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## 4 more group homes to be set up for vulnerable children

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SINGAPORE - Recognising that some children in residential homes may have greater needs and more challenging behaviour, the authorities are setting up four more group homes that will have a smaller care ratio and staff who have gone through intensive training.

The new homes will cater to children who have gone through especially traumatic experiences and now require more structured and targeted care, said Minister for Social and Family Development Tan Chuan-Jin in his speech at a conference on rehabilitation and protection care on Thursday (July 13).

As of May, there were 1,100 vulnerable children and young people placed in out-of-home care here - 630 resided in homes while the rest were placed in foster care.

The Government is also investing \$7 million over four years in training those who care for these children.

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Said Mr Tan: "Through partnering the Social Service Institute, MSF has developed a training framework for the residential care sector. This maps out the professional development for all residential staff, from care staff to management level."

The Training Framework for Residential Care was introduced in January last year. Under this, new residential staff would have to undergo a core training programme within the first year of work. They will learn about the impact of abuse and neglect, how trauma can impact a child's development and the roles of residential staff in addressing the behaviours of the child.

There are also intermediate and specialised training programmes which cover areas such as family therapy and mediation.

To date, 380 residential staff have participated in 25 runs of the training programmes. The Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) said nine in 10 found that the courses were relevant and gave them a better understanding of the needs of children in care.

MSF is also reviewing its standards of care to ensure that children are placed in care only as a last resort.