

Client guide

# The Nucleus Discretionary Gift Trust

Edition 12

Date of publication 01/2026

## 1. Introduction

Welcome to the Nucleus Discretionary Gift Trust guide. This section explains how the document is structured and defines some of the terms we will be using.

This document consists of nine sections:

1. Introduction
2. What is the Nucleus Discretionary Gift Trust?
3. When should you use the Nucleus Discretionary Gift Trust?
4. When should the Nucleus Discretionary Gift Trust not be used?
5. How is the Nucleus Discretionary Gift Trust established?
6. Key provisions of the Nucleus Discretionary Gift Trust
7. The law of the trust
8. The trustees
9. The tax implications of the Nucleus Discretionary Gift Trust

Where we refer to 'you' in this guide, we mean you as the settlor. Note that settlor refers to both settlors where there are two settlors.

This document, and the draft discretionary gift trust deed, are provided strictly for general consideration only. Any action taken or refrained from in connection with the Nucleus Draft Discretionary Gift Trust must be preceded by discussion with your legal and other professional advisers. Accordingly, neither Nucleus nor any associated or affiliated company nor any of their representatives, officials or employees accepts any responsibility for any loss occasioned as a result of the use of the Nucleus Draft Discretionary Gift Trust in any circumstances whatsoever.

Tax treatment depends on applicable law and the individual circumstances of each client and may be subject to change in the future.

## 2. What is the Nucleus Discretionary Gift Trust?

A trust is an arrangement where a person or persons (called the trustee(s)) hold(s) property given to them by another person (called the settlor) for the benefit of yet another person or persons (called the beneficiary(ies)). The trustees have the control and legal ownership of the trust assets and must manage and use them for the benefit of the beneficiaries.

Trusts are commonly used in estate planning. A discretionary gift trust allows the settlor to pay a gift into trust that will reduce their estate and so the potential inheritance tax (IHT) on it. The settlor can set the scope of potential beneficiaries of the trust to provide for persons they wish to benefit from their wealth, but without having to decide immediately who should receive the gift.

The Nucleus Discretionary Gift Trust allows you to make a gift of your investments or the cash intended for the investment, for the benefit of other individuals, but without giving those individuals outright ownership and control. The trust can be used whether the current investment (or intended investment) is a Nucleus Onshore or Nucleus Offshore Bond (bond) or a holding of units or shares in a unit trust/ Open Ended Investment Company (OEIC)/investment trust (collectives) that are held in a general account on the Nucleus Wrap.

When you create this type of trust as the settlor, and make the gift of your assets or cash, this needs to be affordable to you as an outright gift, you cannot benefit from the investment in the trust in any way. There can be more than one settlor, for example where you and your spouse or civil partner jointly create a trust.

Under the Nucleus Discretionary Gift Trust, no beneficiary is entitled to any benefit (capital or income) until the appointor decides who from the classes of beneficiary specified in the trust should benefit from the trust assets and when. The appointor is initially you and, after your death, the trustees.

The trust assets can be distributed to beneficiaries when the appointer believes it is appropriate. However, in order for a trust to be legally effective, the benefits must be distributed out of the trust by the end of the trust period – 125 years. For this reason, you need to appoint a default beneficiary or default beneficiaries who will benefit if assets are still in the trust at the end of the trust period, i.e. have not been distributed in full by that time.

In the unlikely event that no appointments have been made and some assets remain in the trust at the end of the trust period (125 years), the individual or individuals named as default beneficiaries (or their estates if, by then, the default beneficiaries are dead) will benefit.

The main objectives of the Nucleus Discretionary Gift Trust are, to potentially reduce your taxable estate liable to IHT, to allow for a tax efficient gift to be made, and to provide maximum flexibility as to who benefits and when.

