

# New centre set up to research ways to form healthy habits in people

Plans include testing novel interventions such as wearables, apps and games

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A research centre using behavioural insights to improve strategies for getting people to adopt healthy habits was launched on April 3.

For a start, the centre will focus on developing strategies to help people prevent infectious diseases, age well, tackle health issues like mental health, obesity and diabetes, and go for cancer screening.

It is the first behavioural health research centre in Singapore that bridges academia and clinical practice, said NTU and the National Healthcare Group (NHG), which jointly set up the facility.

At the Asian Centre for Health Behavioural Insights and Interventions, or Habits, behavioural scientists will work with medical doctors to develop effective interventions to improve health.

Professor Chong Phui-Nah, clinical director of Habits, said the centre will work with other healthcare organisations and government entities, including the Ministry of Health and Health Promotion Board, to implement its research findings.

Surveys have shown that there is a clear gap between intention and action when it comes to managing health.

For example, while people are aware of the importance of breast or colorectal cancer screening and want to go for it, the actual number of people who do so is lower,

said the centre's director, Professor May Oo Lwin.

With plans to test novel interventions such as wearables, apps and games, the centre will develop and test strategies that make healthy behavioural changes more sustainable, said Prof Lwin, who is associate provost of faculty affairs at NTU.

At the launch, Dr Janil Puthucheary, Senior Minister of State for Health and Digital Development and Information, said the centre will contribute to addressing population health concerns in Singapore and other Asian countries, through public health research

**Dr Janil Puthucheary, Senior Minister of State for Health and Digital Development and Information, said the centre will contribute to addressing population health concerns in Singapore and other Asian countries, through public health research and evidence-based interventions.**

and evidence-based interventions.

Preliminary findings from a 10-country study involving about 10,000 participants in Asia have shown that Singaporeans still rely heavily on healthcare providers for health information.

This contrasts with the West, where there is greater distrust and less reliance on healthcare providers, noted Prof Lwin.

In Singapore, healthcare providers can play a crucial role in helping individuals maintain healthier habits – often the most challenging part of lifestyle change.

A common challenge that family physicians face, said Prof Chong, is getting patients with diabetes and other chronic diseases to lose weight, eat healthily and exercise.

“They would promise me... to lose, very specifically, 2kg – from 64kg to 62kg, for instance. (They would say) ‘the next time I see you, Prof Chong, you will be very proud of me.’”

But they would return, saying sheepishly that their weighing machine was faulty or that they had failed to lose weight because they were celebrating Chinese New Year, said Prof Chong, who is also a senior adviser and senior consultant (Family Medicine) at NHG.

“The older ones will tell you, ‘I’ve got children, and they want to take me out, so I just eat’ or ‘I’ve got neighbours who bring cakes over, so I just eat them; otherwise they’ll be wasted.’”

These are among the behavioural challenges that Habits aims to tackle, said Prof Chong, who is the former CEO of NHG Polyclinics.

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### ST fund beneficiaries try out rugby with top players



Former US Rugby Sevens captain Abby Gustaitis (far right) and Great Britain Rugby Sevens captain Harry Glover (back row, second from left) taking a selfie with beneficiaries of The Straits Times School Pocket Money Fund (STSPMF) at a coaching clinic on April 2. Hosted by HSBC in partnership with the STSPMF, the clinic gave about 30 secondary school children the chance to learn from some of the world's best players at the National Stadium, where the HSBC SVNS Singapore will take place from April 5 to 6. STSPMF aims to support children from low-income families by providing financial assistance to help them through school. In addition to the rugby clinic, the children, together with their parents, will also be invited to catch the event this weekend and participate in the HSBC Fun Zone, an area specially created for HSBC customers. ST PHOTO: AZMI ATHNI

## New HomeTeamNS clubhouse in Tengah due to be ready by 2031

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With two state-of-the-art HomeTeamNS clubhouses already operating in Khatib and Bedok Reservoir, Home Affairs Minister K. Shanmugam has said a third clubhouse in Tengah should be ready by 2031.

He shared some details about the new clubhouse during the HomeTeamNS Awards 2025 event held at the Khatib clubhouse on April 3.

Mr Shanmugam told over 200 guests at the event that the Ministry of Home Affairs appreciates the contributions of Home Team NSmen, a community with more than 270,000 members.

“HomeTeamNS, through its clubhouses and activities, is another way we recognise our NSmen's contributions, build a stronger Home Team community,” said Mr Shanmugam, who is also Law Minister.

The Tengah clubhouse will have a “Great Outdoors” theme with facilities such as an outdoor adventure centre, villas, an indoor children's playground and sheltered futsal courts.

It will replace the HomeTeamNS clubhouse in Bukit Batok.

To show its appreciation, the Government disbursed LifeSG credits worth \$200 to each national serviceman in November 2024, and will raise the monthly NSF allowance by \$35 to \$75 from July 1.

Acknowledging the important role that NSmen play in the Home Team, Mr Shanmugam said: “You work and train next to our regular officers, you perform many of the same duties – you patrol the streets, you fight crime, you respond to fires, you deal with medical emergencies, you deal with a variety of incidents and much more.”

“Your contributions have helped to keep the Home Team working well and to keep Singapore safe and secure.”

