

# THE STRAITS TIMES

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## About 65% of trust accounts for people with disabilities set up by families living in HDB flats



As at Jan 31, 2022, 889 accounts had been set up with the Special Needs Trust Company. ST PHOTO: KUA CHEE SIONG



**Ng Wei Kai**

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**SINGAPORE** - About 65 per cent of the trust accounts set up to support people with disabilities, when caregivers are no longer able to, have been created by families living in Housing Board flats.

Responding to a question from Mr Murali Pillai (Bukit Batok) on the take-up rate of trust services for people with disabilities from low- and middle-income families, Parliamentary Secretary for Family and Social Development Eric Chua provided details of the support given by the

Government to help more families access these services.

Mr Chua said in Parliament on Friday (Feb 18) that as at Jan 31 this year, 889 accounts had been set up with the Special Needs Trust Company (SNTC), a non-profit trust company created here in 2008 to help families set up affordable trusts for their loved ones with special needs.

In 2017, The Straits Times reported that there were 447 accounts set up with SNTC. Then Social and Family Development minister Tan Chuan-Jin had said SNTC would step up outreach efforts to address caregivers' concerns about how their children with disabilities would be cared for after they die.

SNTC trust accounts are activated when the caregiver dies or becomes incapacitated. Once activated, SNTC will follow up with a needs assessment of the beneficiary and periodic fund disbursements, the non-profit said on its website.

Elaborating on support efforts, Mr Chua said that in October last year, SNTC launched the Gift of a Lifetime Sponsorship Scheme, or Goal.

Goal gives eligible low-income families the initial \$5,000 to set up an SNTC trust account and a further \$5,000 grant to help caregivers co-pay the premium of an affordable term policy, where the insurance proceeds will be paid into the child's SNTC trust account when the insured parent dies, he said.

He added that the initial capital required to set up an SNTC trust account is \$5,000, compared to private trusts which usually require \$50,000.

Mr Chua also said that the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) fully funds the operating costs of the SNTC, which helps to ensure that the trust is affordable and accessible to low- and middle- income families.

He said: "Since 2011, SNTC has also proactively raised donations under its Financial Assistance Scheme to help eligible low-income elderly caregivers with the initial capital of \$5,000 to set up a trust account.

"This better ensures that there will be sufficient funds in the trust account to support the long-term care needs of their child."

Mr Pillai asked Mr Chua if MSF was looking to quicken the pace of assistance to low- and middle-income families, and if the ministry would be willing to do a gap analysis on how much more demand there would be given that the number of persons with disabilities is rising in Singapore.

Mr Chua said in response that since the setting up of the Goal initiative, MSF has seen a groundswell of donations.

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However, he added that the scheme is still in its infancy.

He said: "I think we will need to give SNTC some time to let the scheme grow and mature, and at an appropriate juncture we can take stock and perform the gap analysis the Member has mentioned to see what else we can do for low- as well as middle-income families in this group."

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