## 3. When should you use the Nucleus Discretionary Gift Trust?

You should consider using the Nucleus Discretionary Gift Trust if:

- you wish to make an IHT effective lifetime gift of the investment(s) you currently hold in the Nucleus wrap or of a cash sum that is to be invested in the Nucleus wrap.
- you do not need to retain access to the funds for your own benefit in the future.
- you are not certain who is to benefit from your gift or when they are to benefit, i.e. you wish to retain flexibility over which of your beneficiaries ultimately benefit from the trust fund.
- you are prepared to accept that, in certain cases, there could be registration and reporting requirements initially, annually and ongoing. For the different reportable events which you and the trustees must adhere to and more information on this please speak to your financial adviser.

## 4. When should the Nucleus Discretionary Gift Trust not be used?

The Nucleus Discretionary Gift Trust should not be used if:

- you wish to retain access to all or a part of the investment for your own benefit.
- you wish to make an absolute gift to a specific beneficiary or beneficiaries (with nobody else benefiting or being capable of benefiting from this gift).
- If you do not wish to undertake estate planning with the aim to reduce or negate your potential inheritance tax liability.

## 5. How is the Nucleus Discretionary Gift Trust established?

The Discretionary Gift Trust can be used with either cash available for investment or with one or more existing investments held by the investor in the Nucleus Wrap. The gift you make to this type of trust is known as a chargeable lifetime transfer (CLT). Please speak to your adviser to understand the taxation implications of making such a gift and any reporting requirements.

The trust is established by you, as the settlor, and your chosen additional trustees completing a Discretionary Gift Trust deed, having first agreed with your legal advisers that the draft trust provided is suitable for you.

When you are making a new investment, you would normally provide the trustees with a cheque made payable to Nucleus Financial Services and the trustees will then collectively make the application to invest. This is done with the help of your financial adviser.

For existing general accounts holding collectives in the Nucleus Wrap, you would assign your beneficial title to the investments to the trustees (the legal ownership of the shares or units are vested with NFS (Nominees) Limited. You must also instruct NFS (Nominees) Limited to amend their register to show the trustees as the new owners. Special wording is included in the trust deed to facilitate this.

In the case of an existing onshore or offshore bond held in the wrap, the trust deed incorporates an assignment of the bond to all the trustees. A notice of assignment will have to be given to the relevant life assurance company, i.e. Countrywide Assured, Scottish Friendly Assurance or RL360. Again, the necessary wording is included in the trust deed.

The draft Nucleus Discretionary Gift Trust provides for a maximum of four trustees (including the settlor(s)).

Once the investment is made subject to trust, any subsequent dealings with the investment will be by the trustees rather than you personally.

## 6. Key provisions of the Nucleus Discretionary Gift Trust

During the trust period (up to 125 years) the appointor (initially you and then the trustees) may appoint the trust benefits (capital or income) to any of the discretionary beneficiaries. These beneficiaries include your widow/er, children and grandchildren, brothers and sisters and their issue.

You can also specify other beneficiaries at the time the trust is established. If after the trust has been established you want to include a person as a beneficiary who is not listed as a discretionary beneficiary, you can nominate that person to the trustees in writing.

You can choose whether to include your spouse or civil partner amongst the beneficiaries by initialling the appropriate box in the trust deed. This can have income tax consequences.

As the trust is a discretionary trust, no beneficiary is entitled to anything unless and until the appointor makes an appointment in their favour. If any income arises from the trust investments, the trustees can distribute it to or for the benefit of any of the beneficiaries. Alternatively, they can accumulate the income, i.e. reinvest it. If the only trustee investment is an onshore or offshore bond, no actual income will arise to the trustees.

You cannot benefit from the trust under any circumstance.

You must name (as default beneficiary(ies)) the individual or individuals who are to benefit from the trust fund at the end of the 125-year trust period, in the unlikely event that no appointment has been made before then.

The trustees have wide powers to invest, including reinvestment in other assets and generally dealing with the trust property.

