



Executive Summary Annual Operational Report

1st April 2020 - 31st March 2021



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1. Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of achievement and activities between 1st April 2020 – 31st March 2021 and provide an overview of the activity across the whole year. This report will naturally focus on our actions as we responded to the global Covid-19 pandemic, detailing how we endeavoured to ensure the safety and well-being of our recipients and staff members. It will also expand on some of the key developments in delivering our business plan and preparatory work undertaken to inform the potential re-opening of the 2015 Fund in both Scotland and Northern Ireland in 2021-22.

2. Executive Summary

a. **Overview** – The last 12 months has, without doubt, been the busiest and most challenging period since the inception of ILF Scotland, due to the impact of the global pandemic. We have worked hard to be supportive, and innovative, in our response to this pandemic, introducing many new measures and initiatives to help recipients, key stakeholders and staff get through the year with as little impact on well-being as possible in such challenging circumstances. However, as we look back over the last 12 months of dealing with the pandemic, as both an organisation and nation, it has clearly taken a heavy toll on us all. That said, the resilience, determination and solidarity shown by our recipients, and the professionalism, empathy, compassion and sheer hard work of all involved in ILF Scotland has been truly humbling to watch.

The experience of many disabled people during this crisis necessitates fresh thinking about the provision of care, support and rights for disabled people. During this year our model of social care and support, which strives to put disabled people at the heart of defining their own needs and how these needs will be met, has never been more important. This is why it has come as no surprise, to us at least, that the reopening of ILF to new applicants was one of the main recommendations in the recent Independent Review of Adult Social Care in Scotland, led by Derek Feeley. Alongside that, although Covid-19 has undeniably slowed down the momentum in Northern Ireland, we are hopefully on the cusp of taking the next steps in reopening the fund there as well.

Disabled people have undoubtedly experienced very difficult times throughout the pandemic, which has exacerbated the already deep societal inequalities already in place. For those disabled people that receive our support and rely on personal assistance in these uncertain times, it has been very worrying indeed. Social distancing is not possible when personal care is needed, so disabled people and their supporters are in a very challenging space. As many individuals who receive funding from ILF Scotland are also employers, they have faced further problems as many of their personal assistants have had to take time to self-isolate and they have needed to source personal protective equipment (PPE) to carry on safely with their day to day jobs.

What has been reassuring to see and hear, is the feedback from disabled people on how we have supported them this year and how ILF Scotland funding can have a transformative impact on disabled people, their families, friends and communities even through a global

pandemic. This evidence has come via a myriad of routes from direct feedback, wellbeing calls and letters, through to independent research projects carried out by different organisations. Organisations such as Inclusion Scotland, Glasgow Disability Alliance, the Centre for Inclusive Living Northern Ireland (CILNI) and Disability NI have carried out various pieces of research throughout the last year, where ILF Scotland and its positive impact has been clearly referenced. Indeed, comprehensive research conducted by CILNI shows disabled people who have ILF are more resilient and for every £ invested in ILF, it provides £10.89 in social return on investment. Our recipient survey, conducted in late 2020 and early 2021, which received over 340 responses, mirrors the findings of external organisations. This collectively has given us an in depth perspective on the reality of life for disabled people during the pandemic. The vast majority of respondents reported a negative impact from the pandemic, with almost 20% of our survey respondents stating that it had resulted in a major life-changing negative impact. Specific issues related to: mental and physical health being affected; increased isolation; loss of service provision; significant increase in family care; and carer exhaustion. We will be using this research to help plan our next steps out of lockdown in the year ahead.

From an operational perspective, we have stayed fully open throughout the financial year, supporting over 5,000 disabled people across Scotland and Northern Ireland to have choice, control and dignity, which is an increase of over 25% in the numbers of disabled people supported from the previous year. ILF Scotland successfully moved to full remote and agile working in late March and early April 2020 during Covid-19, which was a reflection of our flexible work culture and digital strategy. We have continued providing high quality services to recipients in Scotland and Northern Ireland throughout the pandemic with minimal disruption to provision. Our operational model has been completely redesigned in order to provide over 4,000 in depth wellbeing recipient checks in 10 months, which would normally take approximately 3 years. This resulted in over 92% of recipients maintaining or increasing their pre-Covid-19 support (support was only reduced for the 8% by their specific instruction and never by ILF Scotland). We have dealt with over 11,000 contacts via phone, text and email compared with just over 10,000 the year before, an increase of around 10%.

It has also been a record year for the Transition Fund (TF), with 1,813 applications received, an increase of over 36% from the year before. We also passed 4,000 applications received since opening in Dec 2017 and have approved over £7 million pounds of life enhancing support to help disabled young people, between the ages of 16 and 25, with the transition after leaving school or children's services. To manage the growth in demand this year, we had to reduce the maximum award in December 2020 to £1,500, which resulted in the volume of applications received slowing down in Quarter 4 (Q4). Coupled with this, we received additional funding and as a consequence of this, and the reduced maximum award, the TF has continued to deliver life changing support to young disabled people through the whole year when most statutory support was reduced as a result of the pandemic.

In conjunction with the above, we have carried on consulting, co-producing and developing our plans for the future, ensuring disabled people are at the heart of our thinking. In Quarter 1 (Q1) we completed a public consultation to support the reopening of the fund to new applications in Northern Ireland. In Quarter 3 (Q3) we finished extensive co-production with all stakeholders carried out over the previous 12 months, to launch our person-led strategy. We have continually consulted, developed and implemented our Covid-19 response and recovery plan to play our part in the economic and societal recovery from the pandemic. This included a feedback survey from recipients and award managers that

gained our highest recorded response rate in any consultation previously conducted. Finally, we also actively contributed to Government consultations, such as the Feely Review, and produced responses to various policy areas, including Fair Work and Self Directed Support.

As with other areas of work, Policy has centred around our response to Covid-19 and we have worked closely with colleagues in the Scottish and Northern Irish Governments to jointly agree flexible policy responses to Covid-19. Numerous policy updates to stakeholders have been issued as the situation has changed. We have ensured ILF Funded PAs and recipients were included in the rollout of vaccination and testing for priority groups, whilst jointly taking forward, with our Sponsor Teams, the development of policy guidance in areas including: the continued payment of normal awards (sustainability payments); additional payments for replacement care; other Covid-19 related expenditure; and the £500 'Thank You' payment promised to Health & Social Care Workers by the First Minister in Scotland.

Alongside this, we have successfully completed the annual Scottish Living Wage uplift, whilst continuing to revise award policies to make them more accessible, compliant with the latest legislation, and targeted at enabling independent living. These have included employer support guidance and the long-term objective to reduce the available income charge from £83 to £43 for recipients in Scotland, which will provide additional income to disabled people at a time of most need. During the year we have also published our approach to the Equalities Duty, including Gaelic language preparations and finalised our first Mainstreaming and Equalities Outcome Report. As part of our commitment to keep disabled people at the heart of decision making, meetings with our Stakeholder Group in Northern Ireland and Recipient Advisory Group in Scotland have been conducted virtually. This has supported the work in progressing the Charter for Involvement and as such, the action plan to implement the charter statements has been completed by the end of Q4. In addition, in 2020/21 we managed to formally establish the young ambassadors group, comprised of some young people who have been successful in their applications to the Transition Fund. They have contributed to a number of communications campaigns, provided their assistance with online engagement events and offered their expertise in supporting Scottish Government colleagues with an upcoming digital project.

As communications and engagement have been so important this year, it is no surprise that these areas of work have been exceptionally busy. To keep recipients and other key stakeholders up to date, we have produced two external newsletters sending over 5,000 copies to provide key information through the pandemic. This has been augmented by 7,500 letters over and above normal day to day communications, to keep recipients and award managers updated on developments throughout the year, as well as 3 online mailouts to recipients who want to receive communication updates digitally and other stakeholders, such as payroll agencies, care providers and social work professionals. We have also constantly updated our website and social media channels, provided weekly updates and a monthly internal newsletter to colleagues, and produced new and engaging content to explain what we do. Despite restrictions, 36 online engagement events with an audience of around 550 people attending have been completed. In addition, the Communications Team have undertaken 4 very successful campaigns, including the Northern Ireland consultation survey, ILF Scotland's 5th birthday campaign to celebrate disabled people achieving independent living outcomes, one to help young disabled individuals apply to the TF through the pandemic and the International Day of People with Disabilities in December 2020. This work has helped increase our reach and share knowledge with over 10,000 new website users and has resulted in significant increases in all social media engagement and website page views, which are up 76% over the year.

From a financial viewpoint, we have made around 33,000 independent living payments to 2015 Fund recipients totalling just under £50 million. Colleagues in Finance have completely digitised all of our internal finance processes during the pandemic to operate more efficiently. We gained a clean external audit with no qualifications for the 5th year in a row and carried out 3 internal audits, achieving the highest possible results in both Data Protection and HR.

Keeping colleagues safe and well whilst delivering high quality support to disabled people has been of paramount importance throughout the year. Overall, the culture that has been created at ILF Scotland, coupled with how we have been staffed, structured and trained, has meant that we have been able to pivot the organisation quickly to respond to the crisis whilst protecting our staff and those we support at the same time. As we have moved through the different stages of the pandemic, one of the main challenges for ILF Scotland has been working with colleagues to mitigate against both the extraordinary workloads and the stresses of the pandemic. We have invested significant effort around expanding our already market leading health and wellbeing employee proposition and extended the use of flexible work policies, providing colleagues with the necessary tools to work effectively from home. Throughout the year we have carried out over 1,500 days of personal development to support the delivery of excellent outcomes for disabled people. In tandem with this, we have regularly communicated with colleagues on a weekly basis to make sure we leave no one behind and everyone has been fully up to date with the situation as it occurs. To prevent burn out we have introduced numerous supports, including Covid-19 weekends and initiatives like 'Ditch the Desk', whilst encouraging colleagues to take time to decompress away from the day to day challenges. We have provided additional support for those with caring responsibilities and constantly reinforced the message 'do what you can'.

