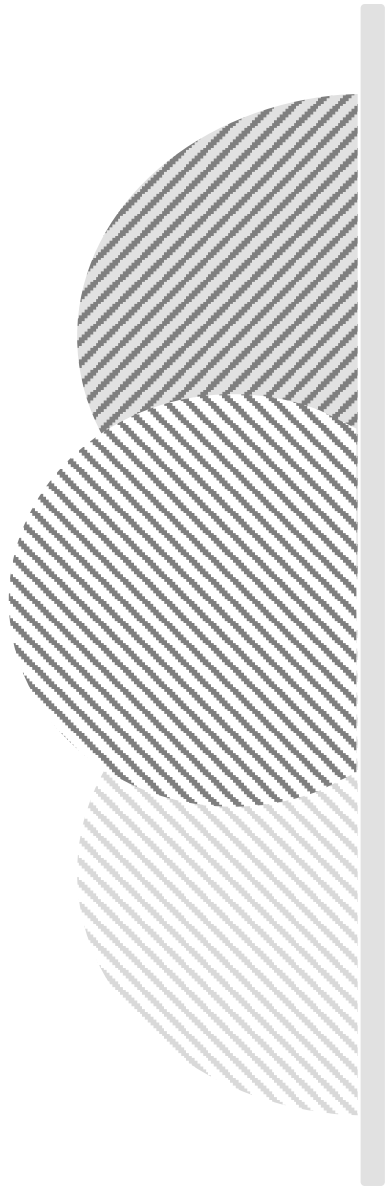
We're **not at the steady stage yet**. I think we're still trying to find a **sustainable service model...**



Increased awareness and growth in sector's capacity perceived as key achievements by EI professionals



Critical area that needs further development!



1. What Motivates Early Intervention Professionals?
2. Deep-diving Into Key Challenges Faced By EI Sector
3. Reviewing the Government's Role
4. Moving Towards An Inclusive Society

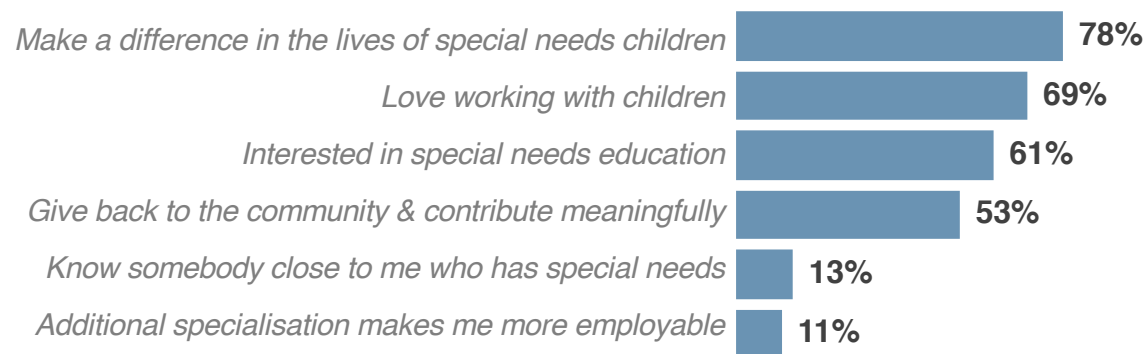
1. What Motivates Early Intervention Professionals?



What motivated you to join the Early Intervention Sector?



“Make a difference in the lives of children with special needs”



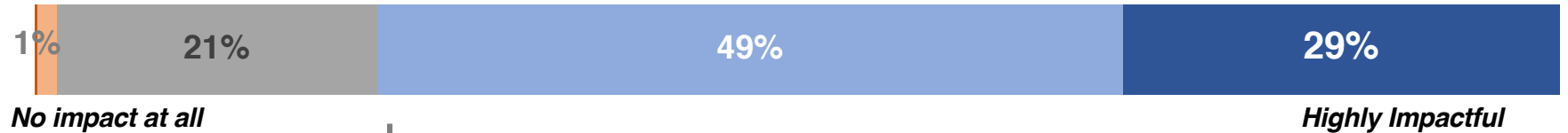
8 in 10




How impactful is your work?



“My work is making an impact on the lives of children with special needs”



Neutral Impact 
21%

- Concerned that EI was only conducted for a few hours per week & not extended beyond the schools' boundaries.
- Work could also have been more impactful given proper outcome measurements and feedback.





How satisfied are you with your work situation?



All Professionals

 **63%**

are **satisfied** with their current work situation

70% *Average satisfaction in Singapore's service sector**

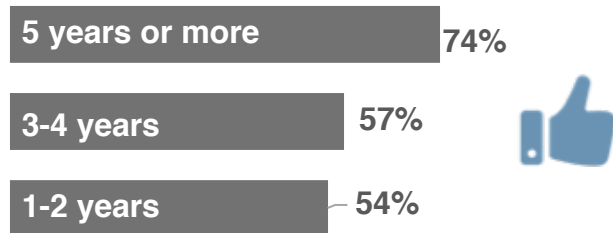


76%

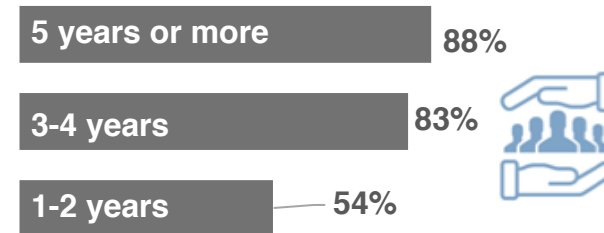
plan to stay in EI sector for 3 years or more

By working experience

Satisfaction is significantly higher amongst the more experienced professionals



Likewise, the experienced professionals are more likely to stay in the sector





2. Deep-diving Into Key Challenges Faced By EI Sector

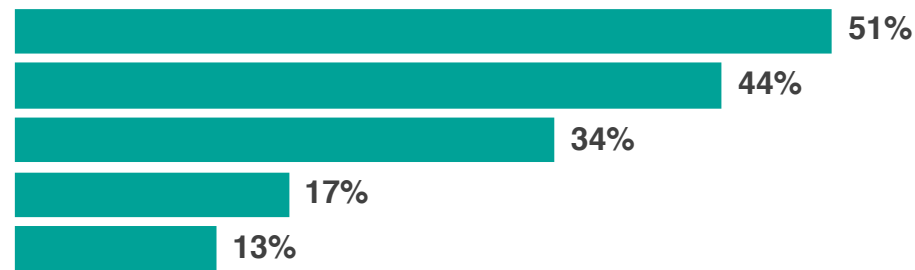
Overview of key challenges perceived by EI professionals



HUMAN RESOURCES



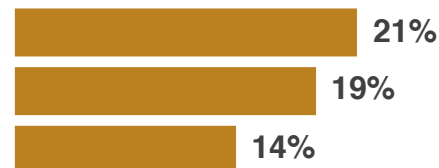
1. Quick burnout
2. Unattractive salary & benefits
3. Manpower shortage
4. Lack of training & development
5. Lack of development opportunities



