

Remember Who We Are

What if Dementia Care Goes Beyond Walls?



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Caring Beyond Walls:
A Guide for Day Care
Centres

Care for a Change?

Imagine being in an enclosed space you do not recognise. All day, you are asked to perform tasks whose purpose you cannot comprehend nor have any interest in. You cannot leave the space without permission too.

This is what many dementia day care centres (DDCCs) in Singapore feel like for the people they care for. Clients sometimes forget where they are and become fearful when they realise they are confined in a centre. The activities, although designed to support their well-being, do not appeal to everyone.



Being dementia friendly, we propose, isn't simply about caring for persons living with dementia (PLWDs). It's about creating space for them to participate and contribute to society. In 2022, AWWA's DDCC piloted Care Beyond Walls (CBW) to push the boundaries of dementia day care and redefine what it means to be dementia friendly.

Every day, groups of up to eight clients from our DDCCs spend time with our partner organisations. They take on a range of tasks that contribute to the needs of the partners while training their physical and cognitive functions. CBW also expands their social circles by connecting them with volunteers, therapists, cooks, librarians, teachers, children, priests and more.

Today, AWWA's clients are not only keen to go out but are also more willing to participate in activities at the centre. While our partners gain skills and confidence to engage with PLWDs, our DDCC care facilitators also discover new strengths in our clients and build stronger bonds with them.

It takes a community to truly care.

“Through these engagements, I learned to focus on [the seniors’] abilities rather than their limitations. I hope to introduce more structured roles or skills-based sessions in future to empower the participants even more.”

MS RESHMA TAZIM

Programme Executive, Sree Narayana Mission



“Caring for, and bonding with animals have therapeutic effects, which can provide a sense of companionship for seniors with dementia.”

MS KIERAN KUA

Head of Operations, SOSD



“Our students have learnt to care for seniors, to be more patient and understanding. Hopefully, this will contribute to better elder care at home and in society.”

MDM IZA MARIAH

Subject Head, Discipline
Elias Park Primary School



“Seniors and volunteers come together in the spirit of community at the monastery’s tranquil Zen Café... Tasking seniors with simple tasks can help boost their self-esteem and provide a sense of accomplishment.”

MR PUA LUCK KHENG

Manager, Community Development Unit,
Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery



“My mum has been absolutely beaming after each outing to Willing Hearts. She’s really connected with the volunteers and looks forward to every session. It’s heartwarming to see her so enthusiastic and engaged. I encourage other families to join because it’s clear that these outings bring so much joy and purpose to these seniors.”

MS SHARON LEE

Caregiver of a PLWD

“We recognise that music is a powerful tool for seniors living with dementia as it offers not just a means of engagement, but a way to express themselves and tap into fond memories. The activities that the seniors take part in at Faith Music Centre encourages movement, sparks creativity and helps maintain muscle memory.”

MR ALVIN YEO

Founder, Faith Music Centre



“For its visionary model that enhances dementia care practices, strengthening community partnerships, reshaping public perception, and standing as a national exemplar of excellence in community dementia care, the Care Beyond Walls – Re-defining Dementia Day Care team is awarded the National Community Care Excellence Team Award 2025.”

MINISTRY OF HEALTH

National Medical Excellence Awards 2025

Growing a Community for Dementia Care

Today, approximately 1 in 11 individuals aged 60 and above lives with dementia in Singapore.¹ When a person is diagnosed with dementia, they are usually referred to a dementia day care centre (DDCC), an indoor, gated facility that provides supervision and care for persons living with dementia (PLWDs) during the daytime. They are safe and cost-efficient.

However, this model of care misses the opportunity to nurture what PLWDs can do, learn or love. It is also not respectful nor realistic to confine each and every one of them as their numbers are expected to more than double to 152,000 by 2030.²

¹ https://www.imh.com.sg/Newsroom/News-Releases/Documents/WISE%202%20Press%20Release_28Aug_IMHFINAL.pdf
² <https://www.moh.gov.sg/newsroom/number-of-dementia-afflicted-patients-over-five-year-period-and-future-projections-for-singapore/pdf>

By bringing dementia care outside of DDCCs over the last three years, AWWA's Care Beyond Walls (CBW) programme has achieved the following:



82

Client participants



12

Partner organisations



300

Community participants



1,155

Interactions



788

Total volunteering hours



95.7%

(22 of 23 respondents)
of clients showed improved engagement in activity, interaction, arousal and affect



82.9%

(29 of 35 respondents)
of community participants showed improved attitudes towards dementia

“ Building the programme around activities outside of the centre meant that the seniors not only go through a range of activities that nurtures their cognitive abilities and aids in preventive care, but it also helped them participate in society, giving them a stronger sense of meaning and purpose.”



J R KARTHIKEYAN (KARTHIK), CEO, AWWA

“ Given the prevalence of dementia, it is imperative that wherever we work, live or play, we are intentional in welcoming their presence and even participation. People with dementia may forget, but we must remember to preserve their dignity, autonomy and quality of life.”