By co-producing solutions with colleagues, listening to them through various feedback mechanisms, we have managed to maintain high levels of engagement from colleagues, as evidenced through the staff survey and our comparatively low absence rates and high staff retention throughout the reporting period. ILF Scotland has also validated its position independently as a market leading employer of choice by winning the Best Small Employer Award in the UK from Working Families in May, a Top 10 Employer in the annual Working Families benchmark in September, a finalist in 3 categories (the Best for Mental Health/for Employee Engagement/for Best for Family Support) in the 2021 Working Mums Awards and Highly Commended in the 2021 Top Employer Flexibility Works Awards.

To support the above work, colleagues from our IT and Information Management Teams have performed brilliantly throughout the year, keeping our systems running safely and securely. This has included the quick roll out of Zoom and Microsoft Teams to enable new virtual ways of working. We have gained Cyber Essentials Plus accreditation for the 3rd year in a row, protecting the organisation from cyber-crime and during the summer of 2020 we successfully replaced 5 servers with no disruption to services, which was a first for ILF Scotland. Due to the high tempo of operations we have constantly looked to be even more efficient, easier to access and better at what we do resulting in the delivery of over 130 improvements to systems, processes and services saving over 7,600 hours of staff time a year, the equivalent of £175k. For example, after seeing the impact of the pandemic on young disabled people around digital exclusion and social isolation, we developed a fast track technology grant application process to enable quicker delivery of life enhancing IT to individuals. In the background we have also actively contributed to two national infrastructure projects – the Payments Platform and Digital Identity Scotland, whilst keeping forward momentum in launching our new electronic records plan ready for 2021-22. Concurrently with this work, we have been working on the

redesign of our risk and resilience framework to make us more robust, and we have finished the first major phase of our digital transformation work. Lastly, we have introduced a new safe and secure bulk electronic mailing system and updated data sharing agreements with key partners.

As can be seen from the above, it has been an extraordinary year for ILF Scotland dealing with the profound impact of Covid-19 on us all. Our focus throughout the year has been to rapidly think what the pandemic means for us, the people we support, how we integrate with the wider governmental response and what actions we take in both Scotland and Northern Ireland. We have worked hard to constantly adapt to the changing and dynamic environment throughout the year by listening to disabled people, colleagues and other stakeholders. As such, we believe we are well poised to move confidently into the next phase of recovery, though know the consequences of this global crisis will have a long overhang into the coming years.

In summary, we have had the busiest, most challenging yet rewarding reporting period by any benchmark since opening in July 2015. With the vaccination programme accelerating to over 65% (at the time of writing) of the adult population covered, we are now looking forward to a gradual return to a more physical environment with restrictions lifted. We continue to work towards re-commencing normal operations, implementing our new strategy and the growth agenda, extending the Transition Fund, reopening the 2015 Fund to new applications in both Northern Ireland and Scotland and supporting the Scottish Government to deliver the recommendations in the Independent Social Care Review report. With strong foundations and an excellent staff team, we aim to build upon our learning through Covid-19 and will work towards enabling even more people to live independently.

b. Key Operational Activities

i. Strategic Outcome 1 – Facilitate the independent living needs of disabled people:

- We continued to work closely with the SG and NI Sponsor Teams to jointly agree flexible policy responses to Covid-19. We are taking forward joint development of guidance in these areas:
 - Continued payment of normal awards (Sustainability Payments).
 - Additional payments for replacement care and other Covid-19 related expenditure.
 - £500 'Thank You' payment promised to health and social care workers by the First Minister in Scotland.
 - ILF Funded PAs and recipients inclusion in PPE access and the rollout of vaccination and testing for priority groups.
- In Q3 we published an Interim Policy TF02, which reduced the maximum Transition Fund grant available to £1,500. We received an additional funding allocation from the Scottish Government to allow us to continue on this basis until 31 March 2021. Following fruitful discussions in Q4 with our Scottish Government Sponsors, we have secured an increased budget for 2021-22 and this has allowed an increase to the maximum grant, which will be set at £4,000 for the coming year. Within this, the fund

retains the discretion to exceed the maximum in exceptional cases where there is deemed to be a potential for a life-transforming impact.

- In Q4 SG agreed that we could continue with our flexible policy implementation, including replacement support, until the end of Q1 2021/22. We wrote to all recipients to advise them of this. We paid out approximately £860k for replacement support in the last year.
- We worked closely with the Sponsor Team, named Vaccination contacts in the SG and NHS along with contacts in Health and Social Care Partnerships (HSCPs), Health and Social Care Trusts (HSCTs) and health board area vaccination centres to facilitate access to vaccines for ILF Scotland funded PAs. This is now progressing well.
- We continue to discuss arrangements for the roll out of the £500 'Thank You' payment promised to health and social care workers by the First Minister. We have developed procedures and the technical solution to achieve this but are waiting for agreement from SG to proceed. Delays have related to COSLA and Payroll agency concerns.
- We have revised and published the 'Your Responsibilities Guide' and 'Employer Support Information Note'. The Sponsor Team have agreed that we change Employer Support from a policy to guidance, which means we will more easily be able to update this quickly in respect of any future legislative changes.
- Civil Servants in Northern Ireland are working on a detailed submission for the Minister of Health to reopen the 2015 Fund. We await further information.
- One of the recommendations from the Feeley Independent Review of Adult Social Care is that ILF Scotland is reopened in Scotland. Development work has been put on hold until after Purdah.
- We continue to conduct Stakeholder Group meetings in Northern Ireland and Recipient Advisory Group meetings in Scotland virtually. We worked closely with group members over the last year to establish relevant Charter for Involvement Statements and in collaboration with them, we co-produced our first Action Plan in Q4 to confirm how we will implement these. These Groups also helped us develop a recipient feedback survey about the effect of Covid-19 on our recipients and their support services.
- We developed our first Equalities Outcomes Monitoring Report, a requirement for ILF Scotland, as a Public Body, from 2020. This reports on the progress we have made in 2020/21 and the equalities outcomes we aim to achieve in 2021/22.
- We developed our First Corporate Parenting Report, again, a requirement for us, as a public body, from 2020. This report on our role as a corporate parent, which for now relates to the Transition Fund, and sets out how we intend to deliver on our corporate parenting responsibilities from 2021 - 2024.

ii. **Strategic Outcome 2 – Be leaders in enabling independent living:**

- Whilst our main focus has been on the wellbeing calls with recipients and carers, there are highly significant reforms in progress in both Scotland and Northern Ireland, which ILF is participating in to promote a focus on independent living outcomes.
- Our Covid-19 policy and practice has received positive feedback from stakeholders. ILF Scotland has been successful in delivering government policy intent of offering flexibility, choice and maintaining supports. We maintained or increased funds for

96% of recipients, in contrast to HSCP/T's average of 62% of packages of support maintained or increased (largely due to the necessity of closing building based services). Our flexibility included enabling a number of recipients to employ family members in a time of crisis.

- Work has continued throughout the year with ARC Scotland on a new national approach to developing a self-evaluation toolkit, with data model, that can be used to plan and measure the effectiveness of transitions (aimed directly at local authority education and social care departments).
- Contributed to various pieces of research and consultations, including the Feely Review.
- Virtual engagement events in the form of online workshops and presentations with a variety of partner organisations continued to take place.
- In Scotland Self Directed Support (SDS) national standards, which we helped create, have now been agreed by COSLA and ILF Scotland has been invited to join Social Work Scotland National Self-directed Support Steering Group. This will oversee the development of a co-produced national action plan for the further implementation of Self-Directed Support.
- In Q4 the continuation of our Carer Respite grant (30 grants) has helped avoid admission to care where carers reported they simply could not continue.

iii. **Strategic Outcome 3 – Operate a high-quality efficient service:**

- Wherever possible, we have attempted to continue our business as usual operation during this period, and have completed meetings, development activities, planning activities, reporting and audit to our normal standards.
- Awarded Best Small Employer at Working Families Awards in Q1, gained a Top 10 UK Employer in the Working Families Benchmark in Q2, were a finalist in three categories of excellence as an employer in the UK Working Mums Awards in Q3 and finally we were awarded a Highly Commended in the inaugural Flexibility Work Awards in Q4.
- Completed the first stage of an organisational workforce plan preparing for future growth.
- Gained Cyber Essentials Plus for the third year running and returned a "satisfactory" level of compliance with a much higher standard than required against the National Cyber Security Centre 10 Steps cyber security framework.
- Three main projects continued well over the year despite the time pressure challenges on all staff from the Covid-19 response. The new file plan for our records management is sitting with the Scottish Government and once the changes are made we can begin the process of records migration into our new ERDM, which is planned for Q1 of 2021/22. The digital transformation project completed the discovery phase and moved to development of the new service delivery model. During Q4, this has been reviewed by a team of industry experts, including technical architects from Microsoft, and during Q1 of 2021/22 we will see this progress to a fully costed business case for capital investment. Finally, we have progressed the redesign of our risk and resilience framework.
- Over the course of the year, we have tried, wherever possible, to continue our business as usual operation albeit remotely. As well as responding to the Covid-19 crisis, we completed and achieved sign off on our new strategic plan for the following 3 years.

As a public body, this one action provided us with the strategic framework to focus our activities on both the Covid-19 response and also our future 3 year planning and we are pleased to report that alongside Covid-19, all of our public body duties, governance, operations and reporting have all progressed.

