



IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Lions Befrienders and Republic Polytechnic Partner to Launch Structured Befriending Curriculum to Strengthen Social Connectedness in Super-Aged Singapore

SINGAPORE, 2 September 2026 — Lions Befrienders (LB) Singapore and Republic Polytechnic (RP) today announced a strategic collaboration to co-develop an evidence-backed, structured training curriculum for senior befriending. As Singapore prepares for a super-aged future, the initiative marks a vital shift in eldercare capability—***moving beyond basic volunteer orientation to professionalise relational care***, manage complex psychosocial needs, and prevent senior isolation through sustained, intergenerational connection.

Since 1995, Lions Befrienders has supported vulnerable older adults, currently serving more than 13,000 seniors nationwide. However, the operating landscape has evolved rapidly. Findings from the ***National Population Health Survey 2022 revealed that one in three seniors aged 60 and above experiences loneliness, while dementia cases among older adults are projected to reach 152,000 by 2030.*** To address challenges spanning cognitive decline, grief, social withdrawal, and safeguarding concerns, LB commissioned RP to design a rigorous, 24-hour training pathway that prepares volunteers for modern befriending realities.

Two-Tier Structured Curriculum

The newly developed curriculum replaces traditional half-day briefings with a two-tier, competency-assessed framework grounded in academic research:

- **Level 1: Foundational Befriending (Two Days / Face-to-Face):** Focuses on role clarity, active listening, and boundaries. Learners apply the **WARM conversation framework** (Welcome with Respect, Attune to pace, Respond, Make space), the **Decision Lens** for safety and escalation decisions, and the **FACT model** (Facts, Ask, Care/action, Trigger) for structured visit documentation.
- **Level 2: Advanced Relational Practice (16 Hours):** Tailored for befrienders with at least three months of field experience. Grounded in **Tom Kitwood's theory of personhood** and the **GUIDE reflection framework**, it prepares volunteers to navigate complex scenarios, emotional withdrawal, and end-of-life conversations. Certification requires passing a 15-minute simulated role-play assessment evaluating empathy, boundary management, and risk response.



"Preparing for a healthy and fulfilling old age cannot wait until retirement; it must begin decades earlier through the social habits and meaningful relationships we cultivate across all generations," said **Ms Karen Wee, Executive Director of Lions Befrienders**. "As the needs of our seniors grow in complexity, befriending can no longer rely on good intentions alone. By pairing our ground experience with Republic Polytechnic's pedagogical expertise, this structured curriculum equips volunteers with the emotional sensitivity, boundaries, and observational skills needed to serve as a vital first layer of community care."

Ms Lim Leng Er, Acting Director, School of Sports and Health, Republic Polytechnic added, "As Singapore's population ages, volunteers are playing an increasingly important role in helping seniors age well in the community. Beyond training future healthcare professionals, RP is committed to strengthening capabilities across the wider community care sector. Leveraging our expertise in healthcare and community care education, we partnered with Lions Befrienders to develop learning and competency assessments that mirror real-life volunteer engagement scenarios. Through these experiences, volunteers build the skills to communicate effectively, identify potential concerns, and connect seniors with appropriate support when needed. This marks an important step towards strengthening volunteer capabilities and enhancing community support for seniors."

Rigorous Evaluation, Framework Alignment, and Rollout

The programme's impact will be tracked using Donald Kirkpatrick's four-level evaluation model, measuring participant reaction, learning gains, field behaviour at three and six months, and operational indicators such as volunteer retention and incident reduction. Senior outcomes will be evaluated through longitudinal wellbeing indicators, including the UCLA Loneliness Scale, visit consistency, and qualitative feedback.

Following the Befriender Train-the-Trainer (TTT) programme in August 2026, the core Level 1 curriculum will officially launch in Q1 2027, delivered primarily face-to-face with a 1:20 facilitator ratio to ensure intensive, high-touch relational coaching. Future phases will explore complementary digital reflective journals and AI-assisted conversation simulations to further enhance ongoing volunteer practice.

Images and logos can be downloaded [HERE](#)

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About Lions Befrienders

Established in 1995, Lions Befrienders Service Association (Singapore) [LBSA] is a social service agency dedicated to providing holistic care and support to help seniors age healthily in place through community participation, enabling them to enjoy purposeful and meaningful lives. Supported by nearly 1,000 regular volunteers, LBSA engages close to 13,000 seniors through a spectrum of integrated eldercare services that address their social, emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual needs. LBSA currently operates 11 Active Ageing Centres, two Community Case Management Services regions (East & West), enhanced Home Personal Care (HPC+) services across Queenstown, Clementi, and Tampines, alongside counselling programs that reach out to socially isolated seniors.