LEE POH WAH, CEO, LIEN FOUNDATION

A Journey of Partnerships

Bringing care beyond walls together



Credit: Lien Foundation

JULY 2022

Partnership with Elias Park Primary School

See page 20

DECEMBER 2022

Interview with CNA 938

JUNE 2021

A search for Care Beyond Walls partners begins!

2021

2022

MAY 2022

Partnership with Jamiyah Child Care Centre



Credit: Lien Foundation

NOVEMBER 2022

Partnership with Sri Darma Muneeswaran Temple

See page 26



Credit: Lien Foundation





FEBRUARY 2023

Partnership with Ang Mo Kio Public Library, Qian Hu Fish Farm and Willing Hearts



MAY 2023

Partnership with Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery



AUGUST 2023

Partnerships with Faith Music Centre and Presbyterian High School

See page 34



NOVEMBER 2023

Partnership with Sree Narayana Mission

See page 32

2023

MARCH 2023

Partnership with SOSD



JULY 2023

Partnership with Pei Chun Public School



Credit: Pei Chun Public School

SEPTEMBER 2023

Official Care Beyond Walls van hits the road





Credit: Lien Foundation

15 NOVEMBER 2024

Media launch of
Care Beyond Walls @
AWWA Dementia Day Care

JANUARY 2024

Food rescue partnership
with Nee Soon East
Community Club

2024

AUGUST 2024

Partnership with
SG Veg Farms

5 DECEMBER 2024

Launch of Care
Beyond Walls videos
by Lien Foundation



MARCH 2025

Partnership with
Northbrooks Secondary
School



2025

19 SEPTEMBER 2025

Receives the National Medical
Excellence Awards - Community
Care Excellence Team Award



Bringing Care Out to the Community

The Care Beyond Walls (CBW) programme by AWWA offers three pillars for partners to work with persons living with disabilities (PLWDs). Each taps into a different strength and ability to create opportunities for our clients to contribute and even shine!



INTERGENERATIONAL EXCHANGE



Most PLWDs are seniors, many of whom are grandparents. Thus, schools make excellent CBW partners. The seniors respond well to children and are less likely to disengage when spending time with them. It can be emotionally fulfilling for students to interact with PLWDs too. They can learn a dialect or gardening from these seniors, who retain procedural skills that they can share through doing. The students also develop empathy towards the seniors, an important virtue in Singapore's ageing society.

Where Generations Grow Together



Since 2022, students from Elias Park Primary School have been hosting seniors from AWWA's Dementia Day Care Centre (DDCC). The school is among many that have incorporated CBW into the Ministry of Education's Applied Learning and Values in Action programmes, which enable students to apply concepts learnt in the classroom in real-world situations.

At Elias Park, some 10 Primary 5 and 6 students from the "Eco Stewardship Team" spend three hours weekly with the seniors to practise and promote sustainability. They harvest mushrooms from the school's garden and create orchids from recycled materials as part of the school's National Day celebration, among many other activities.



Credit: Lien Foundation

While the students teach and occasionally remind the seniors how to fold paper into flowers, the seniors demonstrate, from muscle memory, ways to cut, twist or pull a mature plant. Such mutual learning has forged strong intergenerational bonds.

"The children are very helpful and talkative. Aditi and I like to sing, so I teach her to sing 'Rasa Sayang,'" Mr Hashim Ahmad, a retired security worker who has 14 grandchildren, tells The Straits Times.

His closest young friend, Primary 5 pupil Aditi Harihar, looks forward to seeing him each week too. "When I wake up on Wednesdays, I get excited thinking that I will meet the seniors again. My grandparents are in India, so Mr Hashim is like a grandpa to me," says the girl.



Learning Dialects from the OGs

Seniors in the early stages of dementia retain much knowledge that they can share with students, including their ability to speak dialects. Younger Singaporeans today are disconnected from these vernaculars and their associated cultures, which they can learn from these speakers.

In 2025, seven Secondary 2 students at Northbrooks Secondary School took weekly Hokkien lessons from AWWA's DDCC clients. During the session, students learned words and phrases across various themes, including self-introduction, greetings and interests. The seniors, in turn, gained a sense of accomplishment from imparting the ancestral language of many Chinese Singaporeans.



These bonds also develop into acts of kindness. The students support the seniors by holding their arms as they walk, offering tissues when someone needs to clear their throat, and pulling out chairs when they stand up. Even quieter students become more willing to express care.

“Our students have learnt to care for seniors, to be more patient and understanding. Hopefully, this will contribute to better elder care at home and in society,” says Mdm Iza Mariah, Subject Head, Discipline at Elias Park.

“It felt good, especially when the students were able to concentrate when I was teaching them,” says Mdm Ang Siyu Kie. “As elders, we should pass on our knowledge to the young ones.”



Before they started teaching, the seven senior participants held meetings to plan their lessons, considering factors such as opportunities for daily use. They also compiled a booklet of key phrases, which was distributed to the students and referenced in class.

“[Teaching] was not difficult because there was a booklet. If the students want to know more, they can ask us,” says Mdm Ong Chwee Lian. She adds that teaching helped seniors like herself stay mentally active “since we must think when we teach”.



