

ILF Scotland Newsletter

July 2025



ILF Scotland Celebrates 10 Years

ILF Scotland Marked 10 Years of Assisting Disabled People to Live Independently in Scotland and Northern Ireland



This summer, ILF Scotland and its Scotland and Northern Ireland Advisory Groups proudly