

Higher Old Age Living Allowance Launched

The Social Welfare Department (SWD) today (June 1) launched the Higher Old Age Living Allowance (OALA) and the third phase of the application procedure – the "New Application" phase.

An SWD spokesman said, "Elderly persons aged 65 or above not receiving Normal OALA, Old Age Allowance (OAA) or Disability Allowance (DA) may make applications for Higher OALA starting from today. Application forms and guidance notes can be downloaded from the SWD's website, or obtained from social security field units (SSFUs). Applicants can submit the completed application forms together with photocopies of relevant supporting documents by fax, email or post or directly to the SSFU concerned, or through referral by other government departments or non-governmental organisations. Applicants can also authorise another person to make an application on their behalf. Upon receipt of the application forms, SWD staff will arrange interview appointments with the applicants to verify their eligibility."

The SWD spokesman reminded elderly persons under the "New Application" phase that, as long as their applications are submitted on or before December 31 this year, and all the eligibility criteria for the Higher OALA are met, including the age and residence requirements as well as income and asset requirements, they would receive a lump-sum retrospective payment counted from the effective date (i.e. May 1, 2017) or the date of eligibility, whichever is later. Hence, there is no need to rush to submit applications at the beginning of the "New Application" phase.

For elderly persons who do not meet the income and asset limits for Higher OALA but meet those for Normal OALA, they may consider applying for Normal OALA. However, the arrangement of lump-sum retrospective payment mentioned above is not applicable to Normal OALA.

The SWD is also issuing today the second batch of yellow notification letters under the "Postal Submission" phase to recipients of OAA and Normal DA aged 65 or above, inviting them to apply for Higher OALA through postal submission. Elderly persons who meet the income and asset limits and opt to switch to receive Higher OALA are required to return the completed Postal Submission Application Form to the SWD by post on or before December 31 this year. Eligible elderly persons will receive a lump-sum retrospective payment (after deducting the payment of allowance already made during the corresponding period) counted from the effective date (i.e. May 1, 2017) or the date of eligibility, whichever is later. Subject to the establishment of eligibility, payment will be credited into the elderly persons' designated bank accounts currently used for receiving OAA/DA.

Furthermore, SWD will disburse on June 4 the lump-sum retrospective payment of Higher OALA to eligible elderly persons under the "Auto-conversion" phase. The payment will be credited into their bank accounts

currently used for receiving Normal OALA.

The SWD spokesman said that the SWD issued about 360 000 green notification letters under the "Auto-conversion" phase on April 3 to Normal OALA recipients who meet the income and asset limits for Higher OALA applicable on the effective date (i.e. May 1, 2017) according to the SWD's records.

The spokesman added that some elderly persons may not be able to receive the green notification letters owing to various reasons, such as not making a timely report of updated address to the SWD and undelivered mail. About 3 000 undelivered green notification letters were returned to the SWD. The SWD has initiated contact and reached most of these elderly persons. However, a small portion of them cannot be reached despite repeated attempts by the SWD. To avoid affecting the payment of allowance, the spokesman reminded elderly persons who have moved without informing the SWD to contact the SSFU concerned during office hours (Monday to Friday from 8.45am to 1pm and from 2pm to 6pm) in order to update their address.

For details about the Higher OALA, please visit the SWD's website www.swd.gov.hk/oala or call the Enquiry Line at 3595 0130 during the above office hours.