CROSS - CENTRE ISSUES



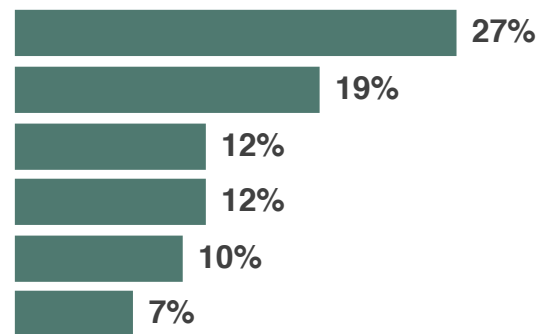
1. Weak organisational integration
2. Wide quality & capability gaps
3. Insufficient knowledge sharing



GOVERNMENT/ POLICY ISSUES



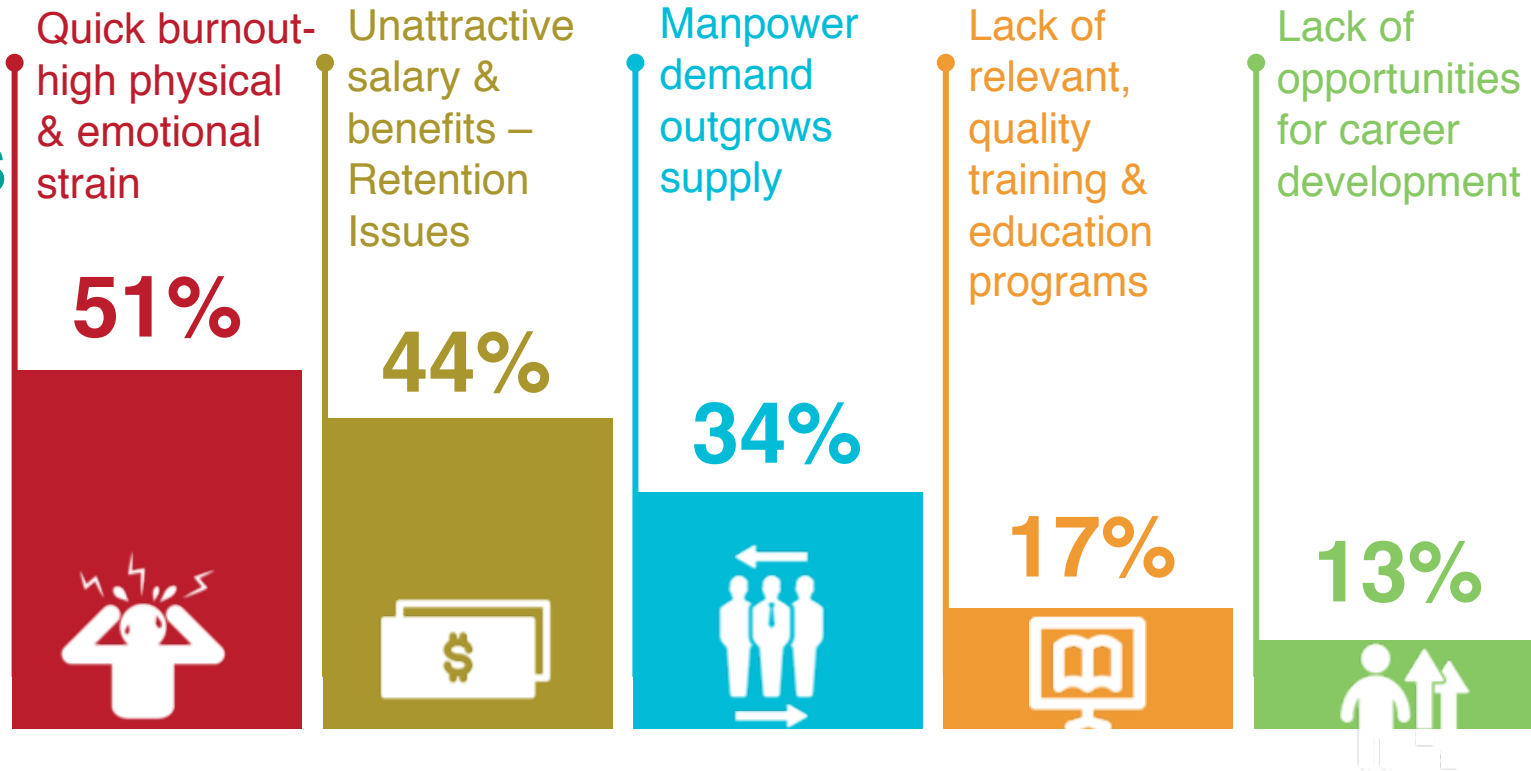
1. Insufficient funding
2. Lack of central authority
3. Absence of assessment framework
4. No outcome measure
5. Lack of sector branding
6. No common vision





Quick burnout and unattractive benefits recognized as key challenges for EI sector in Singapore

HUMAN RESOURCES ISSUES



EI leaders acknowledge the challenges faced by the EI professionals as well as recent efforts by the government



HUMAN RESOURCES ISSUES



Better pay & work-life balance

"The staff burn out quickly as caseloads are high and paper work is a lot, the private sector pays better, and can hire more manpower"

Recent Efforts: Increase in salaries up to 12% as per the new pay guidelines by National Council of Social Service's (NCSS)*.

More Recognition & career development plans

"To train and keep young people, we need to give them something to stay for, apart from pay and it is career advancement"

Recent Efforts: Several initiatives have been rolled out through NCSS for professionals to hone capabilities, gain exposure and experience and grow leadership competencies

Manpower Shortage

"If therapists, even experienced foreigners want to practice here, they have to work under supervision for a year... this makes it very difficult."

Recent Efforts: NCSS is building capacity & capability for the sector, through its 3 pronged holistic approach of Talent Attraction, Talent Development & Talent Retention

*Source :
<https://www.msf.gov.sg/media-room/Pages/Enhanced-Salary-Benchmarks-for-Social-Service-Professionals.aspx>
<https://www.ncss.gov.sg/Social-Service-Careers/Sector-Salary-Guidelines/Salary-Guidelines>

Suggestions to improve key HR issues by EI professionals and leaders

Manage the Workload

 EI Professionals



Implement **assistive measures** such as teacher aides



Digitalise documents & adopt more online admin tools



A **smaller class** needed for **severe cases**

Attract EI Talents

 EI Professionals



Increase awareness about the merits of working in EI sector through mainstream media



Provide more educational opportunities for interested candidates

 EI Leaders



Need to emphasis on **good leadership and culture** across organisations to be able to sustain and motivate the staff

Support Professional Growth

 EI Professionals



Develop **mentoring programs** to guide new staff



Provide **ongoing training & education** with higher emphasis on the junior staff

