

Co-Production Working Group Meeting 7

Monday 5 February 2024 – 10.30am to 12.30pm

Online via Microsoft Teams

In Attendance:

Peter Scott, ILF Scotland (Co-Chair)

Iain MacAllister, Scottish Government (Co-Chair)

Calum Macaulay, Glasgow Centre for Inclusive Living

Cameron Smith, SCLD

Donna Murray, Social Work Scotland

Fiona Collie, Carers Scotland

Fran Holligan, COSLA

Gaby Nolan, Lothian Centre for Inclusive Living

Jenny Miller, PAMIS

Jim Elder-Woodward, ILF Scotland Advisory Group

John Urquhart, COSLA

Laura Kerr, Social Work Scotland

Lyn Pornaro, Disability Equality Scotland

Margaret Petherbridge, Falkirk Council / ILF Liaison

Catherine McGoldrick, Health and Social Care Scotland

Pauline Nolan, Inclusion Scotland

Sam Smith, CCPS

Stephen Wilson, Disability Equality Scotland

Tressa Burke, Glasgow Disability Alliance

Present:

Robert Peterson, Scottish Government

Steven Hanlon, Scottish Government

Lauren Glen, Scottish Government

Jack Blaik, Scottish Government

Amelia Andrzejowska, Scottish Government

Robert White, ILF Scotland

Erika Mather, ILF Scotland

Linda Scott, ILF Scotland

Harvey Tilley, ILF Scotland

Alex Bunch, ILF Scotland

Apologies Received:

Andy Miller, SCLD

Item 1: Welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone to the 7th meeting, recognising how far we've come to date and thanked everyone for their perseverance.

Apologies were received from Andy Miller.

New and guest members were asked to introduce themselves. Intros from John Urquhart, Policy Officer (COSLA) taking Fran's place and Alexander Bunch from the Digital Team at ILF. Alexander and his team are looking at digital solutions for applications.

Confirmation that today we'll be looking again at Threshold Sum and Maximum award to try and decide how we can best identify the first 1000 people we want to help through the re-opened ILF.

We'll also be hearing more feedback from our engagement events and having a presentation from Alexander on work so far on the application process.

Item 2: Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest raised.

Item 3: Minutes of Previous Meeting

It was raised that Cat McGoldrick is noted as COSLA but is Finance Policy Manager for local authorities.

Action: SG Sponsorship team to correct this.

Item 4: Matters Arising and Actions

Updates were provided on previous actions:

ILF to work with DES or others to develop some visual concepts and any suggestions from the group members are welcomed.

No updates at present, work ongoing.

ILF to follow up with Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance to gain more understanding re advocacy issues in relation to independent living.

SIAA holds information and links to all local advocacy services. There are no national services available - the only option for ILF at present is to direct people to local services, which are at capacity. Hopeful that NCS will look at a national advocacy service which ILF will be involved in.

ILF to consider whether self-assessment is appropriate for the reviews.

Noted that former UK ILF applications had initial sections to be completed by the applicant, but there was no outcomes focus, which is what we are aiming for, looking at what the person needs. The ILF team has had training in person-centred planning but there will now be a focus on making applications person-led. Currently it is not led by the person applying, rather LA and assessors.

There was a question around who pays for advocacy. ILF noted they are not aware if they will be funded to cover advocacy. It was suggested that this is discussed again as a group and the Minister is asked to consider – is there anything existing we can piggyback onto.

It was noted that we need to agree what we mean by advocacy (this can mean different things to different people). LAs do offer these services however they tend to prioritise those with learning disabilities or severe communication issues. There are organisations that may offer lighter touch support for those who just need to work through what they need.

It was noted that the 2005 'Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People' report recommended one CIL in every LA by 2025. Instead of creating this network we are losing these services. A network is needed in order to create nationwide support.

It was agreed to consider at a later date.

The remaining outstanding action will be discussed on today's agenda:

ILF to provide feedback from existing network of SWs in relation to plans of cooperation on re-opening.

Item 5: Co-Production Check In

Apologies were given for the easy read paper being issued late.

Item 6: Initial Application Process

Alexander from ILF Scotland presented an update on progress with developing the application process. It was explained that there is a local authority web portal and a staff case management system to deal with back-office things such as processing applications. These are being re-purposed for the re-opened ILF. A citizen portal also exists but will require further work before it is utilised.

Initial research has been carried out to understand the requirements, including the involvement of LA staff, through workshops and interviews with seven LAs. The team have built a prototype application journey with a target of end of March to have the system ready for applications.

The group were talked through the application process. It is being designed so that the applicant doesn't need to be in the room with the person completing it and shouldn't take more than 30 mins. Passporting of eligibility and identity checks will be imported from LAs. Aiming to keep the application simple, covering main topics of what the person needs and their situation and how funding will help them.

It was noted that "eligibility" should be changed to "access" in the application system as per group's earlier discussions.

Action: Alexander will make this change.

The group were walked through the system as it currently looks. The team are aiming to have only 1 question per screen to make it more accessible.

All questions are looking for info that LAs should have readily to hand. Trying to simplify the process as much as possible.

There were questions around whether the local authorities who were not involved in the development are aware this is coming, and if there are any GDPR issues. It was noted that this will create additional work for LA staff, need to be conscious of the extra time this will take.

