

Note of Meeting

Independent Living Fund Scotland: ILF Scotland Advisory Group Meeting

30.8.24 Via Zoom

Present

Jim Elder-Woodward - Chair

Justina Oguguo

Chris Mercer

Joan Turner

Gordon McKee joined the meeting at 11.19am

Andy Higgins joined the meeting at 11.36am

In Attendance

ILF Scotland Staff

Peter Scott

Lee House

Linda Scott

Karen Burnett

Robert White

Lisa McAuslan

Apologies

Catherine Symington

Chloe McKee

List of Actions:

1. Peter will seek a response from Scottish Government regarding ILF Scotland charges.
2. Lee to look at alternative venues for the Christmas lunch and meeting.

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3. Lee to send out the minutes from the Joint Stakeholder Group and arrange next meeting in October.

1. Welcome and Introductions

Jim welcomed everyone to the meeting. Everyone agreed that Lee would record the meeting.

2. Minutes from previous meetings

Minutes agreed and signed off. Lee to pass to communications team to upload to ILF Scotland website.

Actions from previous meeting

- Linda and Peter to provide clarity on the circumstances when contingency funds can be used. (Jim and Peter agreed to pick this up on the PA Programme Group)
- Lee to share the presentation from Finbarr Fitzpatrick to the Group. (Done)

3. Matters arising

Jim and Peter advised the group that there have been no further PA Programme Board meetings.

In the meantime, if members have any questions about their own personal circumstances, they should get in touch with Linda or Peter.

4. Terms of Reference/Chairperson and Vice Chairperson Review

Jim asked Linda to check the date of when he was elected. Linda advised that Jim was elected in 2020 and therefore we would require a re-election. It was agreed to carry this forward to the next meeting.

5. Re-opening 2015 Fund Update

Peter advised the group that, as of today's date, we have received 153 applications with 200 in total waiting to be processed. The target in the first year was 1,000 applications and we would have hoped to have around 300-400 received by this stage. Peter pointed out that applications to the Transition Fund took some time to build momentum, so a delay is somewhat inevitable.

Peter confirmed that at present, only Local Authority Social Work colleagues can identify applicants and submit applications. Currently, Social Work are fully stretched and short staffed, which is impacting the application numbers.

The assessor teams have been engaging directly with Local Authorities and advising on the application process. ILF Scotland sent a letter to CEOs of all Local Authorities to remind them of the Fund and to advise them on the number of applications their authority had made to date. Feedback from ILF assessors is that they believe there will be an increase in applications in the second half of the year.

Peter also advised the group that feedback indicates a wish for direct applications rather than through social work, that a lot of unpaid care is being provided which means that people do not meet the threshold sum to be able to apply. Peter advised the sub-groups will continue to meet and look at these key issues. The co-production group continues to meet with three sub-groups:

1 – carers component

2 – direct/citizen led applications (timescale c18 months to complete)

3 – alternatives to a fixed financial threshold sum – currently main criteria for access

Joan asked Peter if there is there was a risk of losing funding. Peter advised there is a possibility if the money is not spent then it could be lost in the future, and as it stands, ILF will not require the full £9 million.

Jim asked Peter if it would help to reduce the £800 per week social care threshold just for the first year. Peter advised caution against lowering it as it would be difficult to raise it thereafter so this would represent a big risk and in addition, his view is that the rate of applications says more about Local Authority capacity than anything else and changing the Threshold Sum would not assist with this. The average local authority input in successful applications is around £2,200 per week. These applicants are already receiving a lot of support.

Robert advised the group there is a lack of understanding about ILF Scotland and the re-opening of the fund. There have been applications where the social workers have not been sure about threshold sums and how it works. Some Local Authorities are submitting targeted applications and others are waiting until review stage. There is hope that correspondence with Heads of Service at Local Authorities will result in more applications. Some local authority areas feel the threshold is too high.