Define Career Path

 EI Professionals



Implement **multiple pathways** for EI staff to grow



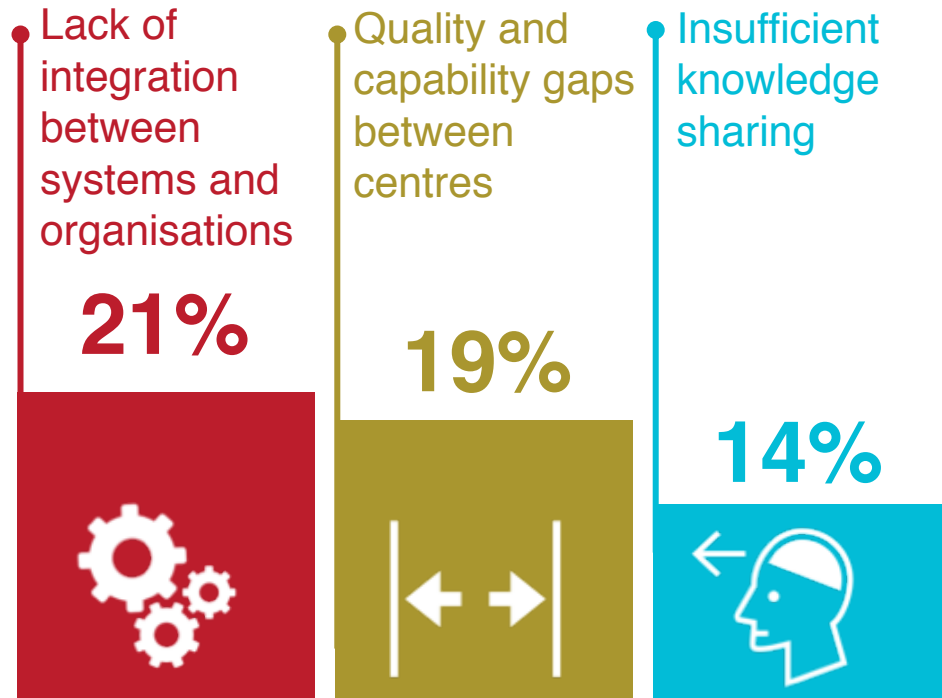
Outline **clear career tracks and KPIs**
Allow flexibility in development

Besides HR, there are cross-centre issues to be improved on



Perceptions of EI Professionals

CROSS CENTRE ISSUES



Perceptions of EI Leaders

*When we look for funding for therapists, we **don't know the real demand and supply... Data is missing to convince the funders of our needs.***

Lack of integration

Quality and capability gaps

*Bigger centers have more synergy and resources whilst **small centers struggle more with retaining therapists***

*There's disability network that meets quarterly, but you still have to **find your own core group of people that you can talk to***

Insufficient knowledge sharing

Suggested solutions to cross-centre issues by EI leaders & professionals

Improve Collaboration



EI Professionals



Define clear roles amongst agencies and organisations



Incentivise cross-agency collaboration



EI Leaders



Develop a **central database** that is accessible to all relevant parties

Bridge Quality Gap



EI Professionals



Develop standard practice guidelines in receiving, supporting, and graduating children across centres



Create a **pool of shared resources** so that organisations can tap on when needed

Enable Knowledge Sharing



EI Leaders



Create more **informal platforms** for knowledge sharing



Develop an **internal instrument**, e.g. newsletter that shares materials on leadership, best practices in the sector

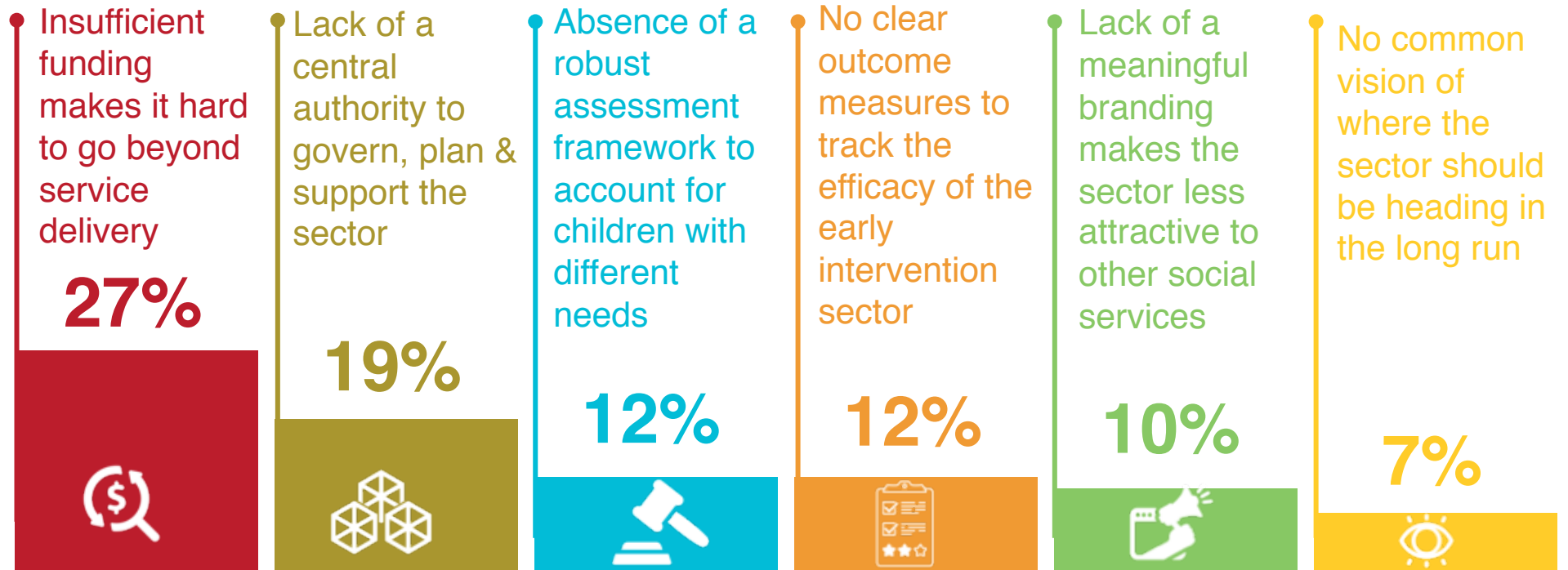


CROSS -
CENTRE
ISSUES



Among policy-related challenges, EI professionals pay most attention to funding

GOVERNMENT / POLICY ISSUES



3. Reviewing the Government's Role



EI leaders acknowledge government efforts to improve the sector, but agree more can be done to streamline efforts



The government has gotten a lot more involved. We're now at the 3rd Enabling Masterplan.

*To their credit, the **salary scale** of EI teachers has increased*

They (MSF) have been very open to suggestions and funded a lot of things

However, an **over arching system to streamline efforts** or a **central authority** seems missing

*Most leaders felt that MSF needed stronger integration and engagement to have more impact. They believed there should be a **similar agency like the Early Childhood Development Authority (ECDA)**, which serves as the regulatory and developmental authority for the early childhood sector in Singapore, **to oversee the EIPIC sector**. Some EI Leaders feel that **MOE has a stronger foundation to oversee EIPIC** since SPED is already under its purview.*





There is a strong call by EI professionals for one central authority to support the sector

The Need for One Central Authority

75% 

Avoid confusion, streamline process, enhance collaboration & resource allocation & facilitate transition from EI to mainstream schools

"Yes, even we are confused with the service provided by the different sectors"

"...there is minimal control of the standards & quality of services, VWOs pursue their own agenda instead of adhering to a common one"

6% 

More important question is how different authorities/agencies can improve communication and collaboration

"Dependent on the clarity of roles, ease of collaboration and specific expertise contributed by the various agencies."

"Centralised means clearer guidelines and being more easily manageable. However, it becomes rigid and in this field of work, being inflexible means being inefficient. So, I can't decide whether I support this idea or otherwise."

