

Special Needs Trust to accept application from today

The Social Welfare Department (SWD) today (March 25) announced that the Special Needs Trust (SNT) has started to accept application.

To address some middle-income parents' concerns about the care for their children with special needs after their passing, the Chief Executive announced in the Policy Address in October 2017 that the Government decided to set up a "Special Needs Trust", with the Director of Social Welfare Incorporated (DSWI) as the trustee. This arrangement gives assurance for parents to put their wealth under the management of the trust services for the care of their special needs children.

A spokesman for the SWD said that the policy intent of setting up the SNT is to provide reliable and affordable trust services for parents with sufficient assets for meeting the long-term daily needs of their children after their passing.

The beneficiaries under the SNT include persons with intellectual disability (including Down's syndrome), mental disorder or autism. The relationship between parents using the SNT service and the DSWI shall be established through the trust deed, the related clauses in the will, the letter of intent and the care plan. The documents also specify the content of the care plan. The parents should appoint the carers of their children in accordance with their wishes. Regular disbursements will be made to the carers to implement the care plan of the beneficiaries.

No entry threshold is set for the SNT. The parent is required to transfer a specified amount of fund, i.e. the first payment, to DSWI when he/she sets up a trust account. This is to ensure that when the parent passes away, the care plan can be immediately activated before the legal proceedings for handling the estate are completed, and the living expenses of the beneficiary can be catered for at least 12 months before the specific sum is transferred from his/her estate to the trust account.

The SNT is non-profit making. The SWD will only activate the trust account after the parent's death and will charge an annual fee at a flat rate to cover the management and administrative expenses of the trust fund incurred by the SNT Office.

The spokesman said that the parents should consider their individual needs to decide whether to apply for the SNT service. As regards those families with welfare needs, the SWD will continue to render existing financial assistances and welfare services to meet the basic living expenses of their special needs children.

Detailed information on SNT service is uploaded to SWD's website (www.swd.gov.hk/en/index/site_pubsvc/page_rehab/sub_listofserv/id_snto).

Interested parties or those intend to apply for the service could also contact the SNT Office (Tel: 2116 5308) for more information.