- In terms of delivery of our services, we have nearly completed two cycles of in depth wellbeing calls/reviews with every 2015 Fund recipient. The change from physical review to the calls has resulted in a fourfold increase from our normal contact cycle with individual recipients as instead of a two-yearly review, we have now contacted all recipients twice in a year. This has placed significant challenges on the normal service delivery model, but also an opportunity to learn how best to scale and deliver this service and has resulted in the much welcomed developments to the assessor portal.
- Video conference, network bandwidth, Skype, Zoom, emails and storage limits were all pushed to the limits during Covid-19 and resulted in much frustration and technology fatigue. The end of Q3 saw the move to a cloud based Microsoft Teams solution for Scottish Government and Q4 has seen ILF Scotland fully adopt the platform and begin to realise the benefits of it as a collaboration tool and secure video conferencing channel for external as well as internal people.
- Business planning for Covid-19 recovery and also for 2021-23 was completed this period and once 3 carry forward response actions have been closed out, the new plan has twenty one business objectives to achieve the corporate strategy.
- Sustainability, change management, improvements and efficiency management have been looked at during this period and two specific business plan objectives set around linking the quality of our performance to the National Performance Framework and net carbon neutral planning by 2045.
- From initial review of the National Performance Framework (NPF), it is likely that ILF Scotland is well placed to demonstrate positive contributions to 9 of the 11 NPFs and this work will progress in the next financial year.
- Overall, as mentioned in the Feely Report (January 2021), ILF Scotland is a strong example of a public service delivering a high quality service in a highly pressurised and challenging time and could be seen as a role model for others.

c. **Main Effort** – The main effort throughout this reporting period has been responding to Covid-19 whilst carrying on developing our strategic plans for the future.

d. **Call Volumes** – This year we have received 11,240 telephone and email enquiries compared with 10,254 in 2019/20. This 10% increase is due to a rise in operational activity, Covid-19 and growth in Transition Fund related calls and a new call recording system that is easier for staff to complete. There are relatively few emails from 2015 Fund recipients, which is explained by the fact that most do not have or use emails, but where we do receive enquiries, these are mainly for respite, requesting forms or queries regarding their award. Most emails come from applications for the Transition Fund and at present, stage one requires an email request to validate the application. Thereafter, applicants are using email to submit quotes, receipts, support letters and to complete the end of grant process. The main areas of enquiry are as follows:

- Transition Fund – general enquiries and Identification document enquiries;

- Transition Fund – requests to extend funding and application support;
 - 2015 – finance changes;
 - 2015 – Local Authority calls for information including payment schedule, threshold sums, etc;
 - 2015 – completion of agreement forms and the new process;
 - General (this includes confirmation of information not covered above, new fund enquiries and general information about the organisation and in recent weeks information regarding employer costs and funding during the Covid-19 situation.)
- e. **Quality Journey** – Work has continued on the creation of an integrated sustainability and improvements plan. The five inter-related components remain:
- Continuous Improvement
 - Change Management
 - Quality Management
 - Sustainability
 - Efficiency Management
- The control mechanism required to be in place, and the initial assessment outcomes for strategic improvement projects, as well as the new improvement and sustainability model has incurred significant delays due to operational workload across all areas of the organisation. The mechanism required for highlighting and approving major improvement work within the organisation will be in place in Summer 2021.
- f. **Complaints** – Across both funds, we received 14 complaints in 2020/21 compared with 35 the previous year. We capture each learning point from this valuable feedback about our service and act to address any issues raised through revised procedures, staff training, etc, in the spirit of continuous organisational improvement.
- g. **Intern** – Our Communications Intern completed his internship at the end of Q2. He wrote a blog for our website highlighting how positive a learning experience it was for him. He managed to secure a temporary position with another organisation in Q3.

h. **Social Work Student** - We received numerous requests to accept a social work student last year. Placements are reduced and universities are struggling to find placements for final year and masters students. We accepted a student, from Dundee University on a largely virtual placement January to May 2021 and this has again been a resounding success. The fresh perspective and recent theory and practice brought into the organisation is a strong aid to keeping our practice reflective and fit for purpose. We intend to take another student in Q1 2021 given the unprecedented demand and lack of opportunities.

i. **Future Work** – The focus for the next period will be to look to the future and what this means for our strategy, policy development, our new business plan and our growth agenda based on the findings of the Independent Review of Adult Social Care, including work to reopen the fund to new applications in Northern Ireland and expansion of the Transition Fund. Work will continue in relation to wellbeing calls and the Covid-19 recovery plan, but we expect, even with the positive impact of the vaccination programme, our operations will remain the same in Q1. After that we are planning for the resumption of physical reviews and a hybrid working solution where colleagues will continue to work flexibly, but with more time in the office. As we have not carried out any physical reviews for over 12 months, there will be a considerable backlog to work through coupled with navigating the long term impact of the pandemic on social care.

3. 2015 Fund

- a. **2015 Fund Numbers** – Over the year 2015 Fund recipient numbers have dropped to 2,572 (Scotland 2,160 & NI 412) from 2,690 (Scotland 2,254 & NI 436). This represents an overall decline in line with the trend of around 4.4% (4.2% Scotland & 5.5% NI) per annum.
- b. **2015 Fund Operational Performance** – This year saw a reduction of 88% in review reports completed due to being unable to carry out physical visits. Instead, we have completed over 4,000 detailed individual calls that in effect were mini reviews; telephone contacts updated practical matters, such as ILF award changes and also provided a range of supports to recipients. As detailed above, the suspension of home visits, a core part of our role, led to an increase in communication with recipients and a lasting legacy will be increased choice and control for recipients. Some lessons from Covid-19 have already been identified e.g. we will now continue to offer video call reviews where appropriate and we are designing our own bespoke guidance as there is very little guidance on social care assessments undertaken by video from any sources.
- c. **Policy Revision** – We have completed the following in this reporting period:
 - Got approval to continue to pay normal awards to the end of June 2021.
 - SG and COSLA issued guidance on sustainability payments to HSCPs on 14 December 2020. Updated guidance relevant to ILF Scotland recipients also produced. This will acknowledge different contractual arrangements.
 - We continue to pay additional amounts for replacement care and other Covid-19 related expenditure where required for the same time period.
 - We have drafted a process to allow ILF Scotland to administer the £500 Thank You payment to our recipients employing PAs. It is with SG for consideration.
 - We have agreed with Scottish Government colleagues to further reduce the cap on Available Income contributions from £83 to £43 from June 2021.

- We have carried out further work to investigate the reopening of the 2015 Fund in collaboration with Civil Servants and other stakeholders in Northern Ireland. Civil Servants are currently working on a submission to the Minister.
- We have completed a revised Policy 44 (Employment Support Guidance) and published.
- We are drafting a revised Policy 41 (Use of Funding) to provide recipients with more flexibility and to bring our policy more in line with SDS principles of choice and control. We have submitted this to the Sponsor Team in Q4 for approval.

d. **Scottish Living Wage (SLW)** – We implemented the Scottish Living Wage for all our recipients in Scotland with directly employed and appointed self-employed PAs, effective from 1 April 2021.

e. **Social Work Update** – In this reporting period ILF Scotland provided analysis of communication with all 2015 Fund recipients to key stakeholders, including Social Work Scotland and both sponsoring governments. As previously mentioned, 92% of ILF awards were paid in full or increased compared with Health and Social Care Partnerships where 60% of jointly funded supports were functioning as normal and 40% of jointly funded supports were not in place or significantly reduced through the closure of day and respite services. Carer stress resulting in the breakdown of support at home was evidenced during communication with recipients resulting in the provision of direct carer support for the first time in ILF history. We have made 30 emergency respite payments to avoid admission to care.

Despite being the busiest year to date in our history, we have contributed significantly to adult social care reforms in Scotland and Northern Ireland. In Scotland we are embedded in the creation of new Self Directed Support Standards with Social Work Scotland, a new PA handbook in partnership with Self Directed Support Scotland and Social Care Charging with COSLA. In Northern Ireland we have helped advocate for consideration of delegated nursing tasks to PAs to enable greater choice and control. We retained the ability to visit people where there was a critical reason to do so and we have completed a small handful of in person reviews with more planned for Q1 2021-2022. Increasing pressure to address a number of issues as we exit Covid-19 is clear, resulting in the necessity to conduct full reviews as soon as possible, because of significant changes made permanent during Covid-19.

As mentioned previously in the report, feedback from recipients over the past 12 months in relation to our support is that we have got it right, people wanted support, reassurance and information. We signposted 40% of recipients to further supports, most commonly Carers Centres and the Wellbeing Hub. We referred 5% of recipients for Income Maximisation; the internal cases where we took a lead in maximising income would indicate this means approximately £350k of additional income to recipients. We increased the frequency of Social Work Scotland and ILF Scotland network meetings from 4 to 8 during the past year, and this was valuable in enabling speedy communication about our approaches to various Covid-19 SDS Policy changes. Colleagues in Local Authorities in both Scotland and Northern Ireland report that during the pandemic they have largely only been able to prioritise emergency visits and statutory work, such as protection investigations. This has meant, therefore, that the SDS policy flexibility that the Scottish Government has promoted via 2 sets of guidance and a letter from the Cabinet Secretary, has been challenging for statutory authorities to fully implement. Recipients have reported to us that the flexibility to temporarily pay a family member as a PA has often been declined by Local Authorities, as have requests to switch SDS options, e.g. to take a temporary direct payment.