11% 

Having multiple parties involved means more flexibility in addressing the sector's growing needs & a bigger pool of ideas

"Currently the agencies have good communication & planning. At the moment there may not be a need for a central authority"

"Should leave it to the constituency and community to formulate their own meaningful outcomes and a variety of programs"

"It's okay to have different agencies as long as everyone works together and are on the same page"

8%: no comment/not applicable



EI professionals have varying opinions on who should oversee the sector

Should EI fall under MOE instead of MSF?

57%



Better allocation of resources & fairer chances for special needs children

“Yes. If it can ease the funding and manpower issue, it will definitely improve the quality of service.”

“Yes, MOE should start the intake to make sure that all that work with these children are qualified in handling...”

21%



Collaborative Approach

Whilst MOE can help to raise the education quality, MSF plays a critical role in addressing other social needs of the children & their families

“...children with special have social needs that need to be addressed as well. It takes a community to raise a child, so MOE and MSF should be working together.”

19%



Various reasons: EI is more than just education, the standardized education imposed by MOE might not suit EI, equal education opportunities should not depend on which ministry EI falls under

“Early intervention should be about building up family's understanding of the child's condition(s), the family's problem-solving abilities, and quality of family life.”

3%: no comment/not applicable

Suggestions by EI leaders and professionals to shape the future of Early Intervention

1. Set Clear Definitions of Disabilities



EI Leaders



Need for more clarity around the **types of disabilities** (not just mild/ moderate or severe) and a more **structured approach** to address their needs.

2. Conduct Proper Assessment of Needs



EI Leaders



There are still misdiagnosed cases, especially for non-physical disabilities. A **more holistic approach** to diagnosing should be adopted

3. Define Outcome Measures



EI Leaders



There are concerns that output is deemed as a measure rather than outcomes. Current measures are not sufficient to indicate the actual progress or milestones of the child.

4. Create Stronger Branding of the Sector



EI Leaders



A **strong brand identity** is seen as important for the sector to **gain the visibility** it needs to attract the right skill set and passion.

5. Establish Long-term Vision & Goal for the Sector



EI Leaders



There is a need for a **common goal** to be established and then **clearly communicated**, not just within, but also outside the sector.

6. More Funding



EI Leaders



EI Professionals



More funds to be allocated in building resources for intervention as well as hiring staff.

A collection of colorful pencils in various containers, including a mesh pencil holder and several plastic cups, set against a light background. The pencils are in various colors like blue, orange, green, pink, and brown. Some are in a mesh holder, some in plastic cups, and some are scattered on the surface. The background is a light, textured surface.

4. Moving Towards An Inclusive Society

EI professionals are more pessimistic about the situation than other stakeholders



Agree that 'Singapore is an inclusive society'



11%



28%



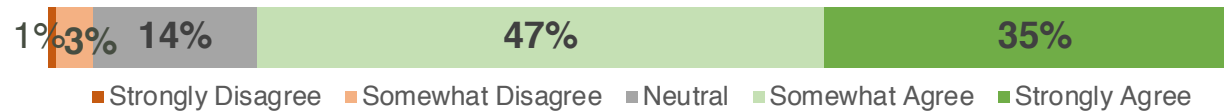
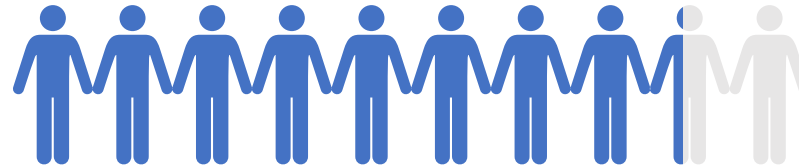
30%

EI professionals probably have higher expectations of Singapore society given their constant exposure to children with special needs and understanding of the situation in other countries. Moreover, they might have a clearer understanding of inclusion which is different from physically integrating children into common spaces.

Inclusive education perceived to play a critical role in creating an inclusive society

Agree that 'Inclusive education is the stepping stone towards an inclusive society'


EI Professionals
83%




EI Leaders

Would love to see that there's no longer early intervention centers, and children are supported in mainstream schools

If we want inclusion to take place, it has to start from preschool level

I'd like to see my kids grow up with someone who's very different from them and in their inner circle... A real milestone of inclusive society is when people realize they can step in and help

EI professionals strongly believe that both sides will reap benefits from an inclusive education



When typically developing children and special needs children attend the same class...