Credit: Lien Foundation

VOLUNTEERING



Credit: Lien Foundation

PLWDs are not just recipients of care but can give it too—if presented with the right opportunities. CBW works with partners to identify and design activities that draw on the skills of PLWDs, including reading storybooks to children with learning needs, assembling oil lamps for Hindu temple prayers, and preparing ingredients for meal donations. These activities, undertaken while volunteering, help PLWDs maintain cognitive and motor skills, give meaning to therapeutic tasks and nurture a sense of purpose!

Lights of Awareness

Every week, a group of eight seniors turns up at the Sri Darma Muneeswaran Temple, even though most of them are not Hindus. Nevertheless, they devote their time to helping the temple prepare prayer offerings.

Several tasks need to be completed: arrange offerings, such as betel leaves and bananas; bag fresh roses for distribution to prayer attendees; braid cotton wicks for oil lamps.



Credit: Lien Foundation



While serving the temple, these seniors from AWWA's DDCC also practise their hand-eye coordination and fine motor skills, which are required for daily living. Twisting wicks strengthens in-hand manipulation. Arranging offerings exercises one's memory.

In a way, the programme takes therapy out of day care centres and incorporates it into activities that also serve partner organisations.

“Knowing they are contributing to others makes the seniors more motivated to perform these tasks that also keep them active,” says Ms Chua Shi Jia, AWWA’s senior occupational therapist and the programme’s leader.



Partnering with places of worship also allows PLWDs who, after diagnosis, tend to have a lesser chance of practising their religions, to seek solace in their symbolic rituals once again. Non-religious participants have found the tasks meaningful too.

“I enjoy working at the Hindu temple,” says Mr Koh, a retired accounts clerk. “I am not Hindu, but it doesn’t matter, because this was how we grew up in Singapore.”

According to Mr N. Vijayan, the temple’s treasurer, other devotees also learn from their interactions with the seniors to “be more curious and engaged in our outreach efforts”.

He adds, “We gain deeper awareness of community needs and are reminded that dignity and connection matter more than perfection.”

As it turns out, the seniors are the lights of awareness, like the oil lamps they prepare.



Credit: Lien Foundation

Willing Hearts and Hands



Whenever clients from AWWA’s DDCC arrive at Willing Hearts, they are greeted with enthusiastic welcomes—and baskets full of onions. Word on the street is that these seniors work fast, and the other volunteers are happy to have their help preparing the 10,000 daily meals for the needy.

While knives are kept away from the seniors for their safety, they can quickly peel vegetables or aromatics once tiny incisions have been made for them. They can even juggle a conversation with other volunteers at the table, discussing topics concerning any parent or ageing person.

“My mum has been absolutely beaming after each outing to Willing Hearts. She’s really connected with the volunteers and looks forward to every session. It’s heartwarming to see her so enthusiastic and engaged,” says Ms Sharon Lee, a caregiver of one senior.

CBW introduces a wider range of activities to day care centre clients, allowing staff to identify more tasks that the clients can still perform and should therefore be reinforced. The seniors who have been volunteering at Willing Hearts are now also helping out in the day care centre's kitchen, maintaining the physical functions related to kitchen tasks.

"I encourage other families to join because it's clear that these outings bring so much joy and purpose to these seniors," Ms Lee adds.



LEARNING AND DISCOVERY



A common misconception about dementia is that it traps patients in a cycle of losses and failures, and that the best they can hope for is to slow it down. But PLWDs are still capable of learning—and gaining. CBW creates opportunities for them to pursue an interest, learn a skill or discover something new. It also gives them comfort to know they can still grow and make progress in their lives.

Helping Others, While Helping Themselves



When they first visited the Sree Narayana Mission in 2023, the six seniors from AWWA's DDCC knew little about cooking or gardening, or had lost these abilities. But they were curious and eager to learn. Since visiting the mission twice a month, the PLWDs can now work independently on various tasks.

Today, cutting, cleaning and frying are not things others do for them, but what they do with others, specifically the mission's nursing home residents.



"I enjoyed meal preparation. It reminded me of the times when I cooked for my children," says Mdm Soh Mee Leng, one of the senior participants. "If left to myself, I would not be confident doing such a thing. But with guidance from peers, volunteers and staff, I can follow."

Besides allowing the seniors to practise these skills under supervision, the monthly visits to the mission also gave them a chance to meet and contribute to other seniors in need. The programme also shows charities such as Sree Narayana that help can come from unexpected individuals too.