This has meant that, in the best interests of recipients, we have temporarily been able to replace some Local Authority funded care and support on a temporary basis to ensure people could remain at home safely. The consequence of this will be a 2 year long review cycle of negotiations with LAs around reinstating their maximum input for recipients and ILF returning to being the minor funder. Our records show that we usually maintain an overall 2/3 LA / 1/3 ILF average support package split, and this is our target for 2021-22. The current position, due to the impact of the pandemic, particularly on building based care services, is estimated to be approximately 50-50%. The ILF percentage in Northern Ireland will be higher, because more LA support was building based services which have remained closed. These figures are fluid, as building based services restart the LA contribution will increase. It will be the end of Q2 2021-22 before we can report with confidence on the health of our balance of funding.

f. **Feedback** – Standard satisfaction surveys (2015 and Transition Fund) are temporarily suspended so as not to increase pressure on vulnerable families. Recipient feedback will be considered as part of the recovery planning process and a sensitive method for re-issuing surveys will be put in place in due course. We launched a survey in December to get feedback from recipients on how they have been affected by Covid-19. We received 350 responses with very positive overall feedback on our services at this time with particular emphasis placed on the ongoing flexible policy application to allow for replacement support and the assessor wellbeing calls. However, the responses also confirmed how badly affected a lot of our recipients have been by the pandemic. Our report is in draft at this stage.

4. Transition Fund

a. **Transition Fund Operational Performance** – The challenge of delivering the Transition Fund (TF) in the context of Covid-19 has been very real. The closure of other services which previously worked with young disabled people in transition and the inability to meet face-to-face with young people and their supporters to provide the level of support that we have been able to give previously, considerably changed the environment in which the fund operates.

Despite these challenges, over the full year the TF has seen a record increase in applications. In 2019-20 the fund received 1,337 applications and in 2020-21 this increased by 36% with 1,813 applications received in an environment where direct engagement with prospective applicants was severely curtailed. This was despite the reduction in the maximum grant amount on 1st Dec 2020 to £1,500 from the original £7,500, due to very high demand, which resulted in a slow-down in applications received. Even with this reduction and slow down, we were only able to keep the fund open after additional funding was made available by the Scottish Government.

There have been many challenges for the recipients of the fund in accessing the services and supports that they had chosen to assist them in meeting their identified outcomes. In many cases these have not been accessible at all during the Covid-19 period. Driving lessons, gyms and other commonly requested supports have been largely unavailable throughout the whole reporting period and as a consequence, the TF has adapted to this situation by offering both additional time to complete outcomes by extending grant periods or by allowing some flexibility in how the funds are spent by allowing for alternative methods of meeting those outcomes, e.g. allowing the purchase

of home exercise equipment when the gym that the young person had identified to assist them in meeting their goal was not available. We have worked closely with young people throughout this period to allow this type of flexibility where possible and keep the person progressing towards their chosen outcomes.

Fruitful discussions with our Scottish Government Sponsors have secured an increased budget for 21-22 and this has allowed an increase to the maximum grant which will be set at £4,000 for the coming year. Within this, the fund retains the discretion to exceed the maximum in exceptional cases.

b. **Social Work Update** – The continued inability to carry out face-to-face visits has caused some difficulties during Covid-19 and continues to make supporting young people, families and non-family supporters to complete and submit applications challenging. Our high rate of applications received in the first half of the year dipped somewhat through Q4, most likely as a response to the reduction in the maximum grant from £7,500 to £1,500 at the end of Q3. On the plus side, this allowed staff to catch up with processing and to return to our 12 week service standard. It is recognised that the return to higher level of maximum grant for the new financial year will further stimulate application numbers. A new specialist caseworker was added to the team during Q3 and they are now fully operational, but in light of the above, a need for further staffing has been identified and a further specialist caseworker is currently being recruited. The non-availability of certain popular activities for periods, such as driving lessons and gym memberships, has meant that funds have been slower to be released than before, with caseworker staff working intensively with applicants to find the best way to meet their needs and also to manage their awards responsibly. Extensions to award periods and allowing the flexible use of funds within the originally stated outcomes has ensured that we have been able to continue to support disabled young people in their transition in spite of the prevailing conditions.

c. **Feedback**– The operational environment remains challenging for staff supporting young people to apply successfully to the fund in the current uncertain times. We continue to hear of other statutory and charitable services not meeting the needs of the young people that apply to the fund and the complete non-availability of services through the Covid-19 pandemic. There continues to be significant anxiety in both young people and their families, especially in terms of how this has potentially affected the long-term prospects of 2020's school leavers, and indeed those due to leave in 2021, who have had little or no time in school for the past 12 months. The TF has been successful to date in addressing some of the inequalities and barriers that exist for young disabled people trying to make their way in the world by addressing a gap in traditional services, which left with reduced support as they take their first steps towards adulthood. This gap appears only to have widened due to Covid-19, which has resulted in many young people missing out on supports to plan their future. The feedback that we have received, particularly in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, has highlighted this and has demonstrated how much many young disabled people and their families have come to rely on the TF in this vital step in their life. Our recent recipient survey has illustrated the depth of the impact that the Transition Fund has made on young disabled people's lives and their ability to move forward in making their future plans a reality.

5. Our People

a. **Overview** - 2020-21 has without doubt been the most challenging and busiest year since our inception for ILF Scotland due to Covid-19 and increasing work pressures. We have tried to be innovative in our support, introducing many new measures and initiatives to help our staff get through the year. Indeed, not only has this been recognised by our colleagues via various feedback routes, our comparatively low absence rates and staff retention, but also externally as a market leading employer of choice winning the Best Small Employer Award in the UK from Working Families in May, a Top 10 Employer in the annual Working Families benchmark in September, a finalist in 3 categories (the Best for Mental Health/for Employee Engagement/for Best for Family Support) in the 2021 Working Mums Awards and Highly Commended in the 2021 Top Employer Flexibility Works Awards.

As always, we have tried to remain an optimistic, open and supportive employer. The Health and Wellbeing programme has remained front and centre of our decision making as we made our way through the year. Focus on our own individual Health & Wellbeing and that of our colleagues as a connected team has been of paramount importance. We have and will continue to meet monthly on Zoom at our All Staff Meetings. Smaller groups also continue to meet regularly in our peer / team groups. ‘Keeping in Touch’ in this manner allows us to monitor changing behaviours and identify anyone who needs support. Our Trickle App has been used since its launch to gauge mood across the organisation and we have started to signpost to supportive wellbeing materials and websites through the App. The Trickle App is building momentum and is also used to carry out pulse surveys to motivate and praise staff.

As with Q1-3, Q4 has continued with continuing pressures on staff as a result of Covid-19, particularly due to a 3rd lockdown since December 2020. Staff have found it challenging to remain upbeat. However, as we move into Spring there is a distinctive change in mood and overall wellbeing with hope on the horizon. Q4 has been another busy quarter across the organisation with further recruitment within the Operations Team of Assessors and a Specialist Caseworker. Interviews are planned for April 2021. As a priority, we continue to promote our life friendly working and the health and wellbeing of all our people.

We have, during Q4, again joined forces with the skill and expertise from the ‘Strong Minded Resilience’ team, who have just completed their final Recharge Workshop, which was delivered three times during Q4. We intend to work closely with Strongminded Resilience later on in the year to refresh and reinforce previous resilience work. Staff feedback has been positive on those workshops. We have also appointed a Trauma Champion to take some of this work forward and they are currently being trained through the Scottish Government Wellbeing Network.

Our student Social Worker from Dundee University will end her placement at the end of April 2021. Although working entirely remotely, the placement has been successful. We look forward to welcoming more students later in the year. During Q4, 15 staff members attended an AGE Inclusive Scotland workshop: 'Planning for the Future'. Feedback from this has been very positive as some staff start planning their futures

away from paid work in the next 10 years or so. We do however move into 2021-22 with renewed optimism looking forward to supporting our workforce, which in turn leads to positive outcomes for our recipients.

b. **Organisational Demography** – Organisational Demography – By the end of Q4 the organisational make up remains at 61: staff (54) and Directors (7): 72:28 female: male, with 16.39% of staff self-identified as disabled, 4.92% BME and 1.64% LGBT.

c. **Employment status** – As we come to the end of Q4 we remain focussed and promote making ILF Scotland as progressive and positive a place to work. We continue a supportive and work/life friendly approach using our full suite of policies, ILF Scotland offers different contractual opportunities to all individuals employed in some capacity within the organisation. Currently all staff have employed status, which is providing stability and continuity for both the organisation and individuals at this time of uncertainty. During 2020-21 all staff have worked 100% flexibly and we will continue to ensure staff can have a work/life harmony which suits their individual circumstances. We recruited our first intern in February 2020, immediately before the start of the Covid-19 lockdown which was successful and productive in the project work completed. Our social work student started in January 2021 and through working remotely has had a positive experience. Our student is due to complete her placement at the end of April 2021. The student has been supported well by 2 of our experienced Assessors. During Q1 2021-22 we will be recruiting an IT Modern Apprenticeship through QA Apprenticeships. Work has started on this process and we hope to welcome our apprentice by the end of Q1. Detailed planning work is underway looking at our Workforce Plan considering new duties ILF Scotland may be formally requested to discharge in due course.

d. **Recruitment** – In Q4, due to increasing workloads across the organisation and in part due to the Covid-19, unintended consequences of changing policies and wellbeing calls, we have continued to build and strengthen our workforce. We advertised internally for an SDS Manager and this was successfully appointed from 01 March 2021. We are currently recruiting to replace Assessors and an additional Specialist Caseworker. Those posts should be in place during Q1 2021-22. During 2020-21 the following roles and internal promotions have been appointed:

- 2 x Specialist Caseworker (Fixed Term -12 month)
- 1 x Senior Communications Officer - internal promotion (was Communications Officer)
- 1 x SDS Manager - internal promotion (was Assessor)
- 1 x Operations Administrator
- 1 x Social Work Student (Jan-April 2021)

e. **Retention** – Staff retention remains high with only one member of staff leaving in the financial year.

f. **Absence –01 April 2020 to 31 March 2021**

- Annual Overall: 5.02% Average days loss per person: 11.32.
- Long term: 3.01% /Avg 6.7 days ppn.
- Short term: 2.01% / Avg 4.53 days ppn.

