

# **ADDRESSING THE EMERGING JUSTICE NEEDS OF SINGAPORE IN THE DIGITAL ERA**

Dr Leonard Lee

Mr Lee Eng Hong



# AGENDA

Who are We

What to Consider

When is the Right Time

Which Technology to Use

How Do We Leverage on Technology

# Focus is on the Socio-legal Challenges of LiPs

Public

Private

Philanthropy

COMMUNITY  
JUSTICE CENTRE

The Community Justice Centre (CJC) was conceptualized by the Singapore Courts and established in 2012 as a community partnership between the public sector, the philanthropic sector and the private sector.

It has been envisaged to be a one-stop hub delivering a seamless amalgamation of services for needy court users. The courts are merely the filter for what is essentially a social need to mend the torn social fabric of society.



# **PRIMARY OBJECTIVE**

To Enhance the Accessibility to Justice for Litigants-in-Person  
Through Community Partnerships

**“ THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE COMMUNITY JUSTICE CENTRE HAS CLINCHED NUMEROUS AWARDS SUCH AS THE UNITED NATIONS SILVER AWARD IN THE CATEGORY OF ‘IMPROVING THE DELIVERY OF PUBLIC SERVICES; FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC REGION’, THE ‘KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT AWARD, THE PUBLIC SECTOR TRANSFORMATIONAL STAR AWARD FOR BOTH (2018) AND (2023).**

**”**

# WHAT TO CONSIDER WHEN PLANNING A SUCCESSFUL ADOPTION



## KNOW YOUR STAKEHOLDERS

What is the technology used for?  
Intended users? Lawyers, Judges, Clients, social workers?  
Resources coming from?



## WHAT IS THE PURPOSE

- Sustaining – improves efficiency, effectiveness, productivity
- Disruptive – changing the way



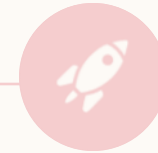
## DESIGN, TEST, DESIGN, TEST.

- Ease of use
- Usefulness
- Smart Friendly?



## STRATEGY

Technology must first be used before it is considered a success. The decision to use lies on the intention to accept the new technology.



## LAUNCH

Set timeline.  
Establish strategic networks for deployment



(From Left) National Council of Social Service chief executive Sim Gim Guan, Community Justice Centre vice-chairman Chew Kwee San, Justice See Kee Oon, Senior Minister of State for Finance and Law Indraneel Rajah, Justice Debbie Ong, Justice Tan Siong Thye, Permanent Secretary (Social and Family Development Ministry) Chuck Hoek Yong and vice-president of The Law Society Singapore Adrian Tan launching the Community Justice Centre's new Self-Help eWeb. ST PHOTO: JONATHAN CHOO

## Self-representing in court? Shew is here to help

Lee Wen-yi

When Sheila was 33, her husband died from cancer, leaving her the sole breadwinner for her mother, sick grandmother and two children. When her grandmother's health turned for the worse and died in 2016, Sheila (not her real name) struggled with the medical bills and

funeral costs, and misappropriated funds in an attempt to pay off her debts.

Last year, she was charged in court but did not have the money to hire a lawyer. She was eventually represented by one under the Criminal Legal Aid Scheme, which helped reduce her jail term from five months to three.

But Sheila was worried about

how her family would cope. This was where the Community Justice Centre (CJC) played a key role by providing assistance to tide her family over during that period.

Now 44 and released after a month for good behaviour, she has found a job as a cashier and is able to support her family. "I was broken down but CJC gave me courage," she said, recounting the support and en-

couragement she received.

Sheila is one of the thousands of people who have benefited from the non-governmental organisation (NGO), which provides non-legal assistance such as interim financial support and food vouchers, in collaboration with organisations such as Comcare, and makes referrals to social service agencies for longer-term support.

CJC also dispenses basic legal advice on-site at the State and Supreme Courts through its On-Site Legal Advice Scheme.