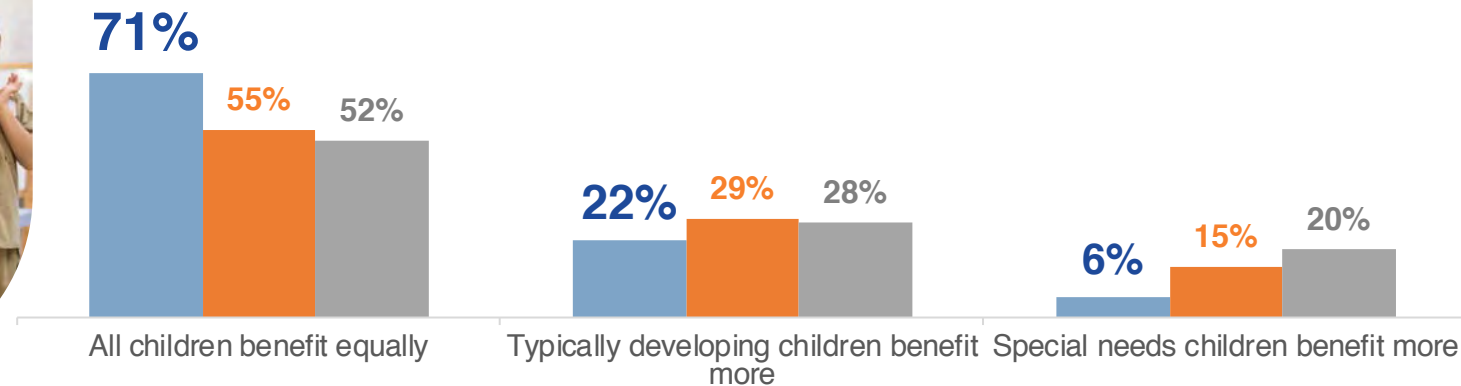
EI Professionals



Parents of special needs children*

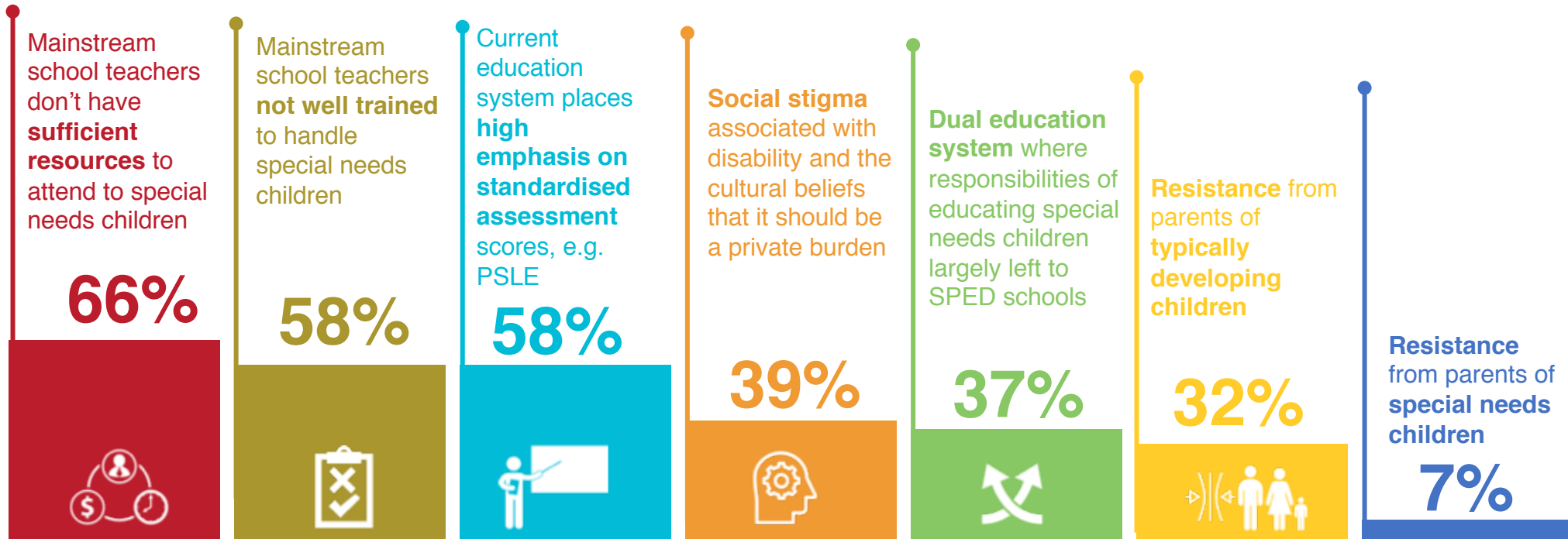


General public*





Nevertheless, there are various barriers to develop inclusive education in Singapore



The sector may **not be ready** for all early childhood education center to be inclusive. There need to be **sufficient quality training and resources** for the early childhood educators and practitioner

When students with special needs attend EIPIC & preschool, most of the time the preschool teachers are **ill equipped** to handle our students and **advise parents to find another school.**

Our education systems is **rigid & exam based**, such that our mainstream students are having huge problems with the system, let alone our children with special needs

A summary of challenges facing the EI Sector



Human Resource

Most professionals are satisfied with their work and believe it is making an impact on the lives of children with special needs, however

Challenges Exist



Quick burnout
(51%)



Unattractive benefits
(44%)



Manpower shortage
(34%)

Solutions Proposed



Assistive measures



Raise awareness about working in the sector



Provide scholarships



Support professional growth and clearer career pathway



Cross-Centre Issue

There are various organisations operating in and authorities supporting the sector. However,

Challenges Exist



Lack of integration
(21%)



Quality & capacity gaps
(19%)



Insufficient Info sharing
(14%)

Solutions Proposed



Define clearer roles



Standardise guidelines



Create pool of shared resources



Develop informal platforms/ comms tool



Government/Policy

EI leaders credit the Government's active role in advancing the sector, however concerns exist regarding

Challenges Exist



Insufficient funding
(27%)



No central authority
(19%)



No robust assessment framework
(12%)

Solutions Proposed



Set clear definitions



Conduct proper assessment

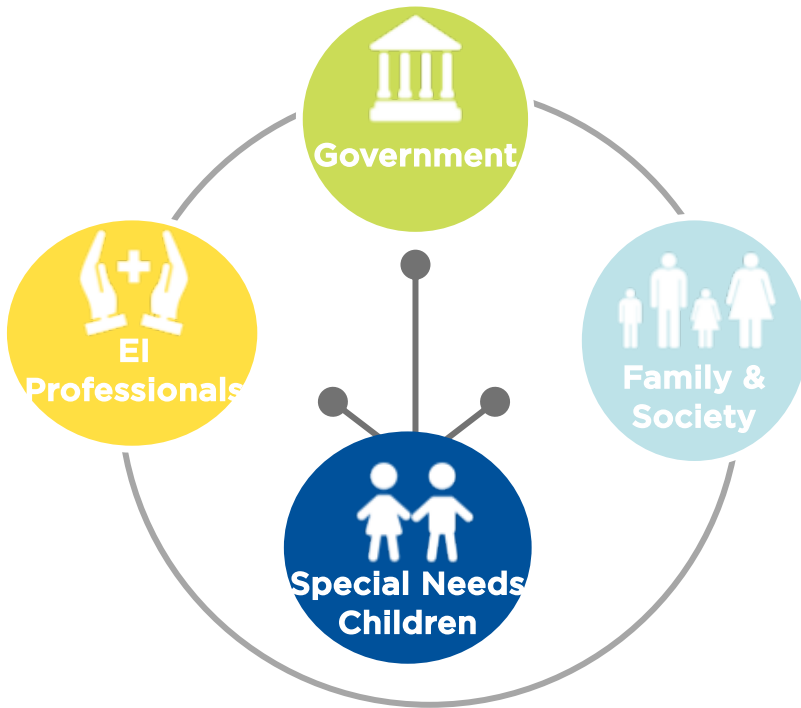


Define outcome measures



Create stronger branding

Moving towards an inclusive society



Singapore is far from inclusive

11% of those polled think Singapore is an inclusive society



83% EI professionals believe: **Inclusive education**

plays a critical role in creating an


Inclusive society



Challenges Exist


Lack of resources for school teachers (66%)


High emphasis on standardised assessments (58%)


Insufficiently trained teachers (58%)



“

Having able-bodied and persons with special needs in an institution does not mean it is inclusive. More importantly, we need to adopt a culture of inclusion, which entails embedding inclusive values such as having one's identity affirmed, accepted and valued for oneself.

Mr J R Karthikeyan
Senior Director, AWWA Disability and Inclusion, who oversees
Kindle Garden, Singapore's first inclusive preschool.



Turning Challenges to Opportunities:

A Study on Early Intervention Professionals
and their Attitudes on Inclusion

ANNEX A: APPENDIX

Key challenges perceived by EI professionals



- Quick burnout
- Unattractive salary & benefits
- Manpower shortage
- Lack of training & development
- Lack of development opportunities

	Total	1 – 2 years	3-4 years	5 years or more	Teachers	Therapists	Others*
Quick burnout	51%	55%	53%	46%	56%	38%	41%
Unattractive salary & benefits	44%	49%	51%	37%	48%	37%	36%
Manpower shortage	34%	41%	37%	25%	32%	44%	32%
Lack of training & development	17%	19%	13%	17%	16%	15%	20%
Lack of development opportunities	13%	15%	10%	11%	14%	10%	10%



- Weak organisational integration
- Wide quality & capability gaps
- Insufficient knowledge sharing

	Total	1 – 2 years	3-4 years	5 years or more	Teachers	Therapists	Others*
Weak organisational integration	21%	15%	21%	27%	16%	38%	29%
Wide quality & capability gaps	19%	14%	19%	23%	18%	13%	24%
Insufficient knowledge sharing	14%	14%	13%	14%	13%	17%	15%



- Insufficient funding
- Lack of central authority
- Absence of assessment framework
- No outcome measure
- Lack of sector branding
- No common vision

	Total	1 – 2 years	3-4 years	5 years or more	Teachers	Therapists	Others*
Insufficient funding	27%	23%	29%	31%	26%	27%	33%
Lack of central authority	19%	17%	16%	22%	20%	17%	18%
Absence of assessment framework	12%	9%	10%	15%	12%	8%	13%
No outcome measure	12%	14%	6%	12%	11%	12%	14%
Lack of sector branding	10%	9%	19%	9%	11%	10%	10%
No common vision	7%	7%	4%	9%	7%	13%	4%

Base: N=423

Base: N=175

Base: N=70

Base: N=178

Base: N=280

Base: N=52

Base: N=91

* Include other occupations such as social workers, psychologists, doctors, admin staffs, etc.

