

Note of Meeting

Independent Living Fund Scotland: Northern Ireland Advisory Group Meeting

**Mencap Centre, 5 School Road, Newtownbreda, Belfast
BT8 7BT**

Thursday 4th August 2016: 1100 – 1400hrs

Present:

Charles Rainey
Niqi Rainey
David McDonald (supported by PA - Alice)
Fiona Coles (Mencap) (in attendance from 11.55am)

Apologies:

Valerie McCarthy
Paul Kinnear

In Attendance

Jackie Aiken
Holly Child
Mary Devlin
Liam Hargan
Liz McGarrity
Margaret Wheatley
Robert White

1. Welcome and introductions

Margaret welcomed everyone to the meeting. Following introductions, it was agreed the timing of the meeting and that all future meetings would take place between the hours of 1100 and 1400 hours.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting

All members of the group agreed the previous minutes of the meeting.

3. Matters Arising

Margaret updated the group on the progress of the Available Income Policy following the discussions on the options that had been proposed at the last meeting.

Margaret explained that she had submitted a proposal to the Scottish Government Sponsor Team, which detailed the removal of occupational pensions as a priority area and that she planned to submit at a later stage another proposal, which would address other issues with the Available Income Policy, such as the current inclusion of Severe Disability Premium (SDP).

Margaret then explained that the Scottish Government Sponsor Team had proposed for a cap on charging to be introduced. This cap would be set at a level that was equal to the maximum amount that those with pension income and those on income support receive. Therefore, following further discussion with the Scottish Government Sponsor Team, Margaret explained to the group that she is looking to submit the following three options in relation to establishing a cap on a recipient's available income contribution:

- A maximum cap of a £103 weekly contribution starting immediately.
- A maximum contribution of ½ Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and ½ Severe Disability Premium (SDP) per week.
- It is proposed that the feasibility of a move to adding a flat rate maximum contribution of ½ DLA per week is also being considered in the longer term.

A discussion took place amongst the group about these three options, including when a decision would be made and when the policy would be implemented. Margaret explained this would depend on what both the Scottish and Northern Ireland Government Sponsor Teams decided, but initially they were looking at October 2016 or April 2017 as a deadline.

David made a very specific point to the group about whether a recipient or their partner's occupational pension would still be taken into account if the income was not specified as only ½ DLA and ½ SDP and was specific as just the total amount of these two (as a cap) or whether part of their occupational pension would be taken into account to take it up to this amount of a contribution per week. Margaret said that she would look into this.

Action: Margaret to get this specific point clarified and will inform the group at the next meeting.

4. Employment Policy Review

Margaret explained that there had been a number of issues arising over employment support costs and the employment support policy. Therefore, subsequently, it was decided that a working group would be established in Scotland consisting of those from Social Work Scotland (SWS), representatives from disabled people's organisations and those from the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) and they would meet regularly over the next few months to discuss about these issues. It was highlighted that Andy Higgins, who is an ILF Scotland recipient and a member of the Scotland Stakeholder Group, has been tasked with project managing the group and the work involved in this policy review.

Margaret explained that her intention was for there to also be a working group for employment support policies.

Subsequently, a discussion about employment support cost issues that have arisen in and are relevant to Northern Ireland took place. Niqui informed the group that Deena Nimick (referred to as Nina) at the Northern Ireland Centre for Inclusive Living had already done some work and research in this area for disabled people living in Northern Ireland

(NICIL). Charles added that he had a proposal document from the NICIL containing a recommended list of how the separation of employment support costs could be implemented.

Following this, Margaret said she would speak with Nina to gather more information with regards to this as it may help inform the group on this issue at a later date. It was also agreed that Charles would send the document he had to Margaret.

Furthermore, Margaret suggested, in agreement with the group, to feedback at the next NI Stakeholder Group meeting what progress the Scotland Working Group have made with regards to reviewing the employment support policy.

Discussion took place about issues in NI with DP rates and variations across NI. The stakeholder group felt that Disabled people in NI could also benefit from a harmonisations across HSCT and with ILF in relation to employment support . It was agreed that Margaret would also get this on to the agenda of the Government sponsor team to consider a NI working group who would review the employment support policy.

Action: Margaret to contact Nina from Northern Ireland Centre for Inclusive Living.

Action: Charles to send Margaret the document he has on the separation of employment support costs.

Action: Margaret to feed back to the group at the next meeting about the progress the Scotland Working Group have made with regards to reviewing the employment support policy.

Action: the Northern Ireland Government Sponsor Team to consider a future NI working group that will discuss the employment support policy.

5. National Insurance

Margaret explained that following discussions she had had with other stakeholders and payroll agencies, it was clear that ILF Scotland no longer needed to cover the cost of National Insurance contributions for

recipients for their PAs as the first £3,000 of national insurance can be covered by HMRC.

Although, there was overwhelming consensus amongst the group that these costs should then be used to cover other statutory costs, such as pension auto enrolment, there were still some concerns voiced. It was agreed that, at the moment, decisions on national insurance would need to be taken on a case by case basis.

Niqi also explained that NICIL had previously outsourced some of its payroll to a third party company called Pauley Business Services and that ILF Scotland would need to double check whether any NI ILF recipients were part of this as this would impact on the national insurance issue.

Action: Margaret to contact NICIL about whether they are still outsourcing payroll services to Pauley Business Services Limited or whether they are responsible for this for ILF recipients as this will impact on National Insurance.

6. Survey Feedback

Margaret explained that Harvey had asked an external company to look at and redesign the ILF Scotland satisfaction survey. She went on to explain that they thought we should have one survey for recipients to fill in after their two yearly review and one that they should fill in on a yearly basis to identify if they thought their outcomes were being met.

The group had a discussion about some edits that they would make, as well as raising some points in relation to accessibility. However, it was decided that the group needed some more time to look over the surveys and feedback any improvements and alterations, which they will send to Holly.

Action: Holly to send out current satisfaction survey for the group to see this as not everyone had seen this, as well as to send out the two surveys discussed to all group members for comment.

7. AOB

The group discussed that at this present moment in time there are not enough members in the group. In order to address this, a number of actions were agreed, which can be seen below.

Action: Holly to invite all ILF recipients in Northern Ireland to be a part of the stakeholder group.

Action: All ILF Scotland NI Assessors to mention about the stakeholder group to any recipients they visit.

Action: Holly to add a section on the website about the NI stakeholder group and to advertise for new members.

The location of the next meeting was agreed to be at Mencap's offices again, however it was acknowledged that one of the other meetings later in the year may be held in another part of Northern Ireland to make this fairer to all members.

It was also agreed that at the next meeting only one of ILF Scotland's NI Assessors would attend.

Date of next meeting confirmed as Monday 17th October 2016 between 1100 – 1400hrs.