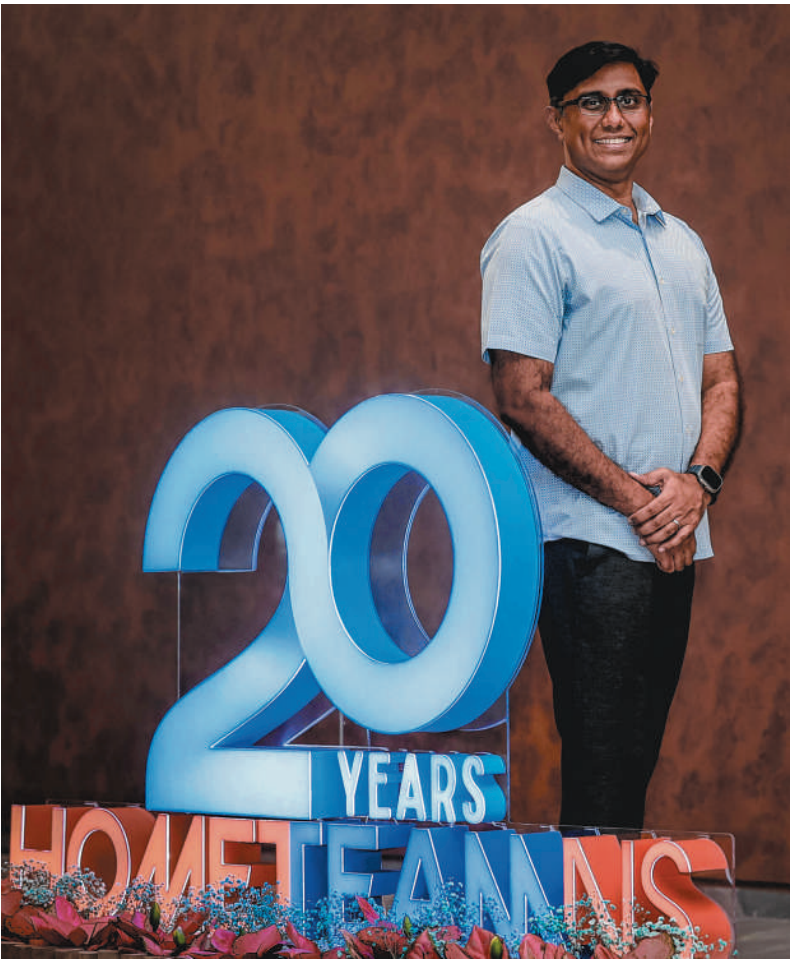
To meet modern-day challenges, the Home Team will call on the expertise of its NSmen. They will be deployed, based on their expertise, to roles where they can tap their skills and knowledge from their civilian professions.

These areas of expertise include medicine, engineering, digital media and psychology, said Mr Shanmugam, noting that the Home Team will “study how to expand this to more areas in the future”.

The new clubhouses in Khatib and Bedok Reservoir have been very well received, generating a strong sense of pride among the Home Team community, he added.

To make life more convenient for NSmen, HomeTeamNS has turned to technology to make access to its services and promotions easier.

Almost 90 per cent of its members have downloaded the HomeTeamNS app. In 2024, HomeTeamNS achieved a 90 per cent



Colonel Jahan De Silva Din Abdullah, who received the Platinum Meritorious Award at the HomeTeamNS Awards 2025 event on April 3, said NSmen can help ensure the continued success of the clubhouses. ST PHOTO: GAVIN FOO

satisfaction rating from over 6,000 Ordinary members who participated in the annual members' engagement survey.

At the awards ceremony, 60 volunteers and corporate partners who made exemplary contributions were recognised.

Forty-three volunteers received the Long Service Award, 15 received the Meritorious Award and two corporate partners were honoured with the Friends of Home-

TeamNS Award.

Colonel Jahan De Silva Din Abdullah, who has been contributing actively to the HomeTeamNS management committee since 2017, received the Platinum Meritorious Award.

As chairman of the information and technology committee, COL Jahan's strategic oversight was important in operationalising information technology for the new generation of HomeTeamNS clubhouses in Khatib and Bedok Reservoir, said Mr Shanmugam.

The 45-year-old IT director at a small and medium-sized enterprise told The Straits Times: “I firmly believe that HomeTeamNS is ‘for NSmen, by NSmen’; so NSmen like us must step up and contribute, ensuring the continued success of the clubhouses.”

HomeTeamNS will mark its 20th anniversary in 2025 with a year-long celebration comprising events and promotions for NSmen and their families.

The events include a roving exhibition across the clubhouses showcasing HomeTeamNS' history and future plans, and a charity dinner in November.

New benefits for members will also be rolled out through strategic partnerships with Golden Village, Kopitiam and Shell.

Ms Agnes Eu, chief executive of HomeTeamNS, said it is a community where lasting relationships and shared experiences among NSmen are forged.

“This anniversary celebrates the invaluable connections that bind our Home Team family, offering exclusive rewards and opportunities for us to grow even stronger together,” she added.

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## THE STRAITS TIMES MASTERCLASS

### Writing stories for children



**Pitched at teachers, parents and aspiring writers, this full-day workshop introduces participants to writing picture books suitable for children between two and five years old.**

**Workshop outline**

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- Types of children's books
- Characteristics of children's picture books
- Basic techniques for narrative writing
- Basics of good writing
- Leaving space for artwork
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- Getting published

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**Fee : \$400 a person**  
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**Trainer**

**Felix Cheong** is a best-selling author of 30 books across different genres, from poetry to fiction to graphic novels. He has also published eight children's picture books, including *Use Your Head*, which has sold more than 10,000 copies, and *A Busy Day For Meow Meow*, which was shortlisted for the Readers' Choice Award in 2021.

A recipient of the National Arts Council's Young Artist Award in 2000, Mr Cheong has participated in writers' festivals all over the world, such as in Edinburgh, Austin and Sydney. He has a master's in creative writing and is a university adjunct lecturer.