Highlights of In-depth Interviews with Early Intervention Leaders

Recommendations



Need for faster growth than witnessed in the past 3 decades

- Prioritise building a strong **brand identity** for EIPIEC to gain visibility and attract the right skill set and passion.
- Establish **clear goals** that would help channel resources in the right direction, minimise duplication and increase pace of sectoral growth.
- More **upstream work**, i.e. policy-makers recognising on-ground realities, the real needs of the child, family, caregivers and EI professionals.
- Continue to work on **addressing sector manpower issues**.



More avenues for efforts in the sector to be consolidated and developed

- Stakeholders/leaders to continue to engage in efforts to address issues within their purview by spearheading **new projects**, setting up of **pilot programs**, etc.
- More **advocacy** and **mobilising of organic groups** to make various initiatives gain visibility and encourage funding, without having to rely on government backing each time.
- There is also a call to open up the boundaries of the sector, i.e. create **more awareness** among the general public.



Leveraging on global know-how

- Make aware and encourage adoption of well-established models and systems from countries like Australia and the US that already have highly evolved EI services.
- EI professionals to be given **opportunities to learn/ borrow** from the full-inclusion based models, more rigorous diagnosis and data management systems, integration and collaborations to facilitate growth in the sector

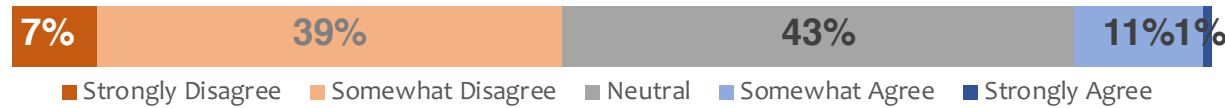


EI professionals' attitudes on inclusion



EI Professionals
11%

Agree that 'Singapore is an inclusive society'



There is no inclusion in Singapore; if one wants to absolutely insist, there is just **physical integration**. There is **no acceptance**, there is merely **tolerance at best**

It's a **long-term idea** for Singapore to really carry it out across everybody **mind and practice.**

Singaporean community has this mindset that **being special is different in a negative light**. There is **no openness** in the community even though Singaporeans think that they are ready"

By working experience

1-2 years

3-4 years

>=5 years

11%

13%

11%

Base: N=175

Base: N=70

Base: N=178

By occupation

Teachers

Therapists

Others*

10%

12%

14%

Base: N=280

Base: N=52

Base: N=91

Similar perception observed amongst EI professionals, regardless of their experience in the sector and occupation

* Include other occupations such as social workers, psychologists, doctors, admin staffs, etc.

ANNEX B: Factsheet on Early Intervention in Singapore

A. Early Intervention in Singapore

A1. What is Early Intervention (EI)?

Early intervention provides developmental, therapy and educational support services for infants and young children aged 0 to 6 years old with developmental problems and special needs. Early intervention programmes aim to equip them with motor, communication, social, self-help and cognitive skills and maximise their developmental potential, so as to help them overcome their condition, or at least prevent it from deteriorating.

A2. What EI programmes and support services are available for a child with developmental needs?

Services	Service providers
Assessment & diagnosis for early identification	Child Development Unit (CDU) @ KK Women's and Children's Hospital (KKH), National University Hospital (NUH) or Singapore General Hospital (SGH) Various VWOs
Information and/or Referral Services	SG Enable
EI programmes & services (see below)	EIPIC centres, VWOs, kindergartens & childcare centres working with EI professionals (educators, therapists, social workers, psychologists, doctors)
Funding	Ministry of Social and Family Development

	Early Intervention Programme for Infants and Children (EIPIC) ¹	Development Support (DS) & Learning Support (LS) Programme ²	Integrated Child Care Programme (ICCP) ³
What	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Started in 2003 to provide therapy & educational support services for infants & children with special needs and/or at risk of moderate to severe developmental delays Each EIPIC session ranges from 2 to 4 hours; The session frequency ranges from 2 to 5 days per week, depending on the centre's assessment of the child's needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Started in 2012 to provide short-term support and intervention for children with mild developmental delays within preschools who are not diagnosed with a developmental need The programme lasts 6-15 weeks at a time (up to 1 hour per session, once a week) for K1 & K2 children with mild developmental needs, in areas such as speech and language, social skills, motor skills, behaviour and literacy Equips the children with developmentally appropriate skills to optimise their developmental outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Started in 2003 to provide an integrated child care programme for children with mild special needs They learn, play and socialise alongside their mainstream peers so they are prepared for future entry into mainstream education No intervention services provided, though the mainstream curriculum could be modified to accommodate the child with special needs The progress of each child will be monitored, with regular parent-teacher feedback sessions

¹ <https://www.sgenable.sg/pages/content.aspx?path=/for-children/early-intervention-programme-for-infants-children-eipic/>

² <https://www.sgenable.sg/pages/content.aspx?path=/for-children/development-support/>

³ <https://www.sgenable.sg/pages/content.aspx?path=/for-children/integrated-child-care-programme-iccp/>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children who need higher levels of support are referred to EIPIC Children enrolled in EIPIC are not eligible 	
Age of children	0-6 years old	5 (K1) & 6 (K2) years old	2-6 years old
Where	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government-funded EIPIC centres run by voluntary welfare organisations (VWOs)⁴ Private Intervention Centres (PICs) approved under the Enhanced Pilot for Private Intervention Providers (Enhanced PPIP) Subsidy scheme⁵ to offer more choices of EI programmes for children referred to EIPIC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DS and LS are being rolled out to mainstream kindergartens and childcare centres in phases. The intervention is being done within preschool settings Preschool operators like PCF, My First Skool, PCS have in-house Learning Support Educators (LSEds) who conduct Learning Support within the preschool If additional Developmental Support is required, these preschools will approach DS service providers like AWWA and SPD, who will send relevant professionals to conduct intervention within the preschool. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Selected mainstream childcare centres⁶
Who is involved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SG Enable provides referrals to parents Recommendation to be made by a doctor from the CDU at KKH, NUH or SGH, or a private paediatrician 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pre-school teachers will flag children with mild developmental needs and refer them to the Learning Support Educators (LSEds) in the preschools who will assess the child to determine if he needs to be enrolled in the DS or LS programme. If the parents consent to the recommended intervention, the programme will be provided by a group of trained LSEds, clinical professionals and therapists in the preschools. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SG Enable provides referrals to parents Recommendation to be made by a doctor from the CDU at KKH, NUH or SGH, or a private paediatrician
Subsidies	Means testing	Means Testing	Basic Childcare Subsidy and Enhanced Infant & Child Care Subsidy for eligible families
Current number of centres	21 EIPIC centres run by 10 VWOs & 5 PICs	About 400 preschools	14 childcare centres run by 5 operators

⁴ For list of EIPIC Centres, see <https://www.sgenable.sg/uploads/EIPIC%20Service%20Matrix.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.sgenable.sg/uploads/Enhanced%20PPIP%20Service%20Matrix.pdf>

⁶ For list of selected childcare centres, see <https://www.sgenable.sg/uploads/ICCP%20Service%20Matrix.pdf>

Number of children	<p>From 2012 to 2016, a total of about 6,500 children were referred to EIPIC centres, or an average of 1,300 children annually.⁷</p> <p>2,600 children benefited from EIPIC in 2015, compared to 1,400 children in the programme in 2010.⁸</p> <p>By 2018, there will be a total of 3,200 places in EIPIC centres.</p>	<p>From inception in 2012 to early 2017, the programme helped about 4,000 children across 350 pre-schools.⁹</p>	<p>Based on media reports in 2016, each centre can only take up to 10 children with mild to moderate disabilities. No therapy is provided at these centres¹⁰</p>
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Other support services for young children with special needs:

Some VWOs offer rehabilitation and therapy services for children with special needs and/or specific disabilities to equip them with self-help skills in mobility, play and socialisation.¹¹

A.3 What does EIPIC look like?

