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With a growing need for skilled social service professionals, various initiatives are being set up to draw more mid-career workers into the sector, while upgrading the skills of those already in the field.

Two new Singapore Workforce Skills Qualifications (WSQ) training courses – an advanced certificate in social service and a diploma in social service – were launched yesterday. They are being introduced as part of the Government’s push to encourage skills upgrading and strengthen career pathways in the sector.

Both qualifications, developed by the Ministry of Social and Family Development and Singapore Workforce Development Agency (WDA), will replace flagship programmes offered by the Social Service Institute – the diploma and higher diploma in social service. Close to 300 individuals have graduated from these programmes since they were started in 2008 and 2010 respectively.

WDA chief executive Ng Cher Pong said: “The skills required in the social service sector are evolving in response to the changing needs of Singaporeans. Therefore, new entrants to the sector and existing practitioners must continue to strive towards skills mastery.”

The classes for the new WSQ programmes will start next February. Applications opened yesterday.

The advanced certificate in social service, a part-time 15-month course, trains individuals to be social service assistants, such as home-care workers. The 18-month part-time diploma in social service will nurture social work associates such as youth workers. Singaporeans and permanent residents will be able to receive up to 95 per cent in course fee support from the WDA. Without the funding, individuals may have to pay more than $10,000 for each programme.

Graduates of the diploma, who would like to become social workers, can then apply for a three-year part-time degree in social work offered by SIM University.

Initiatives introduced as part of the national SkillsFuture movement will also help defray the cost of attending work-related training. For instance, the SkillsFuture Study Awards for the sector, administered by the National Council of Social Service, will provide existing social service professionals with $5,000 to attend training courses. More details about this will be released in the coming months.

Another initiative, the SkillsFuture Credit, will be made available next year to provide Singaporeans over the age of 25 with $500 to cover fees for a range of skills-related courses. Individuals can use these initiatives to support their studies in both social work programmes.

At the Social Service Institute yesterday, Ms Low Yen Ling, Parliamentary Secretary for Trade and Industry and Education, said: “This lifelong quest for learning will not only ensure our sector remains a dynamic one, but it will also enhance and enrich many lives.”

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2 new courses to boost careers in social service

They are part of push to draw more mid-career workers to sector