

EMBARGOED UNTIL 20 NOVEMBER 2025 1.30PM

**ENHANCED MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT
FOR OVER 1,000 PARENTS OF CHILDREN WITH DEVELOPMENTAL NEEDS FROM
2025**

*Early Intervention Centres and community-based Mental Health Service teams will join
KK Women's and Children's Hospital in expanding DayOne pilot programme*

Singapore, 20 November 2025 – Parents navigating the complex early intervention landscape following their child's diagnosis of developmental needs will now receive stronger mental health and psychosocial support, as a hospital-based mental health programme named DayOne expands into the community as part of its Phase II. In this phase, over 1,000 parents are expected to be screened and receive needs-based mental health support by KK Women's and Children's Hospital's (KKH) Department of Child Development (DCD) (more than 800 parents) and AWWA (over 300 parents).

It will mark the first time social service agencies (SSAs) are working with a hospital to provide mental health services for a vulnerable population who face significant mental health struggles, which were uncovered in Phase I. The programme will provide a seamless transition between hospital and community in the provision of sustainable care plans for parents of children with developmental needs.

In Phase II, KKH DCD will also pilot a novel intervention approach that recognises that parents of children with developmental needs are at higher risk of mental health challenges. These challenges can be exacerbated by the child's behavioural and developmental needs, in addition to the parent's own individual circumstances. This perspective acknowledges critical aspects of the mutual influence of parent and child well-being.

"Parents play a fundamental role in the caregiving journey of their children, especially for those with developmental needs. By embedding mental health support for parents where it is most accessible to these families in the community through AWWA and Allkin Singapore, we want to create a scalable, sustainable model in the long term. This includes enhancing the role of our Care Coordinators and leveraging the broad-based training of Medical Social Workers to equip more allied health professionals with skills to provide structured mental health support," said **Associate Professor Lourdes Mary Daniel, Senior Consultant, Department of Child Development, KK Women's and Children's Hospital and Programme Director of DayOne.**

Findings from Phase I

Between 2022 and 2024, with support from Lien Foundation, KKH DCD piloted a new care protocol in Phase I. This protocol provided mental health screening, surveillance and support for a select group of over 600 parents of children with developmental needs.

It revealed that 25% of parents screened required moderate to severe levels of support while 40% required at least some level of guidance and support by KKH DCD therapists for their mental health. It was the first time that the mental health of this population segment was systematically studied in Singapore, and it uncovered that the proportion was higher than what experts had expected.

Parents were categorised into three tiers based on their mental health and/or psychosocial needs, and corresponding tailored support services were provided to the parents who consented in each tier.

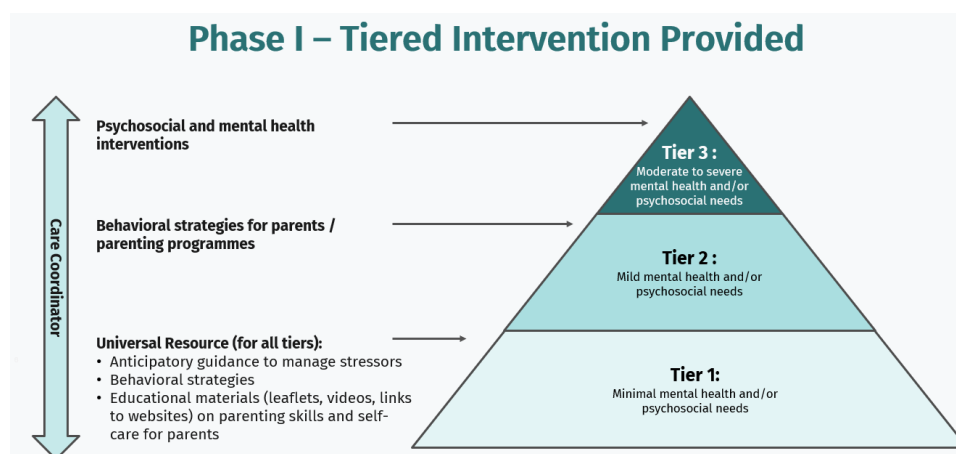


Figure 1: Tiered support offered to parents in Phase I

This care protocol was unique because it went beyond KKH DCD's focus of diagnosing and supporting children with developmental needs to ensure that their parents' mental health needs were assessed and supported as well. Prior to DayOne, a parent's mental health challenges would have been identified and addressed only if they became obvious to the doctor or Allied Health Professional, something that may not occur during short clinic visits where the focus of both professionals and parents tends to be on the child.