ILF confirmed that a Data Protection officer is looking into all areas to ascertain whether an agreement or signed document will be needed. They will be minimising work for LAs as far as possible and looking into the possibility of a “lift and shift mode” for gathering certain info which would involve uploading documents.

ILF lawyers are looking at the data sharing agreement already in place and will confirm whether it is adequate for this.

There was a question around different access options for those who would like different methods such as vlogs etc.

ILF explained that there are complications to this particularly on this tight timeframe. Initially applications will only be in writing via social work but perhaps this can be considered in the future, especially if individuals do start applying themselves. In addition, there is a Digital Transformation project ongoing as separate piece of work and this could be included within that.

There was a concern raised that due to the additional work this creates for social workers, they may not tell clients about ILF.

ILF noted that discussions with social work so far have been supportive of ILF re-opening but this is a work in progress and alternative routes of

application will be considered going forward in the interests of making it as person-led as possible.

Item 7: Threshold and Max Award Levels

Members were referred to paper 15 and it was summarised that the group are aware of the difficult decisions required for re-opening in 2 months' time. It has been recognised from the outset that compromises would be needed. It is our priority to re-open by April and get funds issued to people as soon as possible. Initially, due to the timeframe we're working to, it will be a "minimum viable product" to accept and process applications with a view to evolving and improving the process with the support of the co-production group over the course of the first year, including reconsidering the threshold sum. Data is very limited however we know that, even with a threshold over £1000, there will be a lot more than 1000 people eligible. The group was asked to bear these points in mind during the discussion. There was a reminder that there is a future commitment to look at how unpaid care can be taken into account as part of the threshold, as well as how we remove its "cliff-edge" nature. In an ideal world we open with a high threshold which can later be reduced, rather than the other way round.

The group were asked if they would recommend a max award of £300 as per paper.

The point was made that currently, additional costs associated with managing SDS awards are not covered and there is a risk we replicate this issue with ILF.

It was noted that current ILF awards increase every year to reflect the increase in costs of the real living wage. These principles are expected to be

carried forward into the new fund. We need to ensure we can provide a sufficient level of hours of care with on-costs factored in.

Action: ILF and SG to consider further the rational for a maximum award level of £300 to ensure that the proposed level of award is consistent with meaningful independent living outcomes.

The current average LA input for existing ILF recipients of £1,100, which gives an indication of the level of support people get, was suggested as an initial threshold for re-opening under option 1. Such a high threshold helps us protect the affordability of the fund; however the group recognise that this is not the best tool to use in the longer term.

It was mentioned that with such a high threshold, and despite there being no upper age limit, for the majority of older people receiving ILF will be unattainable as they will almost never have a sufficient budget to meet this high threshold.

Option 2 is to use a threshold level aligned with that recommended by Derek Feeley in his review of adult social care.

Our engagement events have raised the geographical distribution of the old fund – there is inequity where some LAs receive disproportionately more of existing funds. A £600 threshold will mean thousands of people would be eligible – we would therefore need an additional measure to manage the cost and geographical distribution of the re-opened fund. Option 2 suggests a population based proportionate allocation per LA (each LA has an allocation and supports the process, annual budget should be used within the year), which should have the advantage of also maximising year one spend.

There were questions around who determines which applications are accepted in order to stay within the numbers – LAs or ILF.

The ILF Leads group have discussed and it has been raised that this creates a dilemma for LAs – they don't want to be seen as gatekeepers. They want ILF to decide which applications are approved, as this is not an LA fund. It was also noted that it will be a staged process through the first year for getting applications submitted due to capacity restraints. LAs don't have accessible lists of people who would benefit most / least from ILF.

There was a question around how we determine the financial split across the country, and whether there will be a weighting. We need to be mindful of proportions of disabled people. There was a suggestion that deprivation data could be used alongside or instead of population data due to the alignment with disability.

It was asked whether this can be exploratory in the first year as there will be other data to draw from. It was again acknowledged that the first year will be a test phase where we learn as much as we can.

There was a question around the capacity of ILF to carry out work assessing / processing applications, and a suggestion that a higher threshold may manage this better.

ILF have recruited new social workers who are currently being inducted for re-opened fund. There is limited capacity however, and this may also control the number of people accessing the fund.

There was a suggestion that we make the fund more specific to certain groups of people. ILF confirmed that they will provide guidance to help areas to target the right people.

A view was expressed that we go with the higher threshold for the first year and study that and change if necessary. It was stressed that our communications need to be clear, committing to a review.

It needs to be decided how we evaluate the fund and what its impact is for the disabled people who access it after re-opening.

The group did not reach a consensus on which option we go for – pros and cons with both.

Action: ILF and SG will reflect on discussion and come back to the group with draft recommendations for the formal report to Ministers, taking account of the views expressed.

Item 8: Engagement Events Feedback

There have been 5 engagement events so far, and ILF are pleased with how they're going. Lots of things discussed at these which chime with the group's discussions. There have also been new things fed-back such as geographical distribution, as mentioned earlier. PA expenses are being raised a lot – people can't afford to pay their PA to take part in activities. The next in person event is in Glasgow on 19 Feb.

Item 9: ILF LA Leads Meeting Update

Already covered earlier under item 4.

Item 10: AOB

It was acknowledged that this may be Fran's last meeting, so she was thanked for all her input to this work.

Item 11: Next Meeting Arrangements

Aim to have next meeting Tuesday 20 February. This will be confirmed by email asap. (Calendar invite now issued.)