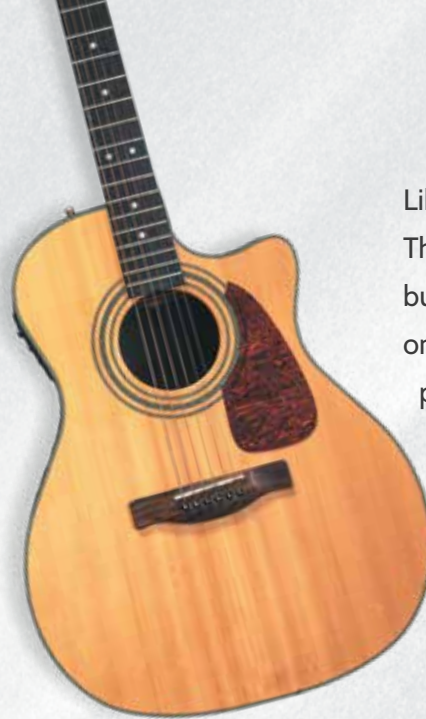
"Through these engagements, I learned to focus on [the seniors'] abilities rather than their limitations," says Ms Reshma Tazim, the mission's programme executive. "I hope to introduce more structured roles or skills-based sessions in future to empower the participants even more."



Finding Their Voice

"I love music! It makes my heart happy when I sing, especially with people who enjoy music too!" Mr Remus Tan exclaims.

For the first time in his life, the 74-year-old tried his hand at the drums and guitar. It was part of the lessons conducted by Faith Music Centre for PLWDs from AWWA DDCC.



Like Mr Tan, who is a long-time fan of the English pop-rock band The Bee Gees, the other senior participants are also music lovers but never had the chance to learn it. They were introduced not only to various music instruments but also taught to sing, and the programme culminated with the seniors performing at the People's Association's Singing Lotus Concert in 2023.

Songs, especially familiar ones, are not merely lyrics to remember or notes to master. Mr Alvin Yeo, the founder of Faith Music Centre, believes they can provide PLWDs with comfort and a sense of security too.

"Music is a powerful tool for seniors living with dementia as it offers not just a means of engagement, but also a way to express themselves and tap into fond memories."



Be a partner!

Join AWWA's growing community of partners bringing care beyond walls:

Schools

1. Anderson Primary School
2. Elias Park Primary School
3. Jamiyah Child Care Centre
4. Northbrooks Secondary School
5. Pei Chun Public School
6. Presbyterian High School

Religious groups

1. Sri Darma Muneeswaran Temple
2. Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery

Other organisations

1. Sree Narayana Mission
2. Faith Music Centre
3. Willing Hearts
4. SOSD
5. SG Veg Farms

Schools, in particular, make great CBW partners because PLWDs have much to offer students. They can volunteer to share their knowledge or learn alongside them—all while facilitating inter-generational exchanges!

Student Group Size: <10

Active Participation

Co-volunteering on school premises, such as maintaining a garden.

Mentoring students in traditional skills, such as knitting, sewing, calligraphy, chess or traditional games.

Teaching students a subject that PLWDs has expertise in, such as dialects.

Joining simple drama or skit performances related to heritage or values education.

Selective Participation

Participating in simple science activities where tasks are clearly structured, such as planting seeds.

Joining Values in Action (VIA) discussions where PLWDs can share their reflections.

Passive Participation

Sitting in during storytelling sessions led by teachers or students.

Legend: ● Intergenerational Exchange ● Volunteering ● Learning and Discovery

Student Group Size: Up to 40

Active Participation

Joining school-based service-learning projects as collaborators, such as making care packs together.

Joining Co-Curricular Activities such as Chinese calligraphy, choir and dance.

Serving as guest judges for classroom competitions with guided criteria, such as storytelling and art contests.

Attending classes with hands-on participation, such as Home Economics. Schools can work with occupational therapists to ensure the tasks are suitable for PLWDs.

Selective Participation

Attending basic mathematics or English lessons. Schools can work with occupational therapists to design the class content, such as a spelling contest.

Joining reading circles where PLWDs can take turns reading short passages or simply follow along.

Contributing to art and craft sessions, such as colouring and making festive decorations.

Passive Participation

Watching classroom presentations or project showcases.

Legend: ● Intergenerational Exchange ● Volunteering ● Learning and Discovery

Student Group Size: >40

Active Participation

Supporting environmental initiatives, such as recycling drives and upcycling crafts.

Selective Participation

Attending music appreciation sessions to sing familiar songs or tap along to rhythms.

Passive Participation

Visiting school exhibitions, such as National Day displays and science fairs.

Attending school concerts as an audience.

Legend: ● Intergenerational Exchange ● Volunteering ● Learning and Discovery



Frequently Asked Questions

*Wondering if your organisation could be a partner?
Here are common queries about CBW.*

Our staff are not trained. Will your staff be present?

All seniors participating in CBW sessions are accompanied by staff from AWWA's Dementia Day Care Centre. This ensures seniors' safety, and when necessary, the staff also acts as intermediaries between the students and seniors.

Is it safe for the seniors?

Our care team, including occupational therapists, assesses suitable seniors based on their cognitive and physical abilities, interests, occupations, skills and other known facts from their life histories. The seniors are then matched with the programmes that are most appropriate for and relevant to them.

What if a senior falls?

Our staff accompanying the seniors are trained to respond to emergency situations. If teachers or students are present and able to help, the staff will give instructions on the types of assistance needed.

Are the seniors comfortable visiting a place of worship that is different from their own religion?

Both the seniors and their caregivers have been informed about the visit. They are happy to contribute as long as they do not participate in any ritual or prayer.