Absences have continued to be higher than previous years mainly due to long term illness and Covid-19. However, we are starting to see a return to work of several of the long term absences. Several staff over 2020-21 have been recorded as isolating, however remained working from home. A few staff were recorded as formally reducing hours/workload for a short period due to caring responsibilities or Covid-19 fatigue with this option temporarily ongoing. A number of staff also continue to shield and have been notified to continue this through to 26 April 2021.

We are however starting to see the consequences of a high tempo of work coupled with the isolating impact of Covid-19, with colleagues reporting exhaustion and increased anxiety. Indeed we strongly believe our absence rates would have been much higher had we not taken such positive action in the area of wellbeing and supporting colleagues through this unprecedented time. Some staff have been working with our Occupational Health partners and we hope to see a reduction in our sickness absences as we move out of lockdown restrictions and into a more positive period particularly as the vaccination programme is rolled out across the population. We continue to offer mental health support through our 4 Mental Health First Aiders with one staff member as a Psychological First Aider. The Mental Health First Aiders meet quarterly to discuss any concerns and how to promote the organisations Mental Health First Aid work.

g. **Disciplinary, Grievance and Performance** – Following a lengthy process 1 staff member left the organisation by agreement on 01 April 2020.

h. **Staff Survey** – The 2020 staff survey took place later than planned (May/June 2020) due to Covid-19. Data analysis from the staff survey evidenced a workforce which remained positive and upbeat. Staff acknowledged positively the supportive offerings from ILF Scotland at the start of the pandemic. The report was presented to the Remuneration Committee in September 2020. The 2021 staff survey will be launched early in Q1 2021-22. The staff have been working closely with one of our Board Directors to include some new and innovative questions to gauge mood and gather evidence to support future workforce decision making. This year we will include questions relating specifically to Covid-19. The staff survey will be open to staff for completion for a period of 1 month. Thereafter the data will be externally analysed before reporting back to our workforce and Remuneration Committee in Autumn 2021.

i. **Supporting Activity** - To enable the organisation to successfully deliver the strategy and be an employer of choice, and as a small sample, the following activity has taken place:

- Monthly 'All Staff' Zoom meetings, including attendance by Susan Douglas-Scott CBE at a few meetings.

- Regular Staff Development Days, largely focussing on Staff Wellbeing and our Recovery Plan through the pandemic.
- Weekly 'news' bulletins from COO continue to Staff, Board Directors and Sponsor Team.
- 3 x Health and Wellbeing webinars attended.
- 'Supporting Each other in a Crisis' webinar attended by 25 staff and Board Directors.
- Resilience Leadership workshop for managers.
- 'Recharge workshops' delivered during Jan -Feb 2021.
- Bereavement Policy review completed (Jack's Law) – distributed on 06 April 2020.
- HR Policy and Procedure – Review cycle through 2020.
- Information Technology Infrastructure Library Level 4 IT Operations course successfully completed.
- In September we signed up to the Breastfeeding Friendly Scotland Scheme to raise awareness and support Breastfeeding in Scotland.
- Mentorship/Student/Buddying Programme work started.
- Online Halloween Party in October.
- Online Christmas Party Quiz on 16th December.
- 1 x staff member attended (in person) a First Aid Refresher Course in December.
- 1 x staff member attended a 'virtual' Disclosure Scotland Conference.
- 5 x staff members attended the virtual 'Women into Leadership' conference.
- All Managers attended a facilitated 'virtual' Away Day in November.
- 1 x Staff member interviewed by Flexibility Works as part of ongoing Scottish Government research on flexible working.
- Weekly Cuppa and Chat - 'virtual' for any staff - non work related chat for 1/2 hour.

j. **Health and Safety** - There are no RIDDOR reportable incidents over the last quarter. The Health and Safety team continue to offer guidance and support with regard to Covid-19, following SG Guidance and NHS Inform. The team have started developing our recovery plan to ensure we keep the workforce and recipients as safe as possible coming out of this pandemic. Display Screen Equipment self-assessments continue with staff being encouraged to re-evaluate their home work areas to ensure they are comfortable and safe. Activities include:

- Continue to follow related Scottish and UK Government//NHS Inform/HSE advice– regularly communicating with staff on guidance and changes in a timely manner.
- 'Work from Home' remains the default position and as advised by Scottish Government will remain till 31st March 2021. All staff are set up to work from home and line management keeping in regular contact. A recovery plan is currently being created as future guidance is received from the UL and Scottish Governments.
- Weekly communications to Board, Staff and Sponsor team continue to be recorded to support post Covid-19 reflection.

- Track and Trace Diary continues to be active and working well – this monitors staff attendance in Denholm House: numbers in and out of Denholm House. This tool is also used to trace should there be a Covid-19 staff outbreak in the office team. Maximum 8 staff members and only those who are essential workers to ensure helpline and mail is ‘business as usual’ as much as possible.
- DSE self-assessments are continuing to be encouraged in the long term as previous self-assessments may have been completed with short term ‘work from home’ timescales in mind.
- Annual leave – currently all staff are using appropriately to support wellbeing.
- Resilience Recharge workshops attended by staff during January, Feb and March 2021.
- Weekly informal 1-2-1’s continue.
- Bi-weekly team meetings continue.
- All Staff have access (and have been utilising) to the National Wellbeing Hub and Helpline. This continues to be promoted by the Wellbeing Ambassador and by HR during the Staff Development Days.
- Monthly ‘All staff meetings’ continue virtually.
- Pulse surveys promoted in Q4 – gauging organisational mood and staff engagement on a regular basis.
- Trickle – Staff Engagement tool continues to be promoted to encourage and monitor pulse survey data collation, feedback to staff and positive encouragement. Staff training underway to promote the use of TRICKLE. 83% staff signed up to use Trickle.
- 2 day - Covid-19 Long Weekends (pro-rated) introduced during the months of February and March 2021 to help combat Covid-19 fatigue. Feedback has been positive and this leave will be reviewed regularly as we gather and monitor mood sense feedback.
- ‘Ditch the Desk’ introduced during January 2021. Staff are encouraged and empowered to get away from their desks for a ½ hour every day to complete a work related task. E.g. walking meetings/ strategic thinking away from screens etc.
- Scottish Government Risk Assessment circulated to all staff to consider reasonable adjustments to tasks and workforce planning for the future.
- Health and Safety Policy 2020-21 reviewed and updated.
- Health and Safety Guidance documents reviewed and updated.
- Health and Safety – Covid-19 Office Risk Assessment completed and circulated.
- Health and Safety – Covid-19 Guidance regularly reviewed, updated and circulated to support staff.
- Next Annual Health and Safety Audit planned for July 2021.

6. Information Governance and IT

- a. **Overview** – This has been a period of enormous change and activity to support the organisation’s ability to function seamlessly throughout what has been the busiest year ILF Scotland has ever experienced. At the start of the year we overcame two key challenges to ensure effective communications across the organisation and supporting data protection and security management as all staff became home workers. All staff transitioned successfully to agile home working and this in part reflects the flexible culture of the organisation and the wider

digital strategy. In effect, ILF Scotland was able to seamlessly continue its normal operations, albeit with some bandwidth and connection issues with the significant pressures on the Scottish Government network.

During the mid-part of the financial year things stabilised during this period and all staff have normalised to our remote operations, including use of Skype, Teams and Zoom meetings. All managers now have the ability to organise and run Zoom meetings and all staff can join in on smartphones and tablets. Staff have also responded well to health and safety home working practices and we have now ensured all staff are set up for what has been an extended period of working from home. Scottish Government launched phase one of their Microsoft Teams rollout, and as this is cloud based, we saw a much improved return to video conferencing capabilities as it was no longer delivered across the SG network.

This year we experienced our first “drive-by” attempt at a cyber-attack which is where randomised websites are selected to see if it is possible to breach their security and perimeter controls by mass action of simple attack types. We are pleased to report that the systems and firewalls worked well, and also that it does not appear the ILF Scotland was specifically targeted. Whilst the Cyber Essentials Plus standard confirmed our protection levels against these simple forms of attack, we sought higher levels of assurance and requested internal audit to assess us against a much higher standard called National Cyber Security Centre 10 Steps. The audit result was returned this period and saw us achieve a satisfactory but with a narrative that suggested a good overall rating here. This has helped identify areas for improvements and these have now been built into the work programme for the resilience project for 2021-22. Alongside cyber security, on a very positive note, we can also report that following a virtual data protection audit, we have received an overall “Good” rating for our information and data security practices.

Q4 has been more settled and stable overall as some of the network and technology challenges of the last year have been largely overcome by the smooth adoption of Microsoft Teams as a collaboration and video conferencing tool. This period of relative stability has enabled us to focus on high quality data analysis and reporting so as to inform some of the key policy developments which we have now seen. Thus we have been able to plan for the introduction of the Scottish Living Wage, Care Grants, Available Income Reduction, Covid-19 related payments, vaccine notification letters and changes to the Transition Fund to allow for an increase in the maximum grant.

Alongside this data mining and analysis activity, we have also made some significant changes to how our systems operate and what services are needed. We have introduced a bulk emailing service for our recipients which can be broken down by group, country, or even postcode and send messages directly to individuals but via one portal. This is a step change in data security and time efficiency saving for the communications and data protection teams. We have also set up the capability to send bulk text messages to recipient mobile phones and again this will see an improvement to the speed and number of channels by which we can get information quickly to recipients about changes to policies and awards. Still on the communications front, we have introduced "Softphone" technologies to caseworker laptops so that there is no need for staff to be in the physical office to answer the main 0300 number - this can now be done wherever they have their laptop and access to the internet and has the potential for energy and office materials savings as well as being able to provide higher availability contact centre services during the working week.