## 7. The law of the trust

The draft trust deed specifies that the trust will be governed by the laws of England and Wales. If the Settlor wishes to have the laws of Scotland or Northern Ireland applying, then they should seek legal advice about getting a bespoke trust deed created to suit their circumstances, and the implications of this.

Tax implications of the trust are the same throughout the UK.

## 8. The trustees

You (or both of you in the case of joint settlors) are automatically included as original trustees. At least one additional trustee should be appointed at outset. You and the additional trustee(s) execute the trust deed together.

Anyone over the age of 18 and of sound mind can be a trustee. You should choose your trustees with care.

You may wish to appoint a professional person, such as a solicitor, to be a trustee. Bear in mind that such professionals will normally charge fees to act as a trustee.

You can appoint further trustees later on and you may also dismiss a trustee provided at least one trustee other than you or your spouse/civil partner remains.

In all other cases the trustees of an English trust must act unanimously. After your death, if any trustee loses mental capacity, they can be dismissed by the majority of the other trustees.

## 9. The tax implications of the Nucleus Discretionary Gift Trust

**IMPORTANT:** The tax position of trusts and the trust property is complex, and varies depending on individual circumstances. It is also subject to any future changes in law or HMRC guidance. The tax information contained in this guide is not a substitute for individual specialist investment, tax and legal advice, which should be taken in all cases before establishing a trust arrangement. Nucleus accepts no responsibility for any reliance placed on the contents of this guide.

### 9.1 Inheritance tax (IHT)

#### 9.1.1 Establishment of the trust

For IHT purposes a transfer of value (a gift) takes place at the time the trust is created.

Where there are two settlors, each is treated as making a gift of one half of the value transferred.

When a new investment is to be made subject to trust with cash given to the trustees, the value transferred will be the cash gift.

When an existing onshore or offshore bond is made subject to trust, the value of the gift will be the value of the bond or the amount of the premium originally paid if greater.

When collectives in an existing investment account are made subject to trust, the value of the gift will be the value of the shares or units at the time of the gift.

If the amount of the transfer exceeds the settlor's available annual exemption, currently £3,000 for each settlor (£6,000 maximum for each settlor if the annual exemption for the previous tax year has not been used), it will be a chargeable lifetime transfer. This means that a liability to IHT at 20% will immediately arise if the value of the gift plus the value of all other chargeable transfers made by you in the previous seven years exceeds the nil rate band at the time the gift is made (the nil rate band of £325,000). A further tax liability could arise if you die within seven years of making the gifts (see section 9.1.4 for further information).

Depending on the value of your gift to trust there could be the need to report this to HMRC. Please speak to your adviser about if this applies to you.

#### 9.1.2 Registering the trust with HMRC

Almost all UK trusts set up during the settlors lifetime, unless excluded, will have to be registered within 90 days of creation.

Before Nucleus can accept an application or monies for new registrable trust cases, we will need sight of a 'proof of registration' document issued to the lead trustee by HMRC.

#### 9.1.3 Additions to the trust by the settlor

Any additional investment will be a further gift and the tax implications will be as described for the initial gift. If regular gifts are made out of income and meet certain other criteria, such gifts may be exempt under the normal expenditure out of income exemption. This can be a complex area, please speak to your financial and tax professional for more information.

Additional investments into the trust can also have an impact on the IHT 10 year principal and exit charges that can apply to the trust (see sections 9.1.6 and 9.1.7 for further information).

#### 9.1.4 Death of a beneficiary

As no beneficiary is entitled to anything unless and until the appointor makes an appointment in their favour, the death of a beneficiary who is capable of benefiting under the trust has no IHT implications for this trust.

#### 9.1.5 Death of the settlor

If you survive a full seven years after making the gift, on your death the value of the gift will be outside your estate for IHT purposes.

