

Reflection on visiting social agencies

[Business](#), [Work](#)



The first agency that I visited was the Lakeside Family Services Centre (FSC) and their main aim in totality was to build stronger families in Jurong, wanting to enrich their lives. This visit was an inspiring and heartening one as I came to understand more about what I wanted to do as a social worker (SW) and even though hard, what I aspired to change in Singapore.

The agency focuses on youths as well, having many free for all services that aim to rehabilitate and encourage those youths. One thing in particular impacted me while having a discussion with the SW there, she said: “ many call them youth at risk or even juveniles, but here we just call them youths”. The labelling of youths not only creates a power dynamic between the SW and the youth, but it also may alter the values of the SWs, resulting in them being more authoritative and belittling the self-determination of the youths. The SWs in this FSC convinced me that they believed otherwise, genuinely wanting to better the lives of these youths. This resonated with me on a whole other level as I had many friends in my past years of school that strayed off into a dark path in their lives. As someone that really cares about my friends, I have always tried to lend them a helping hand as I believe that everyone deserves a second chance. With our discussion, it was heart-warming to know that there are many like-minded SWs in this FSC that I truly felt honoured to meet.

Through the visit, I have come to understand that an emerging social issue in Jurong was the domestic violence of families. The FSC had immensely increased their outreach of educating the public about domestic violence, which was what led to the heightened numbers of cases. As a member of the same community, I could not believe that the situation was so bad and could

not help but feel saddened. It pains to understand that such deplorable acts of abuse were happening so close to home with myself having no ability to help. This sparked a realisation that this may be how most aspiring social workers like myself feel, the immense feeling of needing to help alleviate problems bigger than ourselves. While conversing and listening to the SWs in the FSC talk with such gusto and passion about their jobs, I realised that being a social worker is not just a job but it is part of who we are, we take our strength of wanting a better society and turn it into motivation to work with these families and try our best to give them proper intervention. This visit has taught me that a SW has to first and foremost love our job, without this passion the possibility of burning out during the job is very high which doesn't just impact the state of our health and mind, but it also affects the quality of guidance we give our clients.

The second agency that I visited was HCA Hospice care. This agency mainly focuses on palliative care for both the young and the elderly, with their medical social workers (MSWs) serving a larger purpose of wanting to provide the best quality of life for their patients alongside nurturing dedicated professionals. Evermore in this line of work, the MSWs aim to better the psychosocial aspect of their patient's lives, having the utmost importance of ensuring they live the rest of their lives happily as their family may not have had the proper resources to do it themselves.

Before this visit, I had no prior knowledge to what a hospice was which explains my initial feeling of shock when I learnt the movement behind specialising in palliative care. When I was introduced to the job scope of

working in palliative care, I was shocked as I had no prior knowledge about hospice care centres. The MSW that addressed us truly opened my eyes to her line of work and the many rewards that came with it. Many of their patients had only 3 months to a year to live and this is where I realised that these MSWs had to do so much more than what I initially viewed as intervention as they do not have the luxury of time.

The MSWs not only focused on their patients but they also focused on alleviating the grief and bereavement of their patients' families, ensuring that the family members knew how to cope with their loss, reaffirming the fact that SWs have an equally important role in impacting the client's family. However, the MSWs only have a month to assess how the family is coping which in my opinion cannot be done as the family has not been given enough time to adjust where the memory of their family member is still acute. In this case, I feel that this brings to light the severity of a lack of respect towards life as one should never treat the mental well-being of a person so lightly.

During our visit, she told us a touching story about how she and her team members managed to send a patient that needed a lot of medical assistance back to her homeland Chang Mai in just a week with 3 months' worth of medication. This amplified my belief that SWs have perseverance and unwillingness to give up, and she said that even though it was one of the most elaborate cases she had ever taken, the feeling of fulfilment that came after could have never been found in any other job. More than being an advocator that stands up for the client or an educator that enlightens the

client on resources in their environment, my view has come to change that the most important role a SW plays is a supporter, a person that guides and does all they can for their client even if their odds seem stark.

Truly through these visits, I have gained a deeper perception of what it means to be a SW, unlike other professions, we in social work are our own tools and so we must learn to take care of ourselves alongside assessing the needs of others. With this journey, I believe that no matter the outcome, the fulfilments we get from this job are intangible. Therefore, I conclude with the words of Gordon B. Henkly, “ The happiest people I know are those who lose themselves in the service of others.”