The results of Phase I were encouraging:

- Approximately 75% of parents who were primary caregivers with moderate to severe needs continued intervention after the initial session with a Medical Social Worker (MSW) or psychologist under the DayOne programme.
- Within the 10-month programme period following the initial screening, the percentage of parents with moderate to severe levels of anxiety and/or depression symptoms dropped from 20.9% to 9.4% post intervention. However, while their scores dropped, their scores were still elevated (compared to tier 1), indicating that they still required

continued support. This meant that sustainable longer-term support systems are required to address each parent's unique mental health recovery journey.

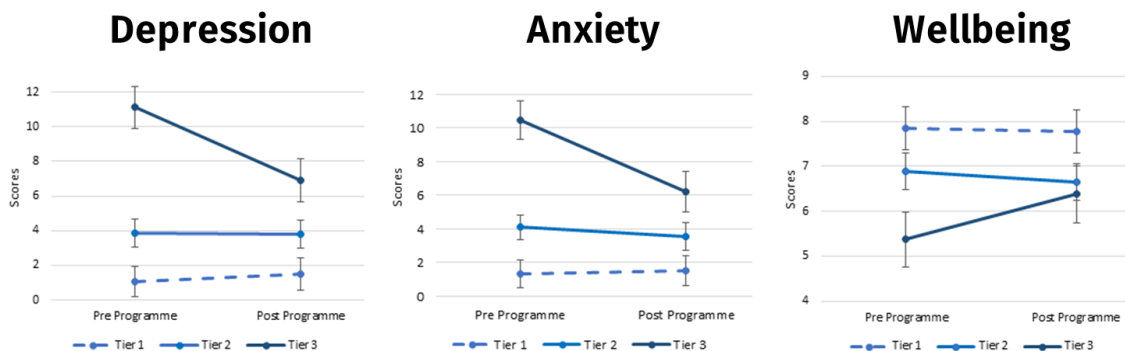


Figure 2: Depression, anxiety and wellbeing scores of parents in the three tiers pre and post programme

Phase II

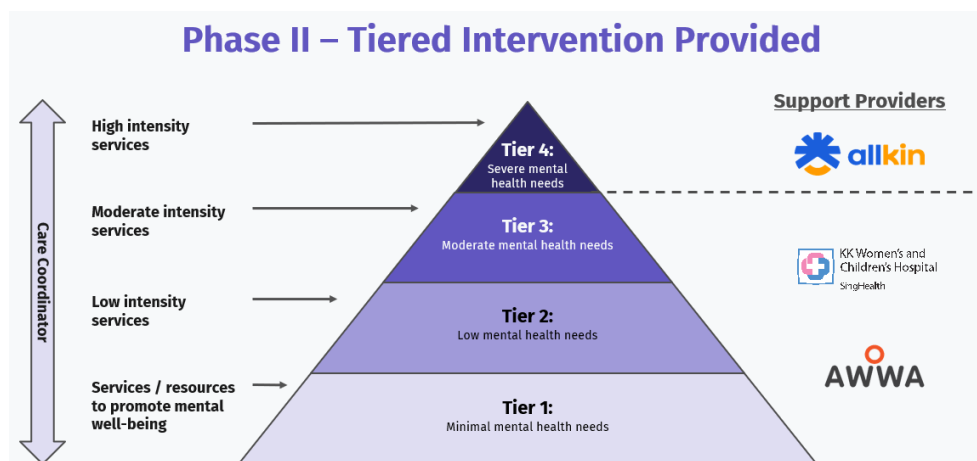


Figure 3: Tiered support for parents in Phase II

In light of the findings from Phase I, DayOne is moving into Phase II which will run for 3 years from 2025 to 2028, with \$4 million in funding support from the Lien Foundation. It aims to achieve two outcomes:

- To increase the accessibility of mental health services to parents of children with developmental needs and ensure scalability and sustainability of support for these parents in the long term. More than 1,000 parents are expected to benefit from this new service model.
- To simplify screening processes in KKH DCD and AWWA, as well as enhance support by piloting parent-child relational interventions in KKH DCD. These efforts acknowledge the mutual influence of parent and child well-being and seek to provide integrated support that addresses developmental needs alongside parental mental health.