Yesterday, the NGO took its activities one step further, launching a new resource to help people who are representing themselves in court, or litigants-in-person, during its fifth-anniversary dinner at the Sentosa Golf Club.

Self-Help eWeb (Shew) features an automated court document assembler (ACDA), which guides users through key court procedures in areas such as bankruptcy, and helps generate the appropriate application form based on answers to a few basic questions.

Other modules now available in the ACDA are deputyship and mitigation pleas. Shew also has a chatbot that gives basic legal information for certain matters.

In addition, the system uses business intelligence to try and analyse the trends of legal issues, which guides decisions on future programmes, said Mr Leonard Lee, CJC's executive director.

Senior Minister of State for Finance and Law Indraneel Rajah said at yesterday's launch: "Shew is in line with the national push towards becoming a Smart Nation. By harnessing technology to improve your operational efficiency, you are delivering better services to litigants-in-person."

CJC, which began in 2012, has grown its outreach from fewer than 10,000 in its first year to 17,000 court users last year.

The NGO, run by a team of just 15 members, relies largely on about 600 to 700 volunteers and looks for innovative ways to expedite and improve its services. Shew is one such example.

"Due to budgetary constraints, we cannot hire a lot of people and while we have strong support from volunteers, we need to actively leverage technology for us to be effective, to strengthen our capacity and fulfil our mission," Mr Lee said.

More than \$600,000 was raised by the NGO in conjunction with the dinner yesterday, including a charity golf tournament.

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## Charity rolls out pilot collaborative scheme to help couples settle their divorces amicably

Theresa Tan  
Senior Social Affairs  
Correspondent

The Community Justice Centre (CJC), a charity that provides legal and social support for needy people involved in a legal case and who do not have a lawyer, is piloting a scheme that allows couples with "modest means" to settle their divorces in an amicable manner, instead of fighting it out in court.

Under its Collaborative Justice Project, which had its soft launch in December last year, each spouse in a divorce will be assigned to a lawyer who is trained in collaborative family practice.

These lawyers facilitate the negotiation between the couple to help them come to an agreement on matters such as child custody and division of marital assets, so they can file for an uncontested divorce.

An uncontested divorce is one where both spouses can agree on all the terms of the divorce.

Ms Gloria James-Civetta, one of 21 lawyers on the project, said: "Collaborative family practice is a legal process whereby couples can avoid the lengthy and costly process of a contested divorce through negotiation."

This collaborative approach is different from the traditional adversarial approach in a contested divorce, where the couple are pitted against each other and a judge decides on matters such as which parent the child lives with after the divorce.

It comes as the Family Justice Courts is promoting therapeutic justice, which is a non-adversarial process that seeks to solve problems and help parents learn to manage their conflicts and engage in co-parenting, said CJC's executive director Leonard Lee.

To qualify for this scheme, which charges a fixed fee for each stage of the process, the applicant must be of "modest means", which is de-

termined as living in a Housing Board flat, Mr Lee said.

He said many couples are worried about lawyers' fees as they do not know how much a divorce would cost. Some cannot afford a lawyer and do without one, he added, but they run into problems after the divorce as they did not understand the details or implications of the matters they had previously agreed on.

Mr Lee added: "We are not doing this for profit and we want to be more transparent about fees. Our fees are at the lower end of market rates."

For this service, CJC is charging up to \$2,200 for each party. This sum includes the lawyer's fees during the collaborative process - which costs \$300 per hour and is capped at a maximum of \$1,500 - and the drafting of divorce documents filed under an uncontested divorce.

Lawyer Dorothy Tan said the fees are reasonable as there can be a "great deal of work", including the negotiations towards an uncontested divorce. She is not involved in the project.

Her firm, PKWA Law Practice, charges a flat fee of \$1,900 for an uncontested divorce if the couple have children issues, maintenance and division of marital property to settle. The fee includes legal consultation and preparation of court documents, among other things.

For the PKWA's fixed fee, the couple would have to largely come to a settlement on their own and it does not include lawyers negotiating with the other spouse, she said.

