



NEWS RELEASE

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Fact Sheet: 14 Of 18 ACCORD Proposals Implemented

23 Jul 2016

The Advisory Council on Community Relations in Defence (ACCORD) was established by the Ministry of Defence (MINDEF) in January 1984 as a channel for the community to provide feedback on issues concerning Singapore's defence. Following recommendations from the Committee to Strengthen National Service (CSNS) in 2014, ACCORD was restructured in August 2014 with three Councils under its main ambit – an Employer and Business (E&B) Council, an Educational Institutions (EI) Council, and a Family and Community (F&C) Council – to tap on members' networks for greater participation and feedback on our National Service (NS) system, as well as for members to proactively engage the community and strengthen their support for National Service and Defence.

ACCORD's 18 proposals with the aim of boosting support and recognition for NS was submitted in Feb 2015 and accepted by MINDEF. To date, 14 out of 18 ACCORD proposals have been implemented.

Proposals by the Employer and Business (E&B) Council

The E&B Council's proposals aim to strengthen the tripartite relationship between MINDEF/SAF-Employers-NSmen, recognise supportive employers and businesses, and address issues and challenges faced by employees.

Revamped Total Defence Awards (TDA). The TDA was revamped to recognise a broader spectrum of NS advocates who have contributed towards NS and Total Defence beyond businesses, to include educational institutions, community organisations as well as individuals. As part of the revamp, the Home Team National Service Awards for Employers, which were given out separately in the past, was integrated into the TDA. The revamped TDA represents a common award platform that collectively recognises strong public support for NS and NSmen from both the Singapore Armed Forces and Home Team. Last year, 122 individuals, businesses and organisations were awarded the NS Advocate Award for their outstanding support towards NS – the top accolade at the revamped TDA.

ICT Performance Feedback for Employers. To provide recognition of NSmen employees' skills and attributes, a pilot implementation on In-Camp Training (ICT) performance feedback was conducted with employers of NSmen who completed the SAF's Command and Staff Course in 2015. Employers were sent a letter, highlighting their employee's attributes that were demonstrated during the course, and the competencies acquired that would be beneficial to their work as well. NSmen who participated in this pilot trial provided feedback that their employers appreciated these letters and found them meaningful. Moving ahead for 2016, MINDEF plans to expand the proposal to other NS leadership training courses as well.

Early Notification of In-Camp Training for Employers. For employers to better support their NSmen employees' NS commitments to ICT, employers have been encouraged to sign-up for an account on the NS Portal, which provides employers with information on their employees' call-up and remedial training schedule. Having access to this information would facilitate employers' early planning and allow our NSmen to focus on their ICT.

Enhanced Career Fair. To give full-time National Servicemen (NSFs) from the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF), Singapore Police Force (SPF) and Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF) more targeted job-matching opportunities and a wider range of learning and career options after their full-time NS, the inaugural Enhanced Career Fair was organised in Nov 2015. The career fair was jointly organised by MINDEF and the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), in collaboration with the Singapore Workforce Development Agency (WDA) and ACCORD. More than 4,000 NSFs from the HomeTeam and the SAF attended the fair, where 77 employers, Institutes of Higher Learning (IHLs) and Continuing Education and Training Centres offered employment and educational opportunities to the servicemen.

Proposals by the Family and Community (F&C) Council

The F&C Council's proposals aim to garner support and engender greater commitment to NS and defence from key stakeholders – family, community, women, New Citizens (NCs) and Permanent Residents (PRs) – through raising their awareness of NS and the need for defence, deepening the engagement with them, and providing support and recognition for their contributions to NS. For example, the F&C Council launched the #NeverAgain movement on Total Defence Day (15 Feb) this year at the 49th War Memorial Service organised by Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry. This movement serves to remind Singaporeans of the vulnerabilities of our nation, and that support for NS is paramount for keeping our country strong and secure. The #NeverAgain movement also reached out to over 10,000 people on Facebook.

“We Support YOU in NS” Initiative. Launched in Aug 2015, the “We Support YOU in NS” initiative aims to encourage businesses and merchants to show their appreciation for national servicemen by offering discounts and benefits. Through the SAFRA National Service Association and People's Association, this ground-up initiative has garnered the support of more than 200 merchants and retailers to offer discounts and benefits to national servicemen from the SAF, SPF and SCDF. The list of participating merchants and stores can be found at www.accord.gov.sg/WeSupportYouInNS.

Engaging Women through Women's Organisations. It is important to engage women on NS and defence as they are a key pillar of support for our national servicemen. By partnering the Singapore Council of Women's Organisation, the Women's Integration Network of the People's Association and the Young Women's Leadership Connection, ACCORD engaged over two hundred mothers, wives and girlfriends over four information-sharing sessions in 2015/16. Over 90% of the participants agreed that they better understand the need for NS and defence after the sessions and would encourage the men in their lives (e.g. friend, boyfriend, son, husband, father) to do their best in NS.