To achieve the outcomes, two components will be developed:

1. Mental health screening and support for parents will become part of the enrolment process at Early Intervention Centres (EICs) operated by AWWA, beginning with the cluster of centres in Hougang and Lorong Napiri before being progressively rolled out to other centres.
2. “Hospital-to-Community” referral protocols will be developed between KKH DCD and Allkin Singapore’s Mental Health Services (MHS) involving the careful handover of the patient from KKH DCD to Allkin, alignment of organisational processes, and cross-training between hospital-based and community based mental health professionals.

1. “In-EIC” mental health screening and support

In the DayOne Phase II model, AWWA staff will undergo a range of specialised training, including sessions by KKH DCD and Allkin, to equip the team to better support parents with mental health needs at their EICs. Trained AWWA staff will also be providing screening and needs-based support for parents as part of AWWA EIC enrolment process.

Piloting this initiative at AWWA EICs is a key step towards building a sustainable care model, as children with developmental needs attend EIPIIC programmes at these centres. Embedding mental health support within the same setting ensures parents receive timely care alongside their child’s early intervention, making support accessible and routine.

KKH DCD will continue screening parents and tiering them based on mental health needs. Parents in Tiers 1 to 3 will receive support at KKH DCD while their children are awaiting EIPIIC placement, reducing escalation risks.

After securing a placement for their children at an EIC operated by AWWA in Hougang and Lorong Napiri, parents in Tiers 1 to 3 can choose to continue receiving mental health support from KKH DCD or transition to AWWA if they have not already started their mental health interventions at KKH DCD. Parents with higher mental health needs (Tier 4) will be referred to Allkin for specialised care.

Annually, AWWA serves approximately 1,350 children across their EICs, making them an ideal community partner. In this phase, approximately 300 parents from this pool of parents are expected to be screened and provided needs-based support via the DayOne programme at AWWA during their child’s enrolment. These parents will be in addition to those screened at KKH DCD. This integrated approach reduces barriers to access mental health support for parents and aligns with national strategies to support mental health needs.

“Caregiver support has always been at the heart of AWWA’s work, from starting Singapore’s first Centre for Caregivers, to embedding caregiver support in all of our services across age groups today. As the needs of our community evolve, we must continue to strengthen our response. Through DayOne Phase II, we are deepening our focus on mental health, ensuring that caregivers of children with developmental needs receive the support they

need, early and consistently. When caregivers are well-supported, children thrive, families grow stronger, and communities become more inclusive,” said **Mr J R Karthikeyan, CEO, AWWA**.

2. “Hospital-to-Community” referral protocols

Parents screened and identified via DayOne to require high intensity support in Tier 4 of the DayOne service model will directly be referred to Allkin MHS, which runs government-funded community mental health teams such as Community Intervention Team (COMIT), and be treated as direct service users. Aside from accelerated support, this also means that Allkin MHS teams are able to continue caring for parents even after the child graduates from EIC (by age 6) if they experience a relapse, which is common for mental health conditions. After graduation, the parents will no longer have access to “In-EIC” mental health support which is tied to their child’s enrolment, making continuity through Allkin MHS essential.

Unlike Phase I, where parents with severe mental health concerns were referred to hospital-based psychiatry services — a model that may be associated with stigma — Phase II aims to be sustainable and resource efficient. Referring parents to Allkin MHS, a non-medical service, reduces stigma and is expected to lower default rates. Where necessary, Allkin MHS can further refer caregivers to hospital-based psychiatry services, polyclinics, or mental health-trained General Practitioners for medication.

Via cross-training and working alongside KKH DCD and AWWA EICs, Allkin MHS will develop new support expertise to address parents of children with developmental needs. This will be a new sub-domain to their mental health work which typically supports clients with dementia, caregivers and other mental health needs.

Allkin MHS, which serves 3,000 clients annually, will also establish a “Hospital-to-Community MHS” referral protocol that ensures that parents with higher mental health needs referred to it by KKH DCD will experience an accelerated and smoother transition of care¹.

“Parents of children with developmental needs often prioritise their child’s well-being over their own. By working closely with KKH DCD and AWWA EICs, we’re ensuring that mental health care follows them beyond the hospital and into their homes and communities,” said **Mr Fareez Fahmy, CEO of Allkin Singapore**. “Our Mental Health Service aims to support this emerging group of caregivers because parents’ mental well-being forms the foundation of a child’s growth. It’s about building continuity of care and showing parents that support is not only available, but within reach.”

¹ Parents identified with self-harm concerns will be referred to hospital-based psychiatry services instead of Allkin’s MHS.

Enhancing the intervention model at KKH DCD

Phase II builds on these insights to strengthen and sustain caregiver support. Moving beyond identification to enhancing the intervention model ensures that mental health care for parents becomes integrated, accessible, and sustainable.