The three main projects continued well this period, and also over the full year despite the time pressure challenges on all staff from the Covid-19 response. The new file plan for our records management is sitting with Scottish Government and once the changes are made we can begin the process of records migration into our new eRDM, which is planned for Q1 of 2021/22. The digital transformation project completed the discovery phase and moved to development of the new service delivery model. During Q4, this has been reviewed by a team of industry experts, including technical architects from Scottish Government, and during Q1 of 2021/22 we will see this progress to a fully costed business case for capital investment.

Last and definitely not least, we moved into Phase 2 of the Resilience Project during Q4 and this has focused on identifying the critical business activities and core processes likely to have the biggest negative impact on our ability to deliver the operation if a risk event were to materialise. This has also resulted in a rationalisation of our risk register and the development of a risk appetite and tolerance framework which can be used for risk planning as we progress through Q1-2 of 2021-22. Despite Covid-19, this has been an exceptional year and, as a crisis-led business disruptor, we have responded quickly to the needs of our staff and our recipients and shown the benefits of our agile digital strategy and the effectiveness of our information security training and awareness programmes.

b. **Records Management** – The Senior Information Risk Officer and the Privacy and Improvement Manager successfully completed formal Records Management Training in February/March of 2021. The Scottish Government eRDM Programme Team issued a number of queries with the updated File Plan and final amendments were submitted to them in early March 2021. All staff will undertake refresher training via the eRDM e-learning module in early 2021-22 with Information Management Support Officers in each area commencing that role in May 2021. The migration from G:Drive to eRDM is due to take place in May/June 2021, subject to the Scottish Government Programme Team's completion of the File Plan within March/April.

The update of our progress with regard to our overall Records Management programme was submitted to the National Records of Scotland in January 2021. This has been successful in that the Keeper has accepted the delays incurred by the project and, as anticipated, they have issued no change to the overall scoring of our records management arrangements. The two amber scores remain in place and are dependent upon the implementation of an electronic records management system. We fully expect the Progress Update Review cycle of 2022 will see these two elements accepted as green by the Keeper.

c. **Data Protection** – As with the last quarter incidents have remained low considering the volumes of work being experienced by frontline teams. There have been 7 incidents this past quarter which remain entirely due to human error. All of have been assessed as a low risk to the data subjects and all have been containable and unreportable to the Information Commissioner's Officer. The similarity in type and number of these minor incidents seems to point to an increased willingness to report minor incidents which can be taken as a positive step forward in data protection reporting. The DPO continues to tailor staff updates and internal newsletter articles to the type of incidents being reported and suggesting process changes for staff to adopt. It is hoped that this, alongside the mandatory annual Data Protection refresher for all staff in first part of 2021/22, will show a reduction in incidents going forward.

d. **Infrastructure and Security** – The infrastructure continues to manage demand well and all staff remain working remotely. At the end of March 2021 we have seen the removal of Skype for Business, which has not caused any issues as all users have been successfully using MS Teams as their main communication tool over the last few months. Security scanning software alerted that two ILF Scotland email addresses were identified on the dark web. The severity was low as passwords were “uncrackable”. Both were advised to change passwords on all systems where they use their ILF Scotland email address as a login. They were also advised to remain extra vigilant over the coming months as they may be more susceptible to phishing emails. Towards the end of the financial year we have seen an increase in the number of phishing emails over the last period. Staff are comfortable reporting these and sharing with colleagues for information. We did experience a targeted spear phishing campaign to several of our assessor colleagues this period which saw a request to process an end of year invoice from a housing association that we have regular dealings with. The association had been hacked and their email system compromised which is why our staff details were found and targeted. The staff members identified this very quickly and we were then able to alert all staff to this potential threat and it is good to report that staff were fully attuned to this classic form of end of year cyber attack.

e. **Digital Transformation** – Work has been completed this period and in total a cross organisational team of 14 people attended various workshops looking at who we provided services for, what we did for them and what tools, technologies and processes were used to deliver the required service. From this, a new technology enabled service delivery model has been developed and towards the end of this period was being reviewed by industry experts, including security specialists, customer service (sales platforms) specialists and technical architects from Microsoft. 5 out of 6 stages have now been completed and once we review the proposed delivery model, the aim will be to complete Stage 6 which is the costing model. From here we will be able to produce the business case to submit to Health Finance via our sponsor team to request the capital funding to adopt the new model .

f. **Forum** – The Forum has been regularly updated and used as a valuable source of information and signposting to all users during the Covid-19 crisis as well as creating a diary of a disabled person living life through these challenging times. It is an exciting and informative service with currently 150 or so registered users. As the new communications strategy develops we will review how best the Forum sits alongside the now many communication channels we have and develop the messages and information resources we wish to use it for.

g. **National Programmes** – The two programmes are proceeding at very different paces with the Payments Platform looking to go live in November 2021 with ILF Scotland as its first onboarded organisation using its services. We are heavily involved in developing not only the customer service model that will be used, but also with the technical integration of a piece of software that will enable payment instruction from our core client database to be coded, encrypted and sent to the platform for payment. This is very exciting and puts ILF Scotland at the very heart of the single most important digital project Scotland has undertaken in recent years. The Digital Identity Project has used the lived experiences of some of our Transition Fund applicants to inform the design model for how a national identity verification system might operate in practice. We have yet to see what this might look like and a prototype demonstration is planned for this period but our interest in this is around making our whole applications processes more streamlined, quicker and an overall better experience for anyone who may already have had their identity verified by another public body or trusted service. As with the Payments Platform, ILF Scotland is seen as a trusted, respected and critical partner in developing these two national infrastructure projects for Scotland.

h. **Efficiencies** – We constantly carry out improvement and efficiency work and this has enabled the organisation to deliver more for the same funding. Over the year we have carried out improvements that have saved 7,600 hours of staff time, the equivalent of £175k, and a summary of highlighted changes are found below:

- Development of the Assessor portal.
- Introduction of the automated corporate reporting tool.
- Introduction of a new call/email logging tool.
- Set up of two factor authentication for caseworker portal (security enhancement).
- Automatic activation of TF accounts.
- Development of short “technology grants” capability for TF applicants.
- Introduction of cloud based authentication tool for our payments team (security and improved reliability enhancements).
- Capability to upload and view audio/video files to the ICI database.
- Sending recipient emails from the ICI database (quality and security enhancement).
- Introduction of virtual meeting technologies.
- Introduction of Microsoft Teams as a collaboration platform.
- “Email” section on ICI that automatically saves emails to recipients.
- A cross checking function that flags any TF applications with matching information (potential duplicate/counter fraud detection function).

January – March 2021

New functionality to send emails to recipients direct from the ICI CRM system and a new bulk emailing service implemented to prevent data breaches. Two factor authentication implemented on the caseworker TF portal for improved access security.



Incident

There have been 7 non-reportable incidents this period with an initial flurry of simple mistakes in January with incorrect email addressees not being checked correctly. We have also identified two cases where external professional colleagues have the same names as ILF Staff members so we have ensured the individuals have deleted the second name from their autofill options.

A briefing paper on how this dashboard is prepared has been submitted to A&R for review.

Status 



Cyber security remains robust and there have been no security incidents to report this period. A housing association with whom we have occasional dealings was subject to a cyber attack of their email registry and we have seen targeted spear phishing to several of our staff from a fictitious email from them with urgent end of year payment request. Staff were vigilant and identified the scam immediately and we were quickly able to alert all staff to be on the look out for this classic form of attack.

Status 



The updated File Plan is with SG but COVID response actions have delayed their implementation of it to the erdm system. An updated project plan aims to have this completed by May so that all staff can begin a phased migration of the G drive during June following refresher training. Two staff members completed a formal records management training course.

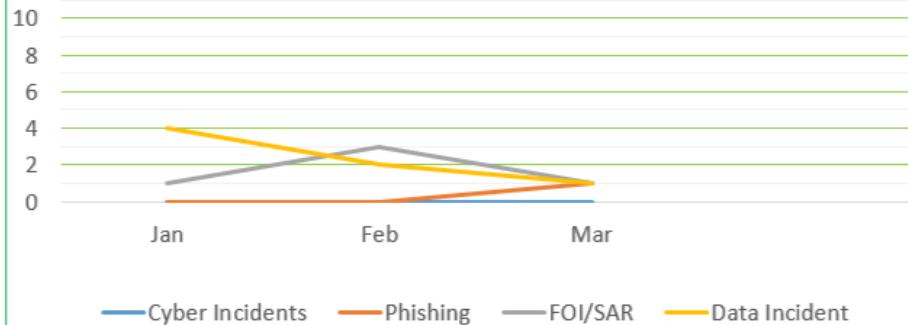
Status 



We have had 5 FOIs and no SARs this quarter. This is nearly the same number as during all of 2020 and the DPO is in discussion with colleagues about a proactive publications schedule later this year. All FOI deadlines met.



By month Q4 2021



On the wider landscape, SEPA was a victim to a targeted and successful cyber attack over Christmas from which they are still recovering. Microsoft Teams appears to be working well and Skype is decommissioned 31 March 21.