Engage New Citizens (NCs) and Permanent Residents (PRs) on NS and Defence. It is important for all NCs and PRs in our society to understand the need for defence and support the NS institution. To engage PRs, ACCORD has worked with the National Population and Talent Division (NPTD) and Immigrations and Checkpoints Authority of Singapore (ICA) to distribute a “PR Handbook” with information on NS, defence and other relevant information. The Council also engaged ambassadors with networks to NCs and PRs through visits to Basic Military Training Centre (BMTC) and information packages so that they are equipped with relevant information to share with the NCs and PRs during their interactions.

Collaboration with Families for Life (FFL) to Strengthen Family Support. The Council collaborated with FFL to strengthen support for NS amongst families through the hosting of NS and defence materials on the revamped FFL website in Aug 2015, and the engagement of more than 3000 NSFs, Regulars, NSmen and their families at the various FFL Celebrations events.

Proposals by the Educational Institutions (EI) Council

The EI Council's proposals aim to raise awareness among students, parents and educators on NS in schools under the Ministry of Education (MOE) / Institutes of Higher Learning (IHLs), as well as the Foreign System Schools (FSSs) and Privately Funded Institutions (PFIs). The proposals also seek to support students in their preparations for and transition after NS, and support the outreach efforts of the SAF Volunteer Corps (SAFVC).

Pilot Fitness Programmes. To help their pre-enlistee students get fit and physically ready for NS, four Post-Secondary Education Institutions (Anderson Junior College, ITE Colleges East and West and Temasek Polytechnic) took the lead and piloted their own fitness programmes. To date, more than 1000 pre-enlistee students have participated in the programmes and the results are encouraging. Temasek Polytechnic and ITE Colleges East and West have seen improvements in the IPPT pass rate of the participating students. These schools also help mentally prepare their students for NS by organising sharing sessions where school alumni

who are currently serving or had served NS were invited to share their NS experience with the students. To date, six such sessions have been organised since 2015 for 1,300 pre-enlistee students.

Outreach to Foreign System Schools and Privately-Funded Institutions. Singaporean and PR students attending FSSs and PFIs go through different curriculums and have fewer touch-points on NS and defence as compared to the MOE schools. Through the EI Council, 430 parents and pre-enlistees from FSSs and 150 pre-enlistees from PFIs attended sessions organised by their schools to help them understand the importance and need for NS and defence.

Supporting NSmen's Transition Back to Institutes of Higher Learning (IHLs). More than 400 students from the National University of Singapore (NUS), Nanyang Technological University (NTU), Singapore Management University (SMU) and the Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT) responded to a survey conducted by the EI Council to find out more about their need for pre-matriculation courses and refresher modules to help NSmen transit more smoothly back to school. The survey found that online modules or programmes were more popular among the students. In 2015, NUS added four new modules to the existing eight modules on their Internal Blended Learning Online Courses (iBLOCs). The universities would continue to review their programmes in view of the survey findings.

Partner IHLs to help NSmen manage their NS ICT call-ups and academic commitments. Starting from Academic Year 2016, SIM University (UniSIM) will work with MINDEF to help NSmen manage their ICT call-ups and academic commitments by not scheduling academic programmes during specific periods in their vacation windows when NSmen will be called back for ICT. Currently, MINDEF has a similar arrangement with NUS, NTU and SMU.

Encourage SAF Volunteer Corps (SAFVC) participation. The EI Council helped to promote the participation of the SAFVC, such as inviting SAFVC Volunteers (SVs) to hold engagement sessions in schools. In 2015, the first cohort of 226 women, first-generation PRs and NCs were enlisted through three intakes and the fourth intake of 91 SVs was enlisted in March this year.

Total Defence (TD) Cohort Experience. In partnership with MOE and the Singapore Discovery Centre (SDC), a TD Cohort Experience for Primary 6 students was launched on TD Day last year. Students penned and shared their thoughts and reflections on TD, attracting 4,139 participants throughout 2015.

Way Ahead

In 2016, the F&C Council will continue to expand the "We Support YOU in NS" programme, and more exciting collaborations with Families for Life to reach the wider community. The EI Council will continue to encourage more schools to implement fitness programmes for pre-enlistees. As part of E&B Council's efforts to engender broad-based support for NS, MINDEF will be implementing the "NS Mark" later this year, which recognises supportive employers, businesses and organisations.

The remaining four proposals are:

The NS Mark will be launched in Aug 2016 to provide broad-based recognition for companies and organisations supportive towards NS, encouraging more employers to declare and demonstrate support for National Service. MINDEF will continue its outreach to employers to raise awareness on NS matters. An information package will also be developed to complement current outreach efforts. This information package will be ready by end of 2016.

ACCORD will work with MINDEF and the Ministry for Social and Family Development (MSF) to enhance financial assistance processes for servicemen to minimise the downtime for financial coverage before and after post full-time NS.

The EI Council will enhance National Education (NE) for secondary schools by getting the schools' alumni who are SAF servicemen and staff within each school cluster to support their clusters' NE needs.

News Release:

- SMS Maliki: ACCORD Has Made An Impact with Its Proposals (MINDEF_20160723001.pdf)