According to the Singapore Legal Advice's divorce fee guide, the legal fees charged for an uncontested divorce range from \$1,500 to \$3,500, based on a poll of 14 lawyers.

The Singapore Legal Advice is a private entity that provides legal information, among other services.

The collaborative approach to settling divorces is not new in Singapore, although it is not widely known outside the legal industry, said social workers interviewed.

For example, the Singapore Mediation Centre (SMC) started the Collaborative Family Practice in 2013 where couples would be assigned to lawyers trained in the collaborative approach.

SMC has handled 50 such cases so far, said its executive director Ban Jiun Ean. The fees are \$300 an hour, although SMC does not have data on the average number of hours it takes to settle a case.

Some had initially agreed on their ex-spouses' terms as they wanted a divorce and to move on with their lives, only to find that they were unhappy with the arrangements post-divorce.

Ms Loh said: "We hope the collaborative approach would give both parties the space and allow them to be better advised by their lawyers to negotiate an outcome that is agreeable to both of them."

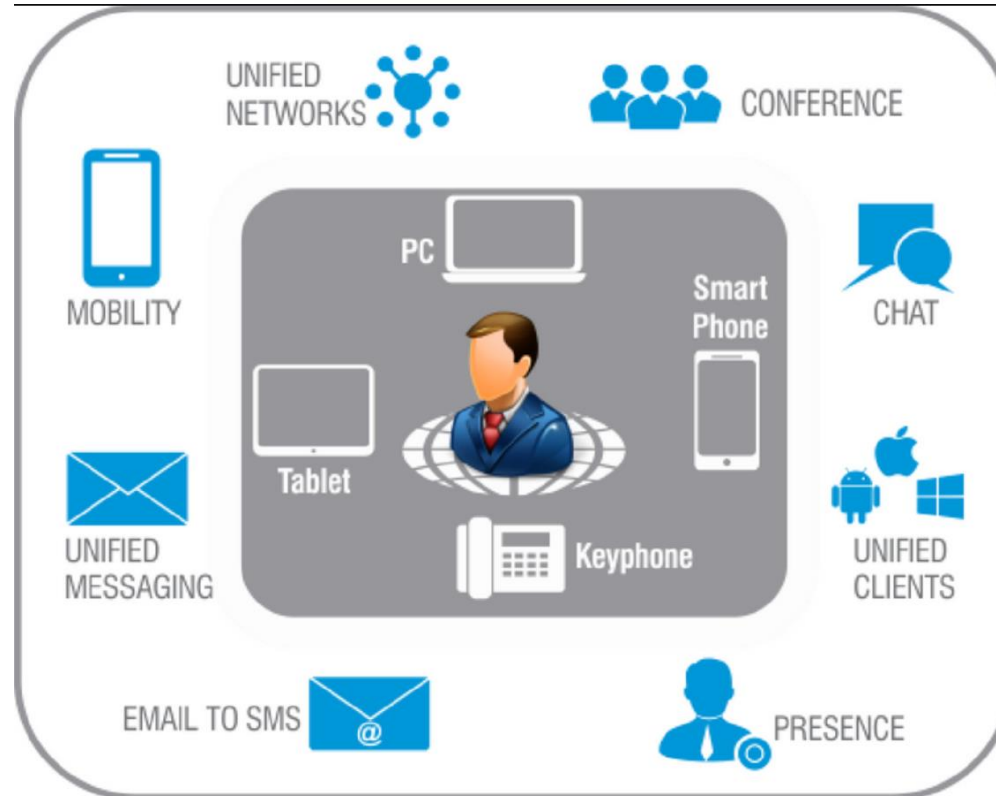
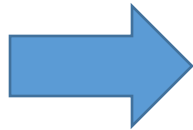
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# Sustainable Technology - Customer Management System



