

Headline	A safe haven for the young		
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A safe haven for the young

Psychiatric evaluation for children home's residents meant to address their mental, emotional health

VANES DEVINDRAN

KUCHING: It is imperative for children placed at the Rumah Kanak-Kanak Kuching to undergo psychiatric evaluation to ascertain the status of their emotion and mental well-being, said the home's principal Armisy Basri.

She explained that this was to determine whether any one of them would require further counselling by a psychiatrist.

"Each case is different. Some have been through an abusive upbringing, some were abandoned and some had just lost their parents. These experiences would surely have impact on the children.

"Which is why one of the first things we tackle is the emotional and mental health of the children," she told reporters during "Masih Ada Yang Sayang" programme of Universiti Utara Malaysia at the home here yesterday.

She said the home emphasised these aspects as they were also challenging for the caretakers when

dealing with the children.

"Most of the children who come to us feel that they cannot trust anyone. The mere thought that they are sent to a home makes them feel the minders here are not genuinely caring," she said.

As such, she said the caretakers — 15 health attendants and 12 community welfare assistants — had to work hard to gain the children's trust and only after that would the children open up and be more willing to reciprocate.

Armisy said the children who came to the home were those whose parent or parents had passed away; those whose parents were ill and could not take care of them; and those with parents who were serving time in prison.

In addition, she said, the home also attended to children who had been abandoned or abused physically, mentally, sexually or emotionally, and also those who came from impoverished families.

At present, she said, the home had

61 children, and this number was lower compared that of 2011 which registered 78 children.

She believed the lower figure was due to better awareness and prevention programmes throughout the various divisions in regard to children's welfare.

The Rumah Kanak-Kanak Kuching started operations in May 2007 and was gazetted as a safe house for children under the Child Act 2001.

The home is for children aged from three to 18 only by the order of the court.

Last year, the home held 241 activities with the cooperation of other institutions and organisations.

Armisy said the activities helped the children a lot for they instilled confidence and also showed that they were getting love from society.

"Acceptance by society is vital in the upbringing of the children, for the last thing they need is to be isolated and looked upon differently," she said.

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Launched:
Armisy (right)
and others
cutting the
balloons free to
launch the 'Masih
Ada Yang Sayang'
programme in
Kuching.