If you die within seven years of making this gift, which is a chargeable lifetime transfer (CLT), it will utilise some or all of your IHT nil rate band. When calculating your potential IHT liability gifts given within the seven years prior to your death are taken into account first in the calculation with the value your remaining assets applying subsequently. Taper relief may apply, you should speak to your financial adviser about whether this would apply to you and how this may work.

These provisions will apply to each settlor independently where there are joint settlors.

#### 9.1.6 IHT while the trust is in existence

As this is a discretionary trust, it is subject to special IHT rules called the 'relevant property regime'. Under these rules there may be IHT charges on every 10-year anniversary of the trust ('the principal charge'), or whenever property leaves the discretionary trust environment, for example when capital is advanced to a beneficiary ('the exit charge').

#### 9.1.7 The principal charge

Principal charges may be applied to the value of the assets in the trust on every 10-year anniversary of the trust.

For further information about the principal charge and how this might apply to the trust fund, please speak with your financial and tax adviser.

### 9.1.8 The exit charge

Exit charges apply when distributions are made from the trust to the beneficiaries. This will be based on the value of property leaving the trust and the timing of the distribution.

The IHT rules on the taxation of discretionary trusts are complex and may change in the future. You should discuss them in detail with your adviser before establishing a trust.

## 9.2 Income tax

The income tax implications depend on whether the asset held by the trustees is an onshore or offshore bond or collectives in the general account.

### 9.2.1 Creation of the trust

The transfer of an existing onshore or offshore bond into a trust does not give rise to a chargeable event and so there are no income tax implications.

There are no income tax implications on the transfer of a collective into trust except in the case of offshore non-reporting funds, in which case the gain (based on the market value of the investment at the date of transfer, less the acquisition price but without the benefit of the annual exemption) will be taxed as your income.

### 9.2.2 During the trust's existence

#### 9.2.2.1 Chargeable event gains under a bond

When a bond is encashed, a chargeable event gain can arise that will be subject to income tax. Who that gain is taxed on depends on whether the settlor is still alive and a UK resident in the tax year when the chargeable event occurs.

#### (a) During the settlor's lifetime and in the tax year in which the settlor's death occurs

For income tax purposes, any chargeable event gains arising under the bond will be assessed on the settlor if they are alive and a UK tax resident in the same tax year when the event occurs. If there are joint settlors, each will be assessed on one half of the gain. A basic rate tax credit will apply if the bond is an onshore bond. This credit will not be available for gains made under offshore bonds. The settlor may be able to use personal tax allowances and reliefs to help reduce the tax payable. For further details of the relevant bond taxation please refer to the relevant Nucleus Onshore and Offshore Bond literature.

If the settlor is non-UK resident and the trustees are UK resident then the trustees will be assessed to tax as explained in (b) below.

#### (b) After the end of the tax year in which the settlor's death occurs

Following the settlor's death, any chargeable event gains arising in a tax year after that will be assessed on the trustees if they are

UK resident. If total income is less than £500, it will be taxed at 0%, though the £500 is split between the number of discretionary trusts created by the settlor. If the gain is over £501, then this will be taxed at 45%. A 20% tax credit will apply if the bond is an onshore bond but this is not available for offshore bonds.

If the trustees are not UK resident there are special rules to tax UK beneficiaries when and to the extent that they receive benefits; specialist advice should be sought in all cases.

#### 9.2.2.2 Income arising to the trustees from investments in collectives

The income tax position will depend on whether the settlor's spouse or civil partner is included as a discretionary beneficiary.

There are changes to how income and gains are taxed for those who may have been claiming remittance basis of taxation prior to 5th April 2025 and advice should be sought.

### UK funds and offshore reporting funds

#### (a) Where the settlor's spouse or civil partner is excluded from all benefit under the trust

Under a discretionary trust there is no beneficiary who is entitled to income when it arises to the trustees. The trustees themselves are taxed on any income arising from the funds at the special trust rates.

Tax rates depend on whether income is treated as dividend income or interest income.

