

Note of Meeting

Independent Living Fund Scotland: Northern Ireland Stakeholder Group Meeting

Disability Action, Belfast.

Friday 22nd April 2016: 1100 – 1500hrs

Present

Charles Rainey
Nikki Rainey
David McDonald (supported by PA)
Valerie McCarthy
Fiona Coles (Mencap – in place of Margaret Kelly)

In Attendance

Peter Scott
Harvey Tilley
Robert White
Liz McGarrity
Mary Devlin

1. Welcome and Introductions

Following introductions Peter formally welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the ILF Scotland NI Advisory Group.

2. Overview of ILF Scotland

Peter provided a detailed update on the work of ILF Scotland since it began operations in July 2015.

3. Role of the Group

The group worked through the draft Terms of Reference. The following additions were requested: -

- Mencap would identify an ILF recipient with a learning disability to attend the group;
- The group should explore additional members and reserves and suggest a letter should be sent to all recipients asking for volunteers.

Subject to these additions the group approved the Terms of Reference.

Charles or Nikki Rainey were nominated by the group to Chair and they would confirm who would fulfil this function. Subsequently Charles volunteered to become the Chair and will do this in the next meeting of the group.

It was also decided that these meetings should be held on a quarterly basis between 1100 – 1400hrs and ILF Scotland would liaise with the group to set the next 4 – 6 meetings in tandem with reporting to NI Government colleagues.

4. ILF Scotland Available Income Policy

Peter informed the group that ILF Scotland had received some criticism for being too money focused during the assessment process. Peter explained that ILF Scotland needs to ensure best use of the limited fund at our disposal, and so we want to ensure that any unspent money – money not required by ILF Scotland recipients – is returned to allow us to re-distribute to other disabled people. However, he recognised that the primary focus at assessment meetings must always be the individual fund recipient and the independent living outcomes they are trying to achieve through their use of the fund.

Peter explained that ILF Scotland had “inherited” their policies from the UK Government and, despite some issues, they had no option but to

work with them until they could be reviewed/replaced. The Available Income Policy has been identified as in need of revision, and the group was asked to consider this policy from the perspective of an ILF Scotland recipient.

Peter explained how recipients were currently contributing ½ of their DLA award and, when received, all of their Severe Disability Premium, whilst older people were also affected by occupational pension income being included (under the existing UK policy). It was felt by some that this was unfair, and disabled people were being left with very little money to live on due to ILF personal Contributions (set by UK Government). The group noted that Disability Related Expenditure (DRE) should be considered to avoid the risk of contributing to financial hardship.

At this point David stated **‘I was better off before I had ILF, but I need it because without it, I cannot even get out of the door’**.

Peter then covered 4 options for discussion and possible changes to the current policy which could be put to the ILF Board and Scottish Ministers.

- 1 Flat rate charge for all, e.g. ½ DLA rate or ½ Severe Disability Premium
- 2 No contributions and ILF cover the costs (although this would cost approx. £8 million)
- 3 No contribution required and current net ILF Scotland award becomes gross award
- 4 Remove Occupational Pension Income from available income calculation

A discussion was held by the group re the various options.

It was requested that Peter would confirm with SG when the working wage disregard come into place?

The group thought that there should not be an increase if recipients start getting an occupational pension and should also disregard partners occupational pension.

In addition to that if there was a contribution this should be proportionate to the size of the award payment so did not disadvantage those with smaller awards.

Peter provided feedback from the Scottish Advisory Group who thought that it should be ½ DLA as a contribution, but the NI Advisory Group unanimously disagreed.

5. Award Policy Development

The group were asked what they would prioritise in terms of policy development and all members had a different view, however all agreed that pension disregard should be the number one priority and we should also look at the following:

- Available income
- ILF opened up to new recipients
- Moving away from Qualifying Support Services (QSS) to outcomes

David also stated the ILF should be used to **‘make sure it is always an independent living fund, not an independent existence fund’**

6. Any Other Business

Valerie highlight different models of social care funding such as the National Disabled Insurance Scheme in Australia and a similar scheme in British Columbia, Canada that was worth finding out more information.

ILF Scotland agreed to send all attendees an expenses form and these should be sent back to Margaret Wheatley (Margaret.Wheatley@ILF.SCOT) for sign off.

Minutes should be published on the ILF Scotland website for everyone to access in easy read.

Location of next meeting was agreed to be at Mencap's new conference facilities.

Date of next meeting confirmed as Thursday 4th August 2016 from 1100 – 1400hrs.