

Note of Meeting

Independent Living Fund Scotland: ILF Scotland Advisory Group Meeting

GCIL and via Zoom
Monday 23rd May 2022 1-3 p.m.

Present

Jim Elder-Woodward
Andy Higgins
Nic Reid
Kate Walsh (Via Zoom)
Joan Turner joined meeting at 3.22 p.m. via Zoom

In Attendance

Lee House
Linda Scott
Robert White
Emma O'Neill (Via Zoom)
Catherine Montgomery (Via Zoom)
Sandra Sweeney joined the meeting at 2.20 PM

Apologies

Chloe Mckee
Gordon Mckee
Christine Mercer

List of Actions:

1. Lee to send out Electronic Forms to the group for review and comment once finalised by Ann Cowan.
2. Lee to add planned registration and regulation of PA's to next agenda.
3. Lee to add Terms of Reference higher up on the next agenda.

1. Welcome and Introductions

Jim Elder-Woodward welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked if everyone would give permission to record the meeting. Everyone agreed.

2. Minutes from previous meetings

No changes required. Minutes to be uploaded to the website by ILF Comms.

Actions from previous meeting

1. Lee will email out electronic feedback forms for review when edits have been made for final comments. (Ongoing)
2. Peter and Linda will discuss the Queens Jubilee payment for PAs with the sponsor team. (Done)
3. Linda will circulate an amended and final version of the Terms of Reference to the group before the next meeting. (Done)
4. Linda to share information about Employer NI costs. (Done)

3. Matters arising

No matters arising.

4. Adult Social Care Wage Increase

The new hourly rate is £10.50 from 1 April 2022. ILF Scotland applied a percentage increase across the board of 5.55 on 1 December 2021. From 1 April 2022, it applied 4.8% to PA rates only. It will increase agency rates on a case by case basis as advised by ILF Scotland Award Managers who should provide a copy of the increase letter from the provider.

5. Proposed Disability Commissioner Bill

An MSP is proposing a Bill to introduce a new Disability Commissioner, which is currently out for consultation. The group agreed they will submit a joint response with ILF Scotland to the proposal.

Action: Linda to circulate draft.

6. Re-opening of the 2015 Fund

Jim advised the group that he met with Kevin Stewart, the Minister for Health & Mental Wellbeing, and asked him directly about the re-opening of the fund. The response was that Scottish Government is keen to open the fund but have to ensure that is sustainable in the long term.

7. Policy update including Covid-19

Linda updated the group on the Covid-19 Sustainability Payments, which the Scottish Government extended until the end of June. The Scottish Government's expectation is that normal service should resume where possible from 1 July 2022. However, some aspects of payment flexibility are likely to be extended beyond then relating to testing and vaccination.

The Scottish Government is aware of the difficulties recruiting PAs. Rising hourly rates has put pressure on the ability of ILF Scotland to process awards within the 'Maximum Sum' (£475 for Group 2 awards and £815 for Group 1). Discussions are taking place with the Sponsor Team regarding options.

Linda shared that Policy 26 Managing an ILF Scotland Award has been sent to all parties for review and comment. The revised policy provides clearer guidance relating to the relationship between Award Managers, persons with Guardianship / Power of Attorney and paid Personal Assistants. ILF Scotland will, in due course, prepare an 'at a glance' document for Award Managers.

Linda asked the Group to review the final draft of the document before final submission to the Sponsor Team on 23 June 2022.

Linda advised the Group that a few Assessors had queried whether Policy 31 Relatives Living with Recipients as a Paid Personal Assistant should be extended to someone with a 'Close Relationship' rather than 'Relatives'. The Group thought it should. Linda to take forward discussion with the Sponsor Team.

8. ILF Scotland Award Schedule, Contingency Funds, Holidays

Linda advised that we have previously discussed bringing forward a change to payments of the funds with the option of three weeks in arrears and one week in advance to better support recipients to manage income and expenditure. ILF Scotland and the Sponsor Team have requested information on the financial impact of this from ILF Scotland Finance Team.

The Group discussed Employer National Insurance contributions. Employers can claim up to £5,000 back in contributions from HMRC's Employment Allowance Scheme. ILF Scotland can contribute to this cost if the total annual bill is in excess of this. Linda advised members to send the annual NI bill to ILF Scotland via caseworkers and then they can adjust the system to include these payments as part of the weekly award. Linda advised we need to make sure recipients and staff are fully aware of this. She will arrange staff refresher training and specifically for new ILF Scotland staff members and will include an article in the next newsletter.

Nic Reid mentioned that you have to apply every year to HMRC if you require that allowance to be added. If you have a payroll company managing the award they will do this for you.

9. Review Visits

Robert advised that the review visit process has resumed and ILF Scotland has found that the majority of recipients would like an in person visit. The key issue for ILF Scotland is that the Local Authorities have not returned to the pre pandemic amounts of funding and support that they provided.

10. Electronic Forms Feedback

Linda advised the group that Ann Cowan has almost completed the changes and updates to the forms. Once this is completed, Lee will send these out to the Group for review and comment.

11. Planned Registration and Regulation

Jim advised that following the Feeley report, the Scottish Government are advocating that all PAs be registered and regulated. Jim advised that registration would allow PAs to become more involved with the care industry but that it is not a simple process to implement with possible complications around for example, identifying individual training requirements.

Andy advised that registration and regulation would be offered on a voluntary basis at the moment.

12. Hospital Admission

ILF Scotland policy is to suspend awards once a recipient has spent 28 days in hospital. This policy has been set aside during Covid 19. The Group discussed the importance of having PAs support recipients in hospital in some cases. The Group discussed the various Hospital at Home pilots in the last 5 years. This would allow awards to continue as benefits would not be affected.

13. Charter For Involvement

Linda suggested the group set up additional meetings to look at what is outstanding in the Charter for Involvement Action Plan. She suggested this is maintained as a live document and we have quarterly meetings to update.

14. Terms of Reference

Andy raised a point from the draft Terms of Reference about the name of the group. Linda clarified that the reason for the name “ILF Scotland Recipient Advisory Group” is that the members are recipients (or representative of recipients, and are advising ILF Scotland - not that the Group is advising ILF Scotland recipients.

Andy suggested the Group be called Scotland Advisory Group.

The Group agreed this. Linda will amend the final Terms of Reference draft, to be ratified and signed off at the next meeting.

15. Any other business

None

16. Future meeting dates and arrangements

Monday 22nd August 2022 12 p.m. – 3 p.m.

Monday 21st November 2022 12 p.m. -3 p.m.