This model involves two key strategies:

1. Upskilling MSWs and Care Coordinators to maximise resources:

- MSWs will deliver mental health interventions for parents with moderate mental health needs (Tier 3).
- Care Coordinators are trained to provide anticipatory guidance and self-care sessions for parents with mild mental health needs (Tier 2), focusing on coping, stress and anxiety management.

2. Introducing Dyadic Parent-Child Interventions

- Recognising that a parent's mental health and a child's development are deeply interconnected, Phase II will pilot parent-child relational interventions by psychologists. These interventions aim to reduce parenting stress — often cited as the biggest mental health challenge — and strengthen the parent-child bond, improving outcomes for both. (Refer Figure 3)

By embedding these enhancements into our model, KKH DCD is creating a sustainable, tiered system of care that addresses the mental health challenges of parents alongside their children's developmental needs. This holistic approach ensures that families receive the right level of support at the right time, improving well-being and treatment outcomes across the board.

Right-Siting Mental Health Support

Overall, it is important to note that the DayOne service model acknowledges and is designed to account for the fact that the severity of mental health challenges faced by the parent may not neatly correspond to the level of developmental needs of the child. In other words, some parents may struggle with significant mental health challenges despite having children with mild developmental needs, while others may cope well even when their children face severe developmental challenges.

That is why in DayOne, mental health support is designed to follow the parent where the child goes, thus removing the burden of having to navigate separate systems. Where the child receives care, the parent will receive care too. Both mothers and fathers, regardless of marital status, will be provided with equal support. By supporting parents based on their individual needs, DayOne promotes parental wellbeing and creates better outcomes for children.



KK Women's and
Children's Hospital
SingHealth



allkin



"DayOne integrates 3 government-funded services, namely the DCD, EICs, and community mental health services, making each more effective and efficient than if they work in isolation," said **Mr Ng Tze Yong, Programme Director, Lien Foundation.**

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About Lien Foundation

The Lien Foundation is a Singapore philanthropic house noted for its model of radical philanthropy. It breaks new ground by investing in innovative models of care, convening strategic partnerships and catalysing action at the intersection of health and social care. The Foundation's focus areas include palliative care, eldercare, rehabilitation care, and maternal & child health. For more information, visit www.lienfoundation.org.

About KK Women's and Children's Hospital

KK Women's and Children's Hospital (KKH) is Singapore's largest tertiary referral centre for obstetrics, gynaecology, paediatrics and neonatology. The academic medical centre specialises in the management of high-risk conditions in women and children.

Driven by a commitment to deliver compassionate, multidisciplinary care to patients, KKH leverages research and innovation to advance care. In 2021, the hospital launched the SingHealth Duke-NUS Maternal and Child Health Research Institute (MCHRI) to support the growth of every woman and child to their fullest potential, and transform national health in Singapore and the region.

Some of the hospital's breakthroughs include uSINE®, a landmark identification system for the administration of spinal epidural, the discovery of new genetic diseases like Jamuar Syndrome, and a series of guidelines for women and children to improve population health in the region.

The academic medical centre is also a major teaching hospital for Duke-NUS Medical School, Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine and Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine. In addition, KKH runs the largest specialist training programme for Obstetrics and Gynaecology, and Paediatrics in Singapore.

Founded in 1858, KKH marked its centenary as a maternity hospital, and welcomed its 1.6 millionth baby in 2024. For more information, visit www.kkh.com.sg

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About AWWA

AWWA was founded in 1970 by a group of volunteers supporting low-income families and has since evolved into one of Singapore's largest multi-service social service agencies. AWWA's multi-professional team supports the integration and inclusion of children with developmental needs, families with complex social issues, the elderly, and persons with additional needs so that they may



live out their various dreams and aspirations. AWWA is a registered charity with an Institution of a Public Character status.

Learn more about AWWA at www.awwa.org.sg.

About Allkin Singapore

Founded in 1978, Allkin Singapore (formerly known as AMKFSC Community Services) is a community-centric social service agency that believes everyone can create positive change, including those who seek help.

Each year, the organisation journeys with over 20,000 vulnerable individuals, including children, youth, families, seniors, and persons facing mental health challenges.

Beyond immediate support, Allkin unlocks opportunities for them to grow their potential, strengthen support networks, and shape their communities – helping them overcome challenges, build a brighter future, and inspire others to do the same.

Discover more about Allkin Singapore at <https://allkin.org.sg>