



Movement for the Intellectually Disabled of Singapore

800 Margaret Drive

Singapore 149310

## **NEWS RELEASE**

For Immediate Release

### **MINDS LAUNCHES KEY WORD SIGN (SINGAPORE) - AN AUGMENTATIVE & ALTERNATIVE COMMUNICATION STRATEGY - TO AID SPEECH DEVELOPMENT FOR PERSONS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES**

**3 December 2020** – On International Day for Persons with Disabilities, MINDS launched 'Key Word Sign (Singapore)', an augmentative and alternative communication approach which promotes the use of hand signs and gestures to support communication for persons with speech or communication difficulties. MINDS is the official training provider of Key Word Sign (Singapore).

Children and adults with special needs experience delay in speech and language development. Their inability to communicate and express themselves often leads to feelings of frustration, and these may develop into other behaviours of concern such as signs of aggression and even self-injurious behaviours. Key Word Sign uses and extends upon a person's natural gesturing abilities to facilitate speech and communication as signs encourage imitation and facilitate comprehension.

Head of Speech and Language Therapy at MINDS, Ms Eva Loh explained, "For the Key Word Sign methodology, only the key words in a sentence are signed as the person speaks at the same time. This is particularly useful for persons with intellectual or developmental disabilities who have cognitive challenges, including the inability to verbalise full sentences."



Key Word Sign has been proven to aid in speech and vocabulary development, social interaction, as well as speech intelligibility in persons with communication difficulties. Research shows that visual-spatial processing of information has been advantageous to the learning and language development of persons with intellectual disabilities.

8-year old Matthew Ng, a student from MINDS Lee Kong Chian Gardens School, was born with Down syndrome. Upon enrolment, his teachers and speech language therapist begun working with him and his mother using Key Word Sign to facilitate communication development. Matthew has since progressed from babbling and using made-up words to verbalising one to two-word combinations when communicating his needs and wants.

Matthew's mother, Mdm Cynthia Tan, remarked, "For children with special needs like Matthew, they might struggle with speech delay. If they feel they are not being understood, they could get agitated or worse, maybe even give up and withdraw. With Key Word Sign, it helps us as parents understand the child more and improve the relationship as it gives them another way of expressing themselves."

MINDS has used Key Word Sign (adopting Australia signs) since 2010. In developing Key Word Sign (Singapore), MINDS has incorporated signs from the Deaf community in Singapore to facilitate communication in the local context. These include signs for local foods (e.g., roti prata, rice dumpling), places (e.g., Gardens by the Bay) and festivals that are relevant in Singapore which would help persons with intellectual disabilities and/or special needs communicate their needs and wants, as well as use these signs for social interaction.

MINDS has identified 700 KWS SG vocabulary and will be conducting basic Key Word Sign (Singapore) workshops for MINDS staff in 2021. These workshops will also be introduced in phases for caregivers, volunteers and members of public who are keen to learn about Key Word Sign. "Key Word Sign (Singapore) is an important milestone in MINDS' larger effort of promoting inclusion in the community. Apart from giving our clients a 'voice' and allowing them to convey their aspirations and dreams, Key Word



Sign also empowers our caregivers with the ability to effectively communicate with their loved ones. We hope in time to come, Key Word Sign (Singapore) will also become a common tool for public service providers, and the wider community, to support and engage with persons with intellectual disabilities,” stated CEO of MINDS, Mr Kelvin Koh.

A series of Key Word Sign (Singapore) bite-sized tutorial resource videos will be uploaded on MINDS YouTube page to support MINDS’ public education efforts. Interested subscribers may access the playlist using this <https://bit.ly/3odEeZ5>.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed today between MINDS and Scope/Key Word Sign (Australia) to launch Key Word Sign (Singapore). An MOU was also signed between MINDS and the Singapore Association for the Deaf (SADeaf) to incorporate signs from the Singapore Sign Language (SgSL) into Key Word Sign (Singapore).

- END -



## **About the Movement for the Intellectually Disabled of Singapore (MINDS)**

MINDS has been serving persons with intellectual disabilities (PWIDs) across their entire lifespan in the past 58 years. Helping and enhancing the quality of life of 3,000 PWIDs annually, MINDS' also focuses on care and support of families and caregivers. Today, an 800-strong workforce, with the assistance of volunteers, runs over 30 facilities, services and programmes island-wide.

MINDS has 4 Special Education Schools, 3 Employment Development Centres, 8 Training and Development Centres, a Residential Home for Adults, a Children's Home, a Hostel, a Caregivers Support Services Centre, a Special Student Care Centre, and a Developmental Disabilities Medical Clinic, and numerous other significant services such as Appropriate Adults for Persons with Mental Disabilities (AAPMD), Allied Health Professionals (AHP), Me Too! Club (MTC) and MINDS MYG (a volunteer subsidiary wing of MINDS).

These efforts are supported by MINDS Institute which specialises in the research and development of holistic and sustainable approaches to nurturing and developing PWIDs.

To learn more, visit <http://www.minds.org.sg/>

*For further information, please contact:*

**Ms Brenda Lee**

Senior Manager, Strategic Communication & Engagement,

MINDS Mobile: 97301044

Email: [brenda.lee@minds.org.sg](mailto:brenda.lee@minds.org.sg)