SRP facing myriad of online resources



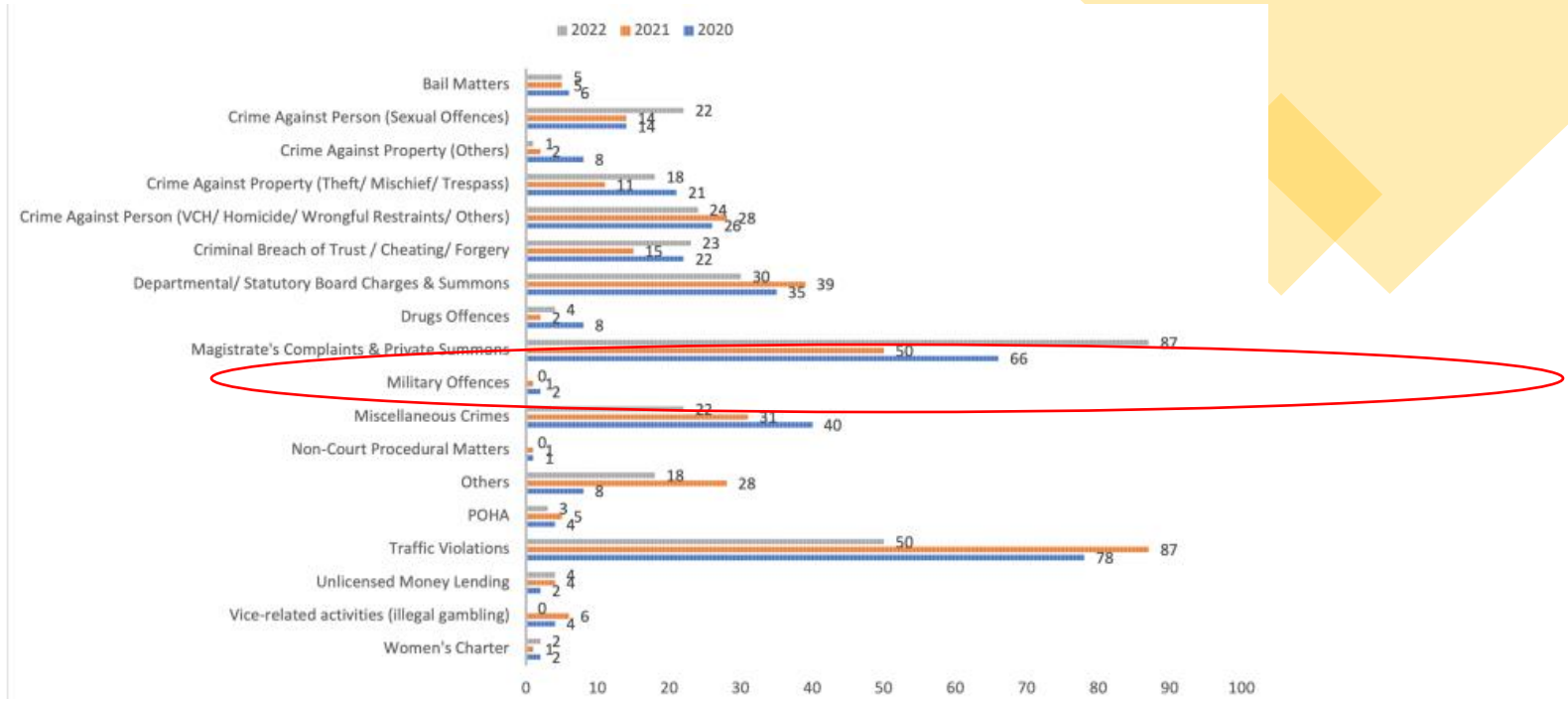
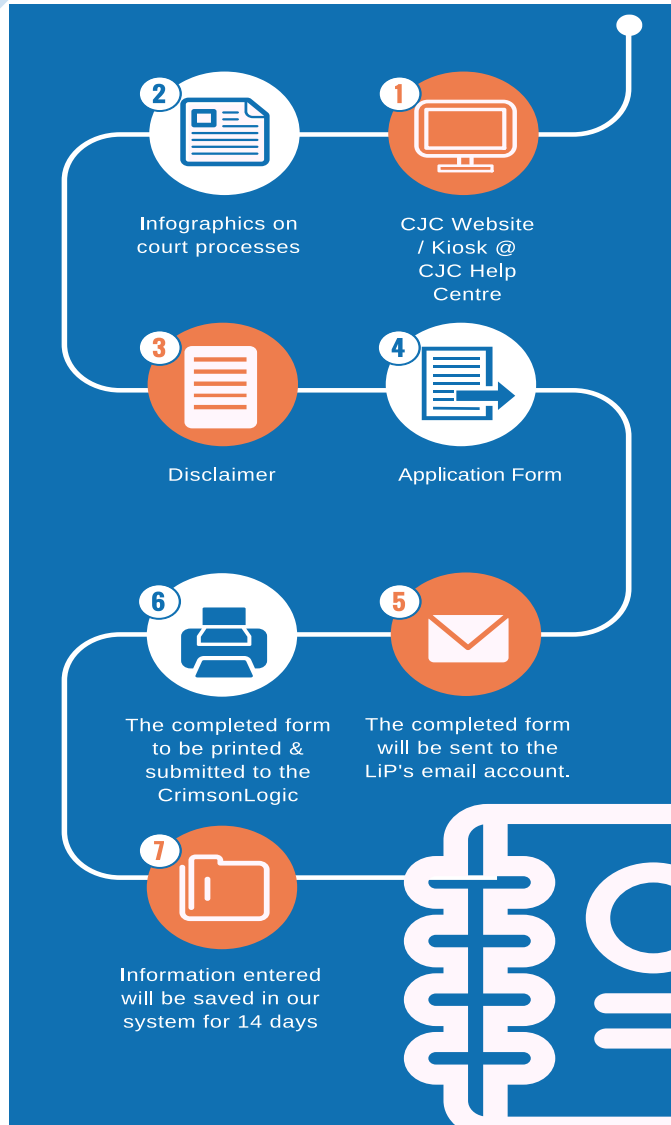
Integration of frontline service delivery

