

Note of Meeting

Northern Ireland Stakeholder Group Meeting

Thursday 15th September, 11am – 3pm
The Mount Conference Centre/Zoom.

Permanent Members Present

David McDonald, Chair
Kieran McCarthy, Vice Chair
Niqi Rainey
Caroline Wheeler
Frances McHugh

Affiliate Members Present

Amanda Paul
Bryan Myles

ILF Scotland Representatives in Attendance

Linda Scott
Lee House
Emma O'Neill
Peter Scott
Ross Browning

Department of Health Representatives in Attendance

Colin Dunlop

Permanent Members Apologies

Collette Jones

Visiting Members Apologies

Robert Dallas

List of Actions:

1. Linda to add item to external newsletter on National Insurance Contributions as a guide to Recipients.

1. Welcome, Introductions, Apologies and Housekeeping

David welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked if everyone was happy for the audio of the meeting to be recorded for minuting purposes. All agreed.

2. Minutes of previous meeting

The previous meeting's minutes were approved and will be uploaded to the website. ILF Communications Team to action.

Actions points from previous meeting:

1. Future agenda point for next meeting to be added about Policy 26 and being an Award Manager. (Complete)

2. Lee to set up a further two meetings on Zoom for the Group to discuss Advanced Care Planning and the Consultation on the Reform of Adult Social Care. (Complete)

3. Matters arising

David asked Emma to update the Group on ILF Scotland's thinking on promoting Advanced Care Planning to Recipients and their families. Emma explained that she had discussed the matter with Linda and it was felt that the best course of action would be for ILF Scotland to update information to the website to support this. Following a brief discussion, everyone agreed.

David updated the Group on the Reform of Adult Social Care. He advised that there have been many sessions involving disabled people and family carers on this and that the ILF Scotland Board and the Northern Ireland Stakeholder Group had separately submitted responses to the Department of Health. David thanked everyone involved for their commitment and very valuable contributions, adding that much remains to be done by us and

others to ensure the Reform delivers positive benefits to Recipients, other disabled people and their families in the immediate and distant future.

4. Stakeholder Membership

David advised the Group that after attending three meetings, Michaela Hollywood has agreed to become a Permanent Member. David has not managed at this stage to confirm if Robert Dallas wishes, having attended three meetings also, to accept Permanent Membership. Post meeting note: Robert has confirmed that he does wish to become a Permanent Member.

5. Terms of Reference Annual Review

David asked the Group if they wished to make any changes to the document. Everyone was happy with it as it stands.

6. Re-opening of the 2015 Fund in Northern Ireland

David asked Colin to update the Group on the current status of re-opening the Fund. Colin advised the Group that he had spoken with the Minister's Special Advisor before attending the Meeting and the position remains the same as previously, that without a confirmed budget going forward they still could not agree to re-open the Fund in Northern Ireland. Colin emphasised however that the matter remains very much still under active consideration.

David asked Colin if it would be helpful if the Group sent a letter to the Minister about the re-opening of the Fund. Colin agreed this would be acceptable. David stated he would like to see the consultation happen as soon as possible. Colin suggested David mentions this in the letter to the Minister.

David agreed with the Group that he would write to the Minister to invite him either to the next scheduled Stakeholder Group Meeting or to a meeting at a date that was suitable to him. (Completed)

7. Available Income, Award Manager & COVID-19 Policies

David invited Linda to address this item. Linda advised the Group that ILF Scotland had made a submission to the Sponsor Team requesting that the Recipient Available Income Contribution be reduced from £103.00 per week to £43 per week in Northern Ireland. The submission requests the adoption of a revised policy, which would also allow ILF Scotland discretion to waive the remaining contribution in full in cases of terminal illness or in part or in full because of financial hardship due to exceptional disability related costs. In addition, the submission requests the ability for ILF Scotland to exceed the Maximum Sum in some circumstances related to statutory employment costs and market agency rates.

Colin advised that the Department of Health has asked him to submit a paper regarding these changes and that he hoped there would be a decision in early October. Colin expects the proposed changes will be warmly received, which may lead to the possibility of a positive outcome to this request.

David suggested that he include a paragraph around these changes in his letter to the Minister, in the hope that he might make them before any visit and that we might be able to thank him in person during it. Colin thought this appropriate. The Group agreed to include it in the letter.

In answer to questions from Members concerning who should manage Awards, Linda advised the Group that ILF Scotland's preference is that Recipients manage their own Awards if possible. If there are exceptional reasons why this cannot happen then ILF Scotland would agree to a family member, close friend or third party Organisation acting as the Award Manager. For any Recipients who have undergone a capacity assessment and need assistance, ILF Scotland would expect someone with Power of Attorney or Controllership to act as Award Manager.

8. Employers National Insurance Contributions

David asked Linda to explain ILF Scotland's Policy on Recipients' National Insurance Contributions. Linda advised that ILF Scotland cannot pay Employee National Insurance Contributions but can contribute to Employer National Insurance Contributions if the total annual contributions of the Recipient to HMRC are more than the Employment Allowance for Class 1 National Insurance, currently of £5,000.00, for each tax year. This was initially

£3,000.00, then increased to £4,000.00 and, from 1 April 2022, to £5,000.00. Recipients and Award Managers should contact ILF Scotland in the first instance for advice on this matter.

It was agreed that Linda would publicise this in our external newsletter to make sure Recipients and Award Managers are aware of this policy.

9. PA Rates, Recruitment & Retention

David raised the massive impact PA Recruitment and Retention is having on Recipients in Northern Ireland. Members shared their experiences, emphasising that the rate of pay they can offer cannot compete with many domiciliary care companies, employment agencies and even the large supermarkets at the moment.

David suggested that ILF Scotland look to promote the PA role. Professional training for PAs was discussed, potentially by the Trusts, who could provide a certificate of training completed, to enable PAs to add them to their personal training portfolios. Peter recommended that we encourage circulating ILF Scotland information on the employer's role. See ILF Scotland [Employer Support Information Note](#)

10. Review Visits Update

David invited Liz to provide an update on restarting Review Visits. Liz advised the Group that one of the main issues they are coming across routinely during review visits is, as Members have just discussed, a lack of workforce available to support Recipients. This is having a direct impact on families. The Assessor Team is working hard to support where they can. Liz advised that respite is sometimes being offered when care packages cannot be provided by the Trust for critical care but that respite services are rarely available at the moment. Liz advised that the cost of living crisis is a real worry for families just now and will be in the coming months.

11. Charter for Involvement and ILF Scotland Meetings

David asked Linda about this Item. Linda advised Members that the Charter for Involvement Action Plan was published in April 2022. Linda noted that the Action Plan needs to be focused on between now and the end of the financial year. Work on this within ILF Scotland has already started and Emma will provide an update at the next meeting.

12. Any Other Business

Linda proposed that ILF Scotland arrange a date for a repeat joint Advisory and Stakeholder Group Meeting, this time in Scotland, long delayed due to Covid-19. This will be discussed at future meetings. This would be a 2-day event in Edinburgh or Glasgow. Members agreed wholeheartedly and gave their unanimous approval.

13. Proposed Next Meeting & Arrangements

Tuesday 6th December.

2023 Dates to be confirmed at next meeting.