- At AWWA:** Early Intervention Centre (EIC) adopts family-centred practices and a transdisciplinary approach. Its team of professionals, such as early interventionists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, speech and language therapists, psychologists and social workers, work closely with the families to achieve the goals set for the children through various programmes. To maximise children’s learning opportunities in the centre, the team plans and embeds goals into the different activities carried out across the day and also empowers parents to integrate some of the intervention techniques into their daily family routines to enhance their learning at home, and participation in the community.
- At Thye Hua Kwan Moral Charities:** EIPIC involves structuring classes around small groups encompassing early childhood special education, social work and therapy support services to stimulate children’s adaptive functioning and school readiness skills. To provide greater support for children and their parents, all four of its centres adopt the Early Childhood Holistic Outcomes (ECHO), a new early childhood intervention programme and evaluation framework.¹² ECHO focuses on achieving functional improvements in the daily lives of the children with greater parent involvement and empowerment. It aims to provide a uniform set of standards to measure functional outcomes and improve the standards of early childhood intervention in Singapore.
- At Rainbow Centre Margaret Drive:** Established in 1987 at Margaret Drive Special School as a centre-based programme, EIPIC aims to give children aged 2 months to 6 years old, with either Down syndrome, developmental delay, cerebral palsy or multiple disabilities, a head start in their development. There are three levels in EIPIC: Infant Stimulation, Motor Training and Special Education. Depending on the level of the child, EIPIC aims to facilitate the development of gross motor skills, fine motor skills, perceptual cognitive skills, language and communication skills, socialisation skills and self-help skills.

⁷ <https://www.msf.gov.sg/media-room/Pages/Clarifications-on-EIPIC.aspx>

⁸ <https://www.msf.gov.sg/media-room/Pages/Early-intervention-services-for-children-with-speech-delay,-autism-and-at-risk-of-moderate-to-severe-disabilities.aspx>; <http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/2600-kids-helped-through-early-intervention-scheme-last-year>

⁹ Minister for Social and Family Development Tan Chuan Jin in Parliament on 8 March 2017

<https://www.msf.gov.sg/media-room/Pages/Opening-Speech-By-Mr-Tan-Chuan-Jin-At-The-Committee-Of-Supply-2017.aspx>

¹⁰ <http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/education/inclusive-pre-school-with-programmes-for-special-needs-children-oversubscribed>

¹¹ For list of voluntary welfare organisations, see <https://www.sgenable.sg/pages/content.aspx?path=/for-children/therapy-for-young-children/>

¹² For more info on ECHO, see <https://www.kkh.com.sg/AboutUs/PressRelease/Pages/15-11-2016.aspx>

A4. Demand for Early Intervention Services

Demand for early intervention is poised to grow as the number of children diagnosed with special needs rises due to greater awareness and better access to testing.

- In 2015, KK Women's and Children's Hospital and the National University Hospital diagnosed 4,000 children with developmental issues, a 60 per cent jump from the 2,500 children in 2010.¹³
- In 2016, 2,170 children under the age of 4 (or about 1.4% of the cohort) were diagnosed with varying degrees of developmental issues and needs.¹⁴
- As of 2018, the average waiting time for a child to enrol in an EIPIC centre today is less than five months, a reduction from the six-month waiting time in 2016.¹⁵
- As of 2018, the number of EIPIC centres has doubled from 11 in 2010 to 21 centres today run by 10 VWOs. Since 2016, four new centres have opened - two centres by SPD in Bedok and Tampines and two centres by AWWA in Kim Keat and Fernvale.
- EI staff to child ratio ranges from 1:1 to 1:5,¹⁶ depending on the child's severity of need.

A5. Qualifications of an EI professional

EI teachers

Recognised training in EI teaching is minimally an Advanced Diploma in Early Childhood Intervention (Special Needs) (ADESN).¹⁷ A 1.5-year part-time course run by Ngee Ann Polytechnic, it provides upgrading opportunities for EIPIC teachers in training to become full-fledged EI teachers. It also helps integrated childcare teachers enhance their capabilities to support children with special needs.

The Certificate in Autism (CIA) and Higher Certificate in Autism (HCIA) is accepted as minimum training only for teachers in programmes that specialise in autism.

Therapists

Occupational therapists need to have a diploma or degree in Occupational Therapy from an accredited university.¹⁸ Similarly, physiotherapists should hold a diploma or degree in Physiotherapy from an accredited university.¹⁹ Local polytechnics do not offer diploma programmes in Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy anymore. The minimum qualification for a speech language therapist is a degree (foreign universities) or Masters in speech pathology.²⁰ The National University of Singapore offers a 2-year full-time Master of Science (Speech and Language Pathology).²¹

These allied health professionals are governed and regulated by the Allied Health Professions Council, a professional board under the Ministry of Health.²²

¹³ <http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/more-children-diagnosed-with-developmental-problems>

¹⁴ <https://www.msf.gov.sg/media-room/Pages/Statistics-on-children-with-special-needs-and-intellectual-disabilities.aspx>

¹⁵ <https://www.msf.gov.sg/media-room/Pages/Clarifications-on-EIPIC.aspx>; With more centres, waiting time is progressively being reduced

¹⁶ <https://www.sgenable.sg/uploads/EIPIC%20Service%20Matrix.pdf>

¹⁷ <https://www.np.edu.sg/lifelonglearning/Pages/elpeci.aspx>

¹⁸ <https://www.ncss.gov.sg/Social-Service-Careers/Diverse-Career-Opportunities/Occupational-Therapist>

¹⁹ <https://www.ncss.gov.sg/Social-Service-Careers/Diverse-Career-Opportunities/Physiotherapist>

²⁰ <https://www.ncss.gov.sg/Social-Service-Careers/Diverse-Career-Opportunities/Speech-Language-Therapist>

²¹ <http://medicine.nus.edu.sg/dgms/SLP/prerequisites.html>

²² <http://www.healthprofessionals.gov.sg/content/hprof/ahpc/en.html>

Social workers

The minimum entry qualification for social workers is a bachelor degree or a graduate diploma in Social Work. Other recognised qualifications include master degrees and PhDs majoring in Social Work.²³

A6. Minimum pay of EI professionals

In 2018, the government announced an increase of up to 12% in the salary guidelines for the social service sector.²⁴ The MSF and the NCSS review pay guidelines every three years to ensure that wages remain competitive; the guidelines are also adjusted in between reviews to reflect wage movements in the general labour market.