- self-HELP e-WEB
- Social Services
- Practical Support
- Information
- Legal Services

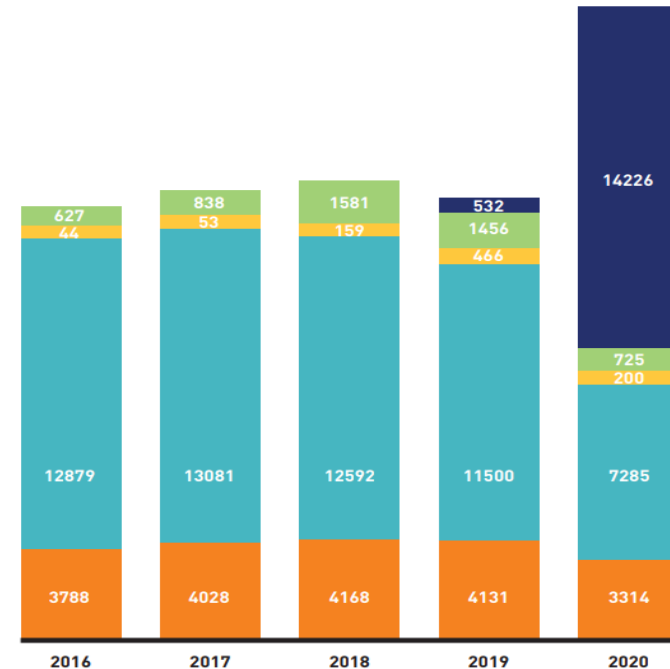


# ACDA

## Automated Court Documents Assembly System



- self-HELP e-WEB
- Social Services
- Practical Support
- Information
- Legal Services



# Collaborative Technology = System Connectivity

 oneclientview



Financial Assistance



Fami|y  
Assl|st

Social Service Net



Strengthening Families Programme  
@ Family Service Centre  
(FAM@FSC)



# THANK YOU

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