Status 

7. Finance

a. All financial reporting happens via the Audit and Risk Committee and Management Accounts, however there are some additional points for Finance, which are as follows:

i. **External Audit** - An interim audit by our External Auditors did not raise anything significant and we do not envisage any issues for the year end audit which starts W/C 26th April for two weeks. We plan to have a draft set of Annual Accounts to go to the Audit and Risk Committee on the 10th June, which will then also be presented for approval to the Board on the 29th June.

ii. **Internal Auditors** - A total of four internal audits completed this financial year:

- Transition Fund – applications, assessment, award and payment.
- Staff recruitment and retention / staff development (including succession planning).
- IT Network Arrangements / Cyber Security.
- Data Protection.

Out of these four audits, three received a good overall rating, with one receiving a satisfactory rating. Due to Covid-19 priorities and other work pressures, one audit, Corporate Governance, has been rescheduled into Q1 of FY 2021/22.

iv. **Process Review** - Work is continuing in Finance conducting a thorough review of all its key processes, this is a major piece of work and will continue into the next financial year. As a result of this review, we will be able to ensure any best practice and any procedural efficiencies are implemented. These updated processes will be incorporated into our Accounting Procedures and Policies Manual. Finance are also working with the IT team on the Digital Transformation project, where we are looking at ways where Finance can digitise its existing processes, making them more efficient and less prone to human error. Finance have also been working with the Risk and Resilience Project, ensuring all processes are fit for purpose.

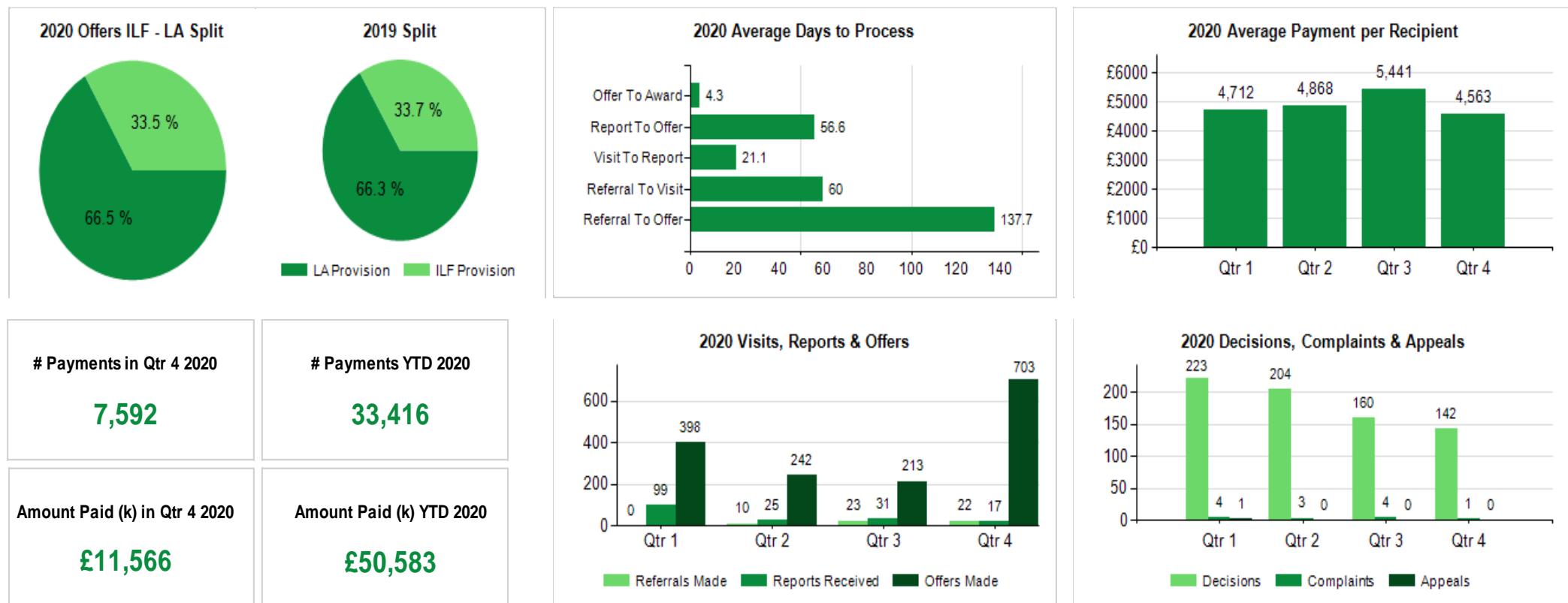
v. **Payment of Invoices** - We have exceeded the payment of invoices KPI, as we have paid 97% of invoices within 10 days, with the Scottish Government KPI set at 95%.

Annex A – Operational Dashboards

As part of the corporate reporting project, the following dashboards show our performance in both the 2015 and Transition Funds:

- a. The dashboard below provides an overview for both Scotland and Northern Ireland in relation to the 2015 Fund:

Operations Dashboard - 2015 Fund to 31-03-2021



21 April 2021

- b. The following dashboard provides an overview of operational activity in relation to the 2015 Fund specific to Scotland:

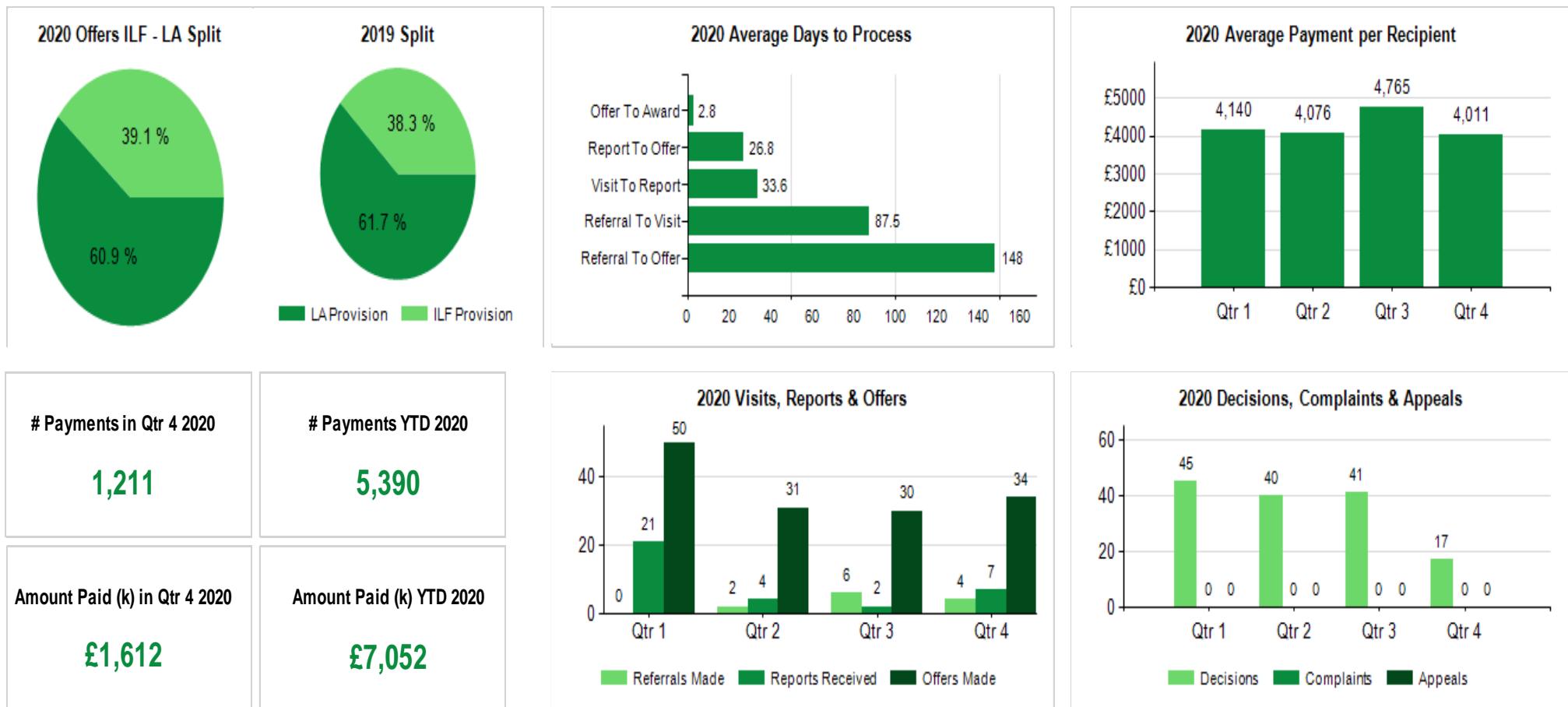
Operations Dashboard - 2015 Fund to 31-03-2021 Scotland



21 April 2021

c. The following dashboard provides an overview of operational activity in relation to the 2015 Fund specific to Northern Ireland:

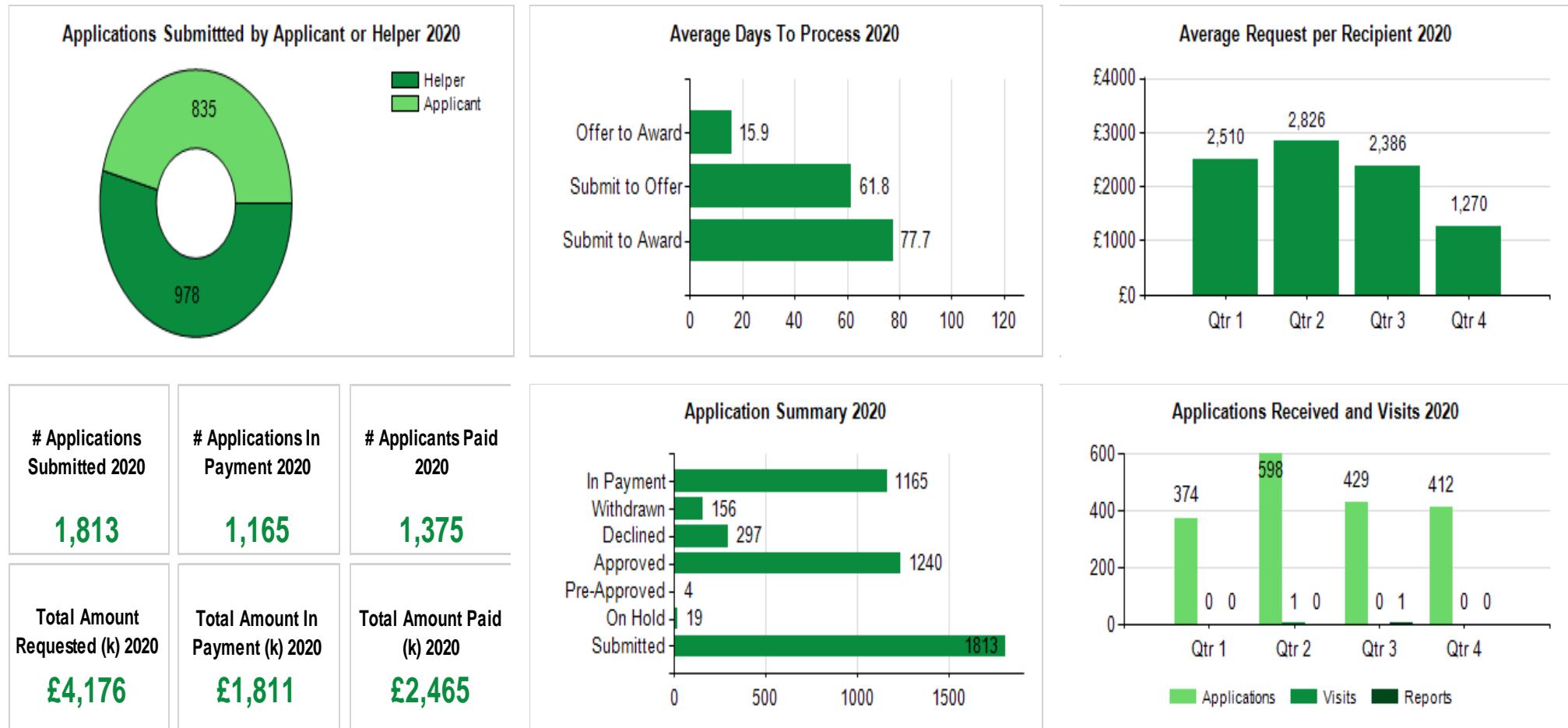
Operations Dashboard - 2015 Fund to 31-03-2021 Northern Ireland



21 April 2021

- d. The following dashboard provides an overview of operational activity in relation to the Transition Fund:

Operations Dashboard - Transition Fund to 31-03-2021



21 April 2021

Annex B - Statistics

The following table shows the key statistics for the period 1st January 2021 - 31st March 2021 and are aligned to standard annual financial reporting cycles as ILF Scotland is now in steady state operations. It does include Transition Fund which is articulated as Group 3.

LA HSCT	Group 1			Group 2			Group 3			Total			2011 Census	% ILF Country	% ILF Total	Recipients / 10,000
	Current Recipients	Average Payment	Total Payment	Current Recipients	Average Payment	Total Payment	Current Recipients	Average Payment	Total Payment	Current Recipients	Average Payment	Total Payment				
Northern Ireland	119		£1,980,322	306		£5,071,189				425		£7,051,511	1,810,863		10.56%	
Belfast HSCT	13	£430	£287,149	76	£337	£1,332,808				89	£350	£1,619,957	348,204	20.94%	2.21%	2.6
Northern HSCT	24	£276	£317,628	45	£273	£633,311				69	£274	£950,938	463,297	16.24%	1.71%	1.5
South Eastern HSCT	8	£404	£168,178	48	£328	£808,034				56	£339	£976,213	346,911	13.18%	1.39%	1.6
Southern HSCT	29	£343	£485,143	69	£310	£1,082,829				98	£319	£1,567,972	358,034	23.06%	2.44%	2.7
Western HSCT	45	£323	£722,224	68	£353	£1,214,208				113	£341	£1,936,431	294,417	26.59%	2.81%	3.8
Scotland	333		£8,022,116	1,888		£35,509,383	1,378		£2,504,608	3,599		£46,036,108	5,295,403		89.44%	
Aberdeen	2	£742	£77,207	24	£307	£366,581	19	£388	£29,508	45	£344	£473,295	222,793	1.25%	1.12%	2.0
Aberdeenshire	7	£517	£175,910	66	£353	£1,194,456	26	£553	£59,739	99	£374	£1,430,105	252,973	2.75%	2.46%	3.9
Angus	2	£448	£46,544	39	£383	£731,585	30	£453	£54,382	71	£390	£832,510	115,978	1.97%	1.76%	6.1
Argyll & Bute	3	£555	£86,638	59	£405	£1,202,285	16	£347	£23,594	78	£411	£1,312,517	88,166	2.17%	1.94%	8.8
Clackmannanshire	2	£695	£72,257	5	£210	£53,003	12	£748	£35,921	19	£399	£161,180	51,442	0.53%	0.47%	3.7
Dumfries & Galloway	3	£551	£85,953	25	£364	£476,249	22	£362	£36,167	50	£383	£598,369	151,324	1.39%	1.24%	3.3
Dundee	2	£492	£51,135	45	£350	£802,755	43	£436	£74,933	90	£362	£928,823	147,268	2.50%	2.24%	6.1
East Ayrshire	12	£503	£298,067	48	£355	£836,830	18	£337	£24,251	78	£383	£1,159,147	122,767	2.17%	1.94%	6.4
East Dunbartonshire	4	£433	£81,476	32	£322	£535,380	30	£413	£54,488	66	£338	£671,344	105,026	1.83%	1.64%	6.3
East Lothian	6	£535	£167,037	30	£341	£515,368	30	£361	£43,372	66	£373	£725,777	99,717	1.83%	1.64%	6.6
East Renfrewshire	3	£434	£67,720	64	£417	£1,355,369	40	£470	£82,755	107	£421	£1,505,844	90,574	2.97%	2.66%	11.8
Edinburgh	19	£450	£442,900	164	£335	£2,812,795	108	£409	£194,711	291	£350	£3,450,406	476,626	8.09%	7.23%	6.1
Falkirk	3	£398	£60,427	11	£359	£205,134	60	£383	£98,017	74	£371	£363,577	155,990	2.06%	1.84%	4.7
Fife	15	£508	£353,833	106	£396	£2,058,467	75	£366	£124,369	196	£407	£2,536,670	365,198	5.45%	4.87%	5.4
Glasgow	84	£459	£1,979,888	390	£389	£7,693,895	188	£430	£344,227	662	£402	£10,018,010	593,245	18.39%	16.45%	11.2
Highland	3	£283	£44,076	42	£324	£663,187	77	£432	£153,821	122	£337	£861,084	232,132	3.39%	3.03%	5.3
Inverclyde	7	£372	£119,145	33	£453	£745,846	21	£368	£36,785	61	£436	£901,776	81,485	1.69%	1.52%	7.5
Midlothian	5	£600	£156,019	24	£376	£468,626	17	£280	£21,281	46	£408	£645,925	83,187	1.28%	1.14%	5.5
Moray	3	£178	£27,810	5	£272	£66,282	14	£556	£35,581	22	£279	£129,673	93,295	0.61%	0.55%	2.4
North Ayrshire	6	£471	£133,695	58	£386	£1,143,166	23	£479	£44,038	87	£396	£1,320,899	138,146	2.42%	2.16%	6.3
North Lanarkshire	55	£448	£1,180,444	160	£344	£2,789,404	161	£406	£298,845	376	£372	£4,268,693	337,727	10.45%	9.34%	11.1
Orkney Islands	2	£275	£28,606	2	£382	£39,695				4	£328	£68,300	21,349	0.11%	0.10%	1.9
Perthshire & Kinross	3	£723	£78,045	28	£426	£619,627	33	£438	£59,502	64	£445	£757,174	146,652	1.78%	1.59%	4.4
Renfrewshire	10	£523	£271,995	86	£418	£1,849,772	39	£339	£66,462	135	£426	£2,188,229	174,908	3.75%	3.35%	7.7
Scottish Borders	2	£274	£29,593	50	£395	£971,001	56	£536	£128,620	108	£402	£1,129,214	113,870	3.00%	2.68%	9.5
Shetlands Islands				1	£470	£24,421	5	£228	£4,553	6	£402	£28,974	23,167	0.17%	0.15%	2.6
South Ayrshire	4	£499	£103,742	52	£427	£1,094,419	20	£284	£27,282	76	£427	£1,225,443	112,799	2.11%	1.89%	6.7
South Lanarkshire	46	£531	£1,245,334	128	£349	£2,303,463	103	£423	£182,525	277	£398	£3,731,322	313,830	7.70%	6.88%	8.8
Stirling	4	£592	£123,097	11	£307	£163,069	17	£368	£26,475	32	£385	£312,641	90,247	0.89%	0.80%	3.5
West Dunbartonshire	6	£839	£261,628	78	£347	£1,340,407	21	£436	£36,589	105	£385	£1,638,624	90,720	2.92%	2.61%	11.6
West Lothian	8	£483	£164,344	20	£333	£345,989	50	£323	£95,613	78	£362	£605,946	175,118	2.17%	1.94%	4.5
Western Isles	2	£105	£7,555	2	£393	£40,859	4	£388	£6,203	8	£284	£54,617	27,684	0.22%	0.20%	2.9
Total	452		£10,002,438	2,194		£40,580,573	1,378		£2,504,608	4,024		£53,087,619	7,106,266			