Professional	Minimum salary range under NCSS 2018 salary guidelines for the social service ²⁵
Early Intervention Teachers	\$1,690 (Teacher Aide with NITEC / 'O' Level) to \$6,250 (Senior Lead EI Teacher / Director with degree or higher)
Social workers	\$1,340 (Social Service Assistant –fresh) to \$8,380 (Master Social Worker)
Psychologists	\$3,230 (Associate Psychologist with degree) to \$7,820 (Principal Psychologist)
Therapists	\$2,950 (Therapist with diploma) to \$6,200 (Principal Therapist with degree or higher)

B. Relevant Highlights of Lien Foundation's 2016 Inclusive Attitudes Survey

The Inclusive Attitudes Survey²⁶ was commissioned by the Lien Foundation in 2016 to examine how truly inclusive Singapore is. Part 1 of the survey explores the views and attitudes of the Singapore public towards children with special needs; Part 2 polled parents of children with special needs for their views on inclusion with regard to children with special needs and education. Highlights of the 2016 findings include:

Part 1 on views of the Singapore public

- 71% are supportive of the idea of inclusive education
- 30% agree that Singapore is an inclusive society
- 64% are willing to share public spaces but not interact with the special needs community

Part 2 on views of parents of children with special needs

- 77% are supportive of the idea of inclusive education
- 28% agree that Singapore is an inclusive society
- 45% believe that their children with special needs do not have typically-developing friends
- 46% encounter difficulty when enrolling their child in pre-school

²³ For the latest information on recognised qualifications, see the SASW website: <https://accreditation.sasw.org.sg/recognition>

²⁴ <https://www.msf.gov.sg/media-room/Pages/Enhanced-Salary-Benchmarks-for-Social-Service-Professionals.aspx>;
<http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/manpower/higher-wages-kick-in-for-staff-in-social-service-sector>

²⁵ For detailed NCSS guidelines on minimum salary range, see
https://www.ncss.gov.sg/NCSS/media/NCSS_SMD/Salary%20Guidelines/FY2018_SocialServiceSector_SalaryGuidelines.pdf

²⁶ Inclusive Attitudes Survey Part 1: http://www.lienfoundation.org/sites/default/files/FINAL%20-%20Inclusive%20Attitudes%20Survey%20Part%201_30May16.pdf;

<http://www.lienfoundation.org/sites/default/files/Inclusive%20Attitudes%20Survey%20Press%20Release%20Final.pdf>
Inclusive Attitudes Survey Part 2:

<http://kidsfirst.sg/pdf/inclusive-attitudes-survey-part2.pdf>;

<http://lienfoundation.org/sites/default/files/Inclusive%20Survey%20Part%202%20-%20Press%20Release%20Lien%20Fdn%20Final%5B1%5D.pdf>

Two questions from the 2016 survey were posed to the respondents of “Turning Challenges to Opportunities: A Study on Early Intervention Professionals and their Attitudes on Inclusion” commissioned by Lien Foundation in 2018.

Survey question	2018 Study on Early Intervention Professionals and their Attitudes on Inclusion	2016 Inclusive Attitudes Survey
Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statement: “Singapore is an inclusive society”	Only 11% of EI professionals agree that Singapore is an inclusive society	30% of the Singapore public agree that Singapore is an inclusive society 28% of parents of special needs children regard Singapore as an inclusive society
When typically-developing children and children with special needs attend the same class...	<u>EI professionals</u> All children benefit equally: 71% Typically-developing children benefit more: 22% Children with special needs benefit more: 6%	<u>General public</u> All children benefit equally: 52% Typically-developing children benefit more: 28% Children with special needs benefit more: 20% <u>Parents of special needs children</u> All children benefit equally: 55% Typically-developing children benefit more: 29% Children with special needs benefit more: 15%

C. What is the Early Intervention Conference 2018?

Date: Friday, 27 April 2018

Time: 9am – 5pm

Venue: Marina Bay Sands

Theme: Today’s Vision, Tomorrow’s Reality

<http://www.eiconf2018.org.sg/about-us/>

This inaugural Early Intervention Conference is a ground-up initiative jointly organised by the ten EI partners to inspire, enskill and engage the Government, families, early childhood and intervention professionals, medical professionals and the community, to build a quality and inclusive early childhood landscape for all young children.

The Conference theme: “Today’s Vision, Tomorrow’s Reality” signifies the aspiration of a promising future for early intervention in Singapore. Collectively, the Organising Committee envisions a significant conference that all early intervention professionals can be proud of and participate as a common platform to learn and share best practices, be recognised for their professionalism and raise greater awareness of the importance of early intervention in Singapore.

This conference will be the first step to building a stronger fraternity for early intervention and is a timely event for the sector leaders to come together and work collaboratively towards a successful and impactful conference. This will mark the start of the journey in co-creating a common vision for a more sustainable early intervention landscape in the next 10 to 20 years ahead.

D. Laws and guidelines affecting EI in Singapore

1. UN Convention On The Rights Of The Child (UNCRC)

Singapore acceded to the UN Convention On The Rights Of The Child (UNCRC) in Oct 1995.²⁷

The UNCRC sets out the standards on the provisions of healthcare, education, legal and social services for children and affirms four basic principles

- a child's right to survival;
- a child's right to development;
- a child's right to be protected; and
- a child's right to participate actively in his/her community.

2. UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)

Singapore signed the UNCRPD on 30th Nov 2012, ratified it on 18 July 2013 and submitted its Initial Report to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on 13 July 2016 outlining the collaborative efforts among the various stakeholders in making Singapore a more inclusive society over the period 2004 to 2014 and up to 2015 in some instances.²⁸

Article 24 deals with the right to inclusive education and provides that children with disabilities should be able to participate in the general education system, and that children with disabilities should be educated in mainstream schools.

3. Compulsory Education Act²⁹

A child of compulsory school age born after **1st January 1996**, and who is a citizen of Singapore and residing in Singapore, has to regularly attend a national primary school as a pupil, unless he/she has been granted exemption. With effect from 2019, the Compulsory Education Framework will also include children with moderate-to-severe Special Educational Needs (SEN) born after 1st January 2012. They will no longer be exempt from Compulsory Education on the basis of their SEN alone.

4. Enabling Masterplan³⁰

Launched in 2007, the Enabling Masterplan charts the development of programmes and services in the disability sector, and serves as a roadmap for Singapore to build a more inclusive society where persons with disabilities are empowered and enabled to realise their true potential. It is reviewed every 5 years, and is now in its 3rd iteration. The 3rd Enabling Masterplan for 2017-2021 was released in Dec 2016.

²⁷ <https://www.msf.gov.sg/policies/Children-and-Youth/Pages/Obligations-under-the-UN-Convention-on-the-Rights-of-the-Child.aspx>

²⁸ <https://www.msf.gov.sg/policies/International-Conventions/Pages/UN-Convention-on-the-Rights-of-Persons-with-Disabilities-UNCRPD.aspx>

²⁹ <https://www.moe.gov.sg/education/education-system/compulsory-education>

³⁰ <https://www.sgenable.sg/pages/content.aspx?path=/about-us/enabling-masterplan/>