Trusts with income less than £500 in a tax year are not subject to Income Tax. If income is £501 or more then all income will be taxed at the appropriate trust rate depending on the source of income.

Where trust income is paid to a beneficiary it is treated as having already been taxed at the trust rate of 45%. Where the trustees have paid insufficient tax on the income, they may have to pay more tax.

If the beneficiary is a non, basic or higher rate taxpayer, they may be able to claim some or all of the tax back from HMRC (via their tax return or by writing to HMRC).

If they pay tax at 45% they will have no more tax to pay on the trust income. However, as this income is classed as "trust income" neither the personal savings allowance or the dividend allowances will be available.

Special rules also apply if the income distribution is made to a beneficiary who is the settlor's minor child. In such a case, the settlor will be taxed on that income if the income exceeds £100 in a tax year.

In such cases the settlor will be entitled to use their personal savings allowance and/or dividend allowance.

#### (b) Where the spouse or civil partner of the settlor may benefit under the trust

If you choose to include your spouse or civil partner as a beneficiary under the Nucleus Discretionary Gift Trust, you will be taxed on all trust income at your personal rates of income tax. This rule does not apply if only your widow or widower can benefit.

## Offshore non-reporting funds

Where the collective is an offshore non-reporting fund there will normally not be any real income distributions from the fund. Instead, when units/shares are disposed of, e.g. on sale, the gain (known as an offshore income gain) realised by the investor (the trustees) will be taxed as income. The offshore income gain will be calculated in the same way that a capital gain would be calculated, but without the benefit of the annual exemption from capital gains tax. This means that any income that arises to the fund effectively suffers income tax when an offshore income gain is made by the investor.

Who is assessed to tax on an offshore income gain made by the trustees depends on whether the settlor's spouse or civil partner can benefit under the trust or not.

### (a) Where the settlor's spouse or civil partner is excluded from all benefit under the trust

The trustees are liable to tax at the special rate of 45% on offshore income gains.

Where a payment is made out of the trust by the trustees to a beneficiary it is treated as capital without any liability to tax.

### (b) Where the spouse or civil partner of the settlor may benefit under the trust

If you choose to include your spouse or civil partner as a beneficiary under the Nucleus Discretionary Gift Trust, you will be taxed on all trust income (including offshore income gains) at your personal rate of income tax. This rule does not apply if only your widow or widower can benefit.

Despite this, the trustees will still be liable at the 45% trust rate described above, effectively paying tax on your behalf. You will receive a credit for the tax paid by the trustees.

Where a payment is made out the trust by the trustees to a beneficiary it is treated as capital without any liability to tax.

## 9.3 Capital gains tax (CGT)

### 9.3.1 Creation of the trust

There are no CGT implications if cash is transferred to the Nucleus wrap to buy new collectives or bonds to be held in the trust or if an onshore or offshore bond is transferred to a trust, unless the bond had previously been bought from another investor.

When an existing general account holding collectives (or some of the collectives in the account, but excluding any offshore non-reporting funds) is transferred to the Nucleus Discretionary Gift Trust, this will be a disposal for CGT purposes though hold over relief might be able to be claimed. Speak to your tax adviser about this. The gain will be calculated in the usual way and, after deduction of your available annual exemption, will be taxed at 18% or 24% depending on your marginal rate of income tax. However, if the collective is an offshore non-reporting fund the gain, without the benefit of the annual exemption, will be taxed as your income.

### 9.3.2 Trust capital gains (only relevant to collectives held in the general account)

The trustees are assessed on CGT for any capital gains arising when they sell the shares/units in a collective unless it is an offshore non-reporting fund, when the gain will be subject to income tax.

Unless the settlor has created more than one settlement the trustees are normally entitled to an annual CGT exemption currently £1,500 before any tax is actually payable. The trustees pay tax at a special trustee rate which is 24% on capital gains that exceed their available annual exemption.



0131 226 9535



client.relations@nucleusfinancial.com



www.nucleusfinancial.com