6. Review Visit Update

Robert advised the group that review visits are going well operationally, almost twice as quickly as this time last year and are almost back to the two-year cycle. The difficult news is Local Authorities are cutting respite budgets and day care attendance. This will affect the recipient but also ILF packages where a Local Authority can't meet the threshold.

Lisa advised the group she joined ILF Scotland from a Local Authority in January and agrees with Robert's comments that knowledge of the Fund was limited. Lisa advised her former colleagues feel the threshold is too high. The cases Lisa is working on are very complex with re-balancing and social work not being present and available to attend reviews and complete paperwork.

Peter asked if any of the group were experiencing Local Authority reductions? Joan shared her challenging experiences of the last 12 months, although currently things are working well. She noted that she is aware of some friends who should be applying to ILF, but they feel they may not be entitled to it and are reluctant to approach Social Work unless really needed.

Christine noted she is aware of other people whose support has been reduced or stopped altogether.

Jim raised a query regarding a friend who has been advised by an ILF assessor that a payroll accountant they used can no longer be used. Jim uses the same company. Linda and Peter said that normal ILF Scotland Policy was to list a number of payroll providers and for the recipient to choose between them. Linda agreed to raise with Robert outside the meeting.

7. Policy Update

Linda advised that the maximum ILF Scotland weekly award has been increased for Group 2 to £600 a week and Group 1 £1,000 per week. She advised that a number of Recipients had or were almost at the top of the previous maximum award (£475 and £815). The increases give more flexibility within awards with wage increases and agency increases continuing to happen. There are some circumstances where ILF Scotland can exceed the maximum award, which are set out in Policy 20 Payments.

There have been some other minor changes to meet industry and legislative updates such as the Capital Threshold Sum increase and Protection Policies.

Linda advised that following the issues raised around Award Management at joint stakeholder meetings, there are staff sessions planned to discuss this further. Karen will be attending this session and will feedback at the next meeting in December.

Linda advised the commitment to abolish ILF Scotland charges by 2026 still exists. Peter advised that there has been no formal update since the Minister attended the Advisory Group meeting earlier this year and that he will try to get an update before the next Group meeting.

8. Case Studies

Linda advised that Clare Henry who has recently joined ILF Scotland will be following up with case studies and ILF Scotland will continue this work internally for the foreseeable future. Any current work that has been agreed with the external PR agency will be completed, this includes the video of Joan's PA who has provided a Case Study and Chloe and her PA who are preparing a blog.

9. PA Awareness Raising Campaign

Linda advised the Group that we were looking at running a campaign, but now have to be mindful of marketing expenditure. Therefore, this work will be undertaken internally utilising staff skills.

Lee noted that South Lanarkshire were running a recruitment programme and social media PA campaign and will forward details to the group.

10. Public Spending

Peter advised the group that due to the Scottish Government introducing spending controls following pay settlements across the public sector, public bodies have been asked to keep spending to essential areas only. This means we were unable to go ahead and book the in-person meeting and Christmas lunch for the advisory group in the hotel we had identified.

Peter advised there will be a further update from the Scottish Government in the coming weeks.

Joan advised she would be keen for the group to still meet at no cost to ILF Scotland and offered to contact a suitable venue. Joan asked the group if they would like to think about it more and link in with Lee and Linda. The Group agreed and Lee will have a look at alternative, reasonable options.

11. Any Other Business

Linda advised the group there were some action points from the last Joint Stakeholder meeting held on 28 June 2024. Linda asked Lee to re-send the minutes from the last meeting and arrange a meeting for October.

Jim raised some concerns about the regulation and registration of PAs. This relates to the changes and the implementation of the Disclosure (Scotland) Act 2020 and the legal requirements for mandatory membership of the PVG Scheme. Jim expressed his feelings that this jeopardises choice and control. Gordon noted that he is in favour of the scheme as it assists safer recruitment. Linda advised that ILF Scotland will publicise the scheme shortly as requested by the Scottish Government.

12. Future Meeting Dates & Arrangements

5 December 2024