Is it safe for PLWDs to work in the kitchen?

Only seniors with relatively high cognitive and functional abilities are selected for CBW programmes. We also take precautions to keep them away from sharp or hot objects. Caregivers have been informed of the potential risks associated with the activity.

How have parents of participating schools responded to CBW?

Parents have expressed support for the programme. If necessary, schools may obtain parental consent for students' participation in CBW.

How long must we commit?

AWWA aims to build long-term partnerships. Every partnership is unique due to logistical and operational differences. CBW programmes vary depending on the partner's schedule. Some partners prefer weekly sessions over several months, while others opt for monthly, bi-monthly, quarterly or even ad hoc sessions.

Do we need to pay?

Your welcome is all we need!



SOSD
Feeding toy preparation



Anderson Primary
*Learning how to pot plants
using recycled materials*



**Kong Meng San Phor
Kark See Monastery**
Cleaning up the cafe for guests



Willing Hearts
*Preparing ingredients
for a soup kitchen*

WHEN DEMENTIA CARE GOES BEYOND WALLS



*Join us in breaking down
the walls of dementia care!*



Ang Mo Kio Public Library
*Seniors teaching one
another how to sew*



Jamiyah Child Care
*Completing an art
project together*



Qian Hu Fish Farm
*Feeding terrapins while
learning about them*



Presbyterian High School
*Playing games designed by the
students*



Faith Music Centre
Singing live before an audience



Caring Beyond Walls: A Guide for Day Care Centres

Ready to reimagine care in your Dementia Day Care Centre (DDCC)? Here are seven steps to kickstart your own Care Beyond Walls (CBW) programme:

Step 1: Get your staff on board

DDCC staff play a vital role in the success of a CBW programme. Help your team see the benefits it brings to PLWDs and their work to motivate them to adjust their routines.

- 1. What?**
CBW redefines dementia day care by taking PLWDs outside of day care centres to participate in activities with various host organisations. The activities include:
 - Volunteering: Giving back to the community through meaningful engagements.
 - Intergenerational Exchange: Leveraging experience and residual skills to teach the young.
 - Learning & Discovery: Tapping into personal interests and motivations to enrich lives.
- 2. Why?**
CBW empowers PLWDs to use their residual skills, nurture their cognitive abilities and stay active within the community. They contribute to the host organisations rather than receive care from them, which elevates their dignity and quality of life.
- 3. Who?**
PLWDs assessed as having adequate residual abilities (see Step 2). This ensures that the DDCC staff accompanying them can care for them.
- 4. How?**
CBW can work with the existing number of DDCC staff especially if it also involves participants from the host organisations.

“After CBW, I realised they can do many things on their own.”

Dementia care beyond walls not only benefits clients but also transforms DDCC staff. Just ask Sandar Htwe (S) and Kevin Legaspi (K), care facilitators at AWWA Dementia Day Care Centre, who saw a different side of their clients.

How did CBW change the way you see your clients?

S: In the centre, they don't have many opportunities to introduce themselves, but they are very sociable during CBW programmes. When they meet someone new, they introduce themselves. “I am so and so. We are from AWWA Day Care Centre.” They are not afraid of strangers. They smile and say hello to passersby too. One time, we encountered a flight of stairs, almost 50 steps. I wasn't sure if they could climb it. I was surprised they could! They were surprised too. When we reached the top, I asked them to look back and see how far they had climbed. It made them happy to know they could do that. It is good for their mental health.

K: CBW helps clients reminisce. When we visit new places, they say, “Oh, I've been here. It used to be like that when I was young.” The clients share their memories with other clients too. Because they see something that triggers their memory, they become more talkative and participate more actively.



Credit: Sandra Htwe

Does this change the way you interact with them too?

S: Yes. When we see what they can do, we try it at our centre. After finding out they could climb many steps, we asked them to stand during their exercise at the centre. Usually, they are seated for their safety. But after the outing, we encouraged them to stand instead. After volunteering at Willing Hearts, we asked them to help us in the centre's kitchen. Take the bowls out of the cabinet. Scoop the food. In the past, we did it for them because we had to portion the meals. But it is important they keep doing what they are still capable of to slow the deterioration of their dementia.

How has CBW given you a different perspective of caregiving?

S: In the past, I thought I had to do everything for the clients. Even wearing shoes for them. But after CBW, I realised they can do many things on their own. Now I feel I can plan and create activities for them. I can think of ways they can help out at the centre so that they don't deteriorate so quickly. If we don't try, we'll never know.

K: I like CBW because the clients like it. They cannot express themselves, but I can tell they are happy. When they are in a good mood, they listen to us better and are more likely to participate in activities at the centre.



Credit: Kevin Legaspi

Step 2: Prepare your clients

It is important to assess the functional and cognitive abilities of PLWDs to ensure they can participate in a CBW programme. This not only safeguards their well-being but also ensures they can engage meaningfully with the host organisations.

Assess abilities

Occupational therapists (OTs) should first determine the activity levels their clients can undertake. You can use the checklist below, adapted from the Pool Activity Level (PAL) Instrument developed by Dr Jackie Pool, to tailor activities to the cognitive and functional abilities of PLWDs. It categorises PLWDs into four groups based on their participation levels and the assistance they require to perform daily tasks.

Activity level	Characteristics of PLWD	Example of daily task	Suitable for CBW
Planned	Plans and carries out familiar tasks independently.	Plans outfit and puts them on in correct sequence.	Yes
Exploratory	Follows simple instructions and learns by doing.	Needs help planning outfits but recognises the items and ways to wear them.	Yes
Sensory	Responds mainly to sensory stimuli such as music.	Needs instructions and sometimes assistance to put on outfits in sequence.	Yes, with support
Reflex	Reacts reflexively most of the time.	Totally dependent on caregiver to plan and dress up.	No

Gather personal stories

Learning about your clients' interests and strengths allows you to tailor CBW activities to them. Document their biographies and preferences using the PAL Personal History Profile, which consists of five categories of questions:

Likes and dislikes

- What do you enjoy these days?
- What activities would you like to try?
- What cheers you up?
- What do you not like to eat?

Preferences

- What time do you like to go to bed?
- Which tasks would you want help with?
- Which tasks do you wish to carry out independently?

Childhood/Adolescence

- Where did you live?
- Which schools did you go to?
- Did you join any clubs in school?

Adulthood

- What was your job?
- Do you have a partner? What is your partner's name?
- Who are your friends and how did you meet them?

Retirement

- When did you retire?
- What did you look forward to?
- What were the biggest changes after retirement?

Separating genders

Some PLWDs suitable for CBW may exhibit inappropriate sexual behaviour due to loss of inhibition. They may not be suitable for programmes that involve interactions with the opposite gender.

Step 3: Build partnerships

Based on the needs and preferences identified in Step 2, you can seek out suitable CBW activities and partners.

- **Identify common themes** in clients' interests, hobbies or previous jobs. For example, if many enjoy reading, form a book club and partner with a library. A volunteer programme at an animal shelter would be suitable if many of your clients are pet owners or love animals.
- **Seek suitable host organisations in your neighbourhood.** This is convenient for your client and staff, and it reduces travel time. It also deepens clients' connections with the neighbourhood, laying a foundation for place-based care. Potential host organisations include schools, childcare centres and town councils. Food businesses could use help preparing ingredients too!
- **Reach out to host organisations:**
 - » Introduce your organisation
 - » Explain how CBW works
 - » Give examples of activities that may bring value to the host organisation too.
- **Visit the host organisation** to recce the site where the activity will be held. An OT should be present to discuss and look out for the following:
 - » Ratio of participants to clients
 - » Possibility to carry out appropriate activities or tasks
 - » Feasible schedule for the programme
 - » Safety and mobility on site
 - » Safety and accessibility of the toilets
 - » Need for dementia training
 - » Select clients who match your CBW programme and schedule.

“We help partners see PLWDs as individuals with likes, dislikes and even skills.”

A successful partnership starts with a good understanding of your clients, says Chua Shi Jia (SJ), Senior Occupational Therapist at AWWA and the project lead for its CBW programme.

How did you begin to develop partnerships for CBW?

SJ: Even before reaching out to partners, we have to understand our clients. We implemented the pool activity level (PAL) checklist at our Dementia Day Care Centres to identify who is suitable for CBW and their appropriate levels of engagement based on cognitive and functional abilities. We shared this information with our partners to help them plan appropriate activities. In addition, we recorded our clients' life histories through what we call My Fable-ous Saga. It covered their personal biography, daily routine, childhood, adulthood and retirement. This knowledge helped us to tailor programmes to their interests. For example, some clients love dogs, so we got them to volunteer at a dog shelter. If a client used to do calligraphy, we encourage him to reminisce and share images of his work.

How do you typically prepare partners for CBW?

SJ: Organisations are hesitant to host PLWDs usually because they know little about dementia. They are afraid they might cause harm to our clients. We will offer to give them a dementia awareness talk and teach them ways to engage with PLWDs. We also share information about our clients, gathered from PAL and My Fable-ous Saga, to help them see PLWDs as individuals with likes, dislikes and even skills that may correspond with what they are looking for.

An occupational therapist (OT) will also attend the first few CBW sessions to facilitate conversations and help partners build rapport with our clients. Most partners gain confidence after interacting with our clients in person.

Does this process apply to every partnership?

SJ: Some partners are non-profit organisations whose programmes are task-focused and rely on walk-in volunteers. Sharing clients' profiles is unnecessary in these cases. For example, at Willing Hearts, volunteers, including our clients, focus on peeling garlic and kangkong rather than interacting with one another. An intimate understanding of our clients is not essential.



Credit: Pei Chun Public School

Step 4: Co-design activities

CBW activities should match your clients' activity levels. They should also be meaningful but not critical to the operations of host organisations. This eases the pressure for everyone.

Activity level	Type of CBW activities	How to support?
Planned	<p>Somewhat complex and competitive to motivate clients. They should comprise a series of steps leading towards a goal or an end product. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Memory games • Word quizzes • Cooking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep the materials in their usual, familiar places. • Explain the task in short and simple sentences. Avoid connecting phrases such as “and”, “but” or “therefore”. • Give them time to respond. Repeat the instructions only if they struggle to recall them. • Encourage problem solving with gentle prompts. • Demonstrate ways to avoid errors. • Demonstrate the solution and invite them to copy only if they can't solve the problem independently. • Encourage them to initiate conversations.

Activity level	Type of CBW activities	How to support?
Exploratory	<p>Creative and spontaneous, preferably without the pressure to achieve a specific result. They can be based on shared interests, hobbies or skills. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Art & craft • Food tasting • Board games or online games • Reminiscing • Gardening • Flower arrangement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Place the materials in their line of vision. • Explain the task in short and simple sentences. Avoid connecting phrases such as “and”, “but” or “therefore” and prepositions such as “in”, “by” or “for”. • Repeat the instructions if they struggle to recall them. • Break down the activity into steps. • Encourage host organisation participants to approach the clients first.
Sensory	<p>Repetitive tasks that enhance sensory experiences are most suitable. For examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wiping tables • Peeling vegetable fibre • Song and dance • Exercises 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage them to touch the objects or materials to make them aware of their presence. • Limit verbal instructions and demonstrate the action instead. Show how to hold the brush rather than say “hold the brush”. • Break down the activity into steps and convey one step at a time. • Encourage host organisation participants to approach the clients first. • Call out clients' names to sustain interactions.

Step 5: Build dementia awareness

Host organisations hesitate to participate in CBW partly because they lack knowledge of dementia. You could invite them to your DDCC to understand dementia and meet with your clients. You may also give a talk on dementia awareness to help them feel more confident about interacting with PLWDs. Here are some topics to cover:

- What is dementia?
- What are its effects on mood, behaviours and abilities?
- What are the signs and symptoms?
- How should one interact with PLWDs? For example:
 - » Speak simply and slowly.
 - » Ask closed-ended questions that elicit yes or no answers.
 - » Ask one question at a time.
 - » Be patient and give them time to think and respond.
 - » Reassure and praise them to increase their self-esteem.
 - » Be respectful. Do not treat them like children
 - » Acknowledge their concerns to calm them down.
 - » Do not test their memory or ask them what they did recently.
 - » Smile, listen and maintain eye contact!

Step 6: Get buy-in from caregivers

Caregivers play a key role in CBW programmes. They remind PLWDs of their upcoming session and encourage them to practise the skills they have acquired during the programme to enhance retention. If a client is eligible for CBW, explain to the caregiver why their loved one should participate:

- Describe the activity from start to end.
- Notify of the possible risks and the precautions that will be taken (e.g. clients will not work with knives in the kitchen).
- Get signed consent.

“Clients are volunteers, not care recipients”

CBW activities should be something clients can do for partners rather than the other way around.

How do you plan the activities partners offer?

SJ: We are open to suggestions from our partners. They may have existing initiatives they wish to incorporate or on-site facilities we could use. For example, many schools have a garden. Our clients have helped to harvest vegetables and pull out weeds. If there's cooking to be done, they can peel vegetables or ladle food into bowls. If there's a recycling centre, they can sort the waste.

How is CBW different from social outings?

Sj: A social outing typically involves clients visiting a venue while the partnering organisation supports and entertains them. The spirit of CBW is different. Our clients take on non-critical tasks to contribute and add value to the organisation. They are volunteers, not care recipients. Whenever a new CBW partner suggests doing something for our clients, we guide them towards activities they can do with our clients, and eventually tasks that our clients can do for them.

How do you sustain CBW partnerships?

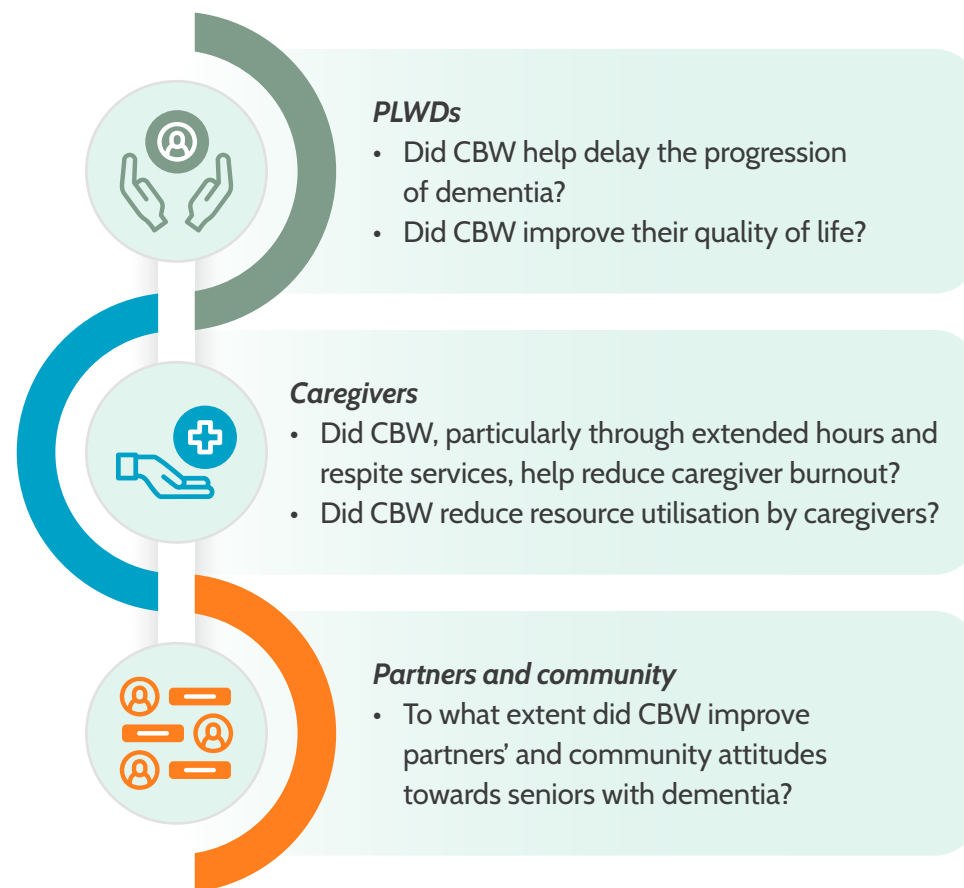
Sj: We are keen on long-term relationships, and our partners appreciate that. This is only possible if we recognise operational challenges and allow for flexibility. If it's raining and it's unsafe for either party, we can cancel the session. If the partner does not have enough manpower, they are free to cancel. When our manpower is down, please expect cancellations too. This way, no one needs to feel they are disappointing the other party.




Credit: Lien Foundation

Step 7: Measure impact







Before you implement CBW, ensure that you have a robust evaluation plan to measure the programme's effectiveness for all stakeholders. Collect both quantitative and qualitative data to understand its holistic impact.




The following tools are useful measures of the impact of a CBW programme:







PLWDs

-  Delayed exits due to functional decline
-  **Length of Stay (LOS)** measures the length in which clients are supported by your day care centre between the dates of admission and discharge. A longer LOS suggests that clients are adequately supported and did not deteriorate to a condition that requires more intensive support.
-  Improved quality of life
-  **Dementia Quality of Life Instrument (DEMQOL)-Proxy** measures the perceived impact of a health condition on everyday life. It is an interviewer-administered questionnaire reported by the caregiver on behalf of PLWDs. The questionnaire consists of 31 items rated on a four-point scale. A higher score indicates a higher health-related quality of life.
-  Improved engagement levels
-  **Assessment Scale for Engagement in Activities (ASEA)** measures engagement levels across four domains: activity, interaction, arousal and affect. It consists of 10 items rated on a three-point scale. A higher score indicates better engagement.



Caregivers

-  Reduction or slower increase in caregiver burden
-  **Zarit Burden Interview Screening** measures caregiver' burden, highlighting the emotional, physical and social effects of caregiving. The survey consists of four items rated on a five-point scale. A higher score indicates greater caregiving burden.
-  Reduction or slower increase in costs of patient care and caregiver time
-  **Resource Utilisation in Dementia – Lite Version** records the use of healthcare resources by PLWDs. Caregivers are asked to recall resources used in the last month across a range of activities.



Partners and Community



Increase in positive attitudes towards PLWDs and their caregivers



Dementia Attitude Scale (DAS)

measures an individual's attitudes towards dementia. The questionnaire consists of 20 items rated on a seven-point scale. A higher score indicates more positive attitudes.

In addition to the above, you may also conduct interviews and focus group discussions with caregivers, eligible clients, staff and CBW partners to gather qualitative data on how CBW has impacted them and their attitudes towards PLWDs.



Ideal outcome



Measuring tool

“Now, we have clients who join our centre solely for CBW!”

The benefits of bringing dementia care beyond walls benefits clients time in DDCCs and their everyday lives too.

How has CBW benefited clients at your DDCCs?

SJ: Clients who did not use to sit at the same table now do so after an outing together. We also have clients who used to hover at the door wanting to leave the centre, but they now mingle with others and hover around the breakfast area instead! CBW has also helped our care staff see a fuller picture of our clients. They see what clients are capable of when they prepare food or read together. When they see “difficult” clients enjoying themselves in a different social setting, they realise these clients are not difficult but simply not engaged in a way they prefer. These perspectives encourage more people-centred care in the DDCCs.

What do caregivers of your clients think about CBW?

SJ: They have been supportive. Some were surprised that their loved ones could perform the tasks they did at CBW. They didn't know because there wasn't an opportunity to do the same task at home. Now, we have clients who join our centres solely for CBW!

What's next for AWWA's CBW programme?

SJ: We rolled out CBW with any organisation willing to work with us, but most are far from our DDCCs. We are seeking partners within the neighbourhood. This will not only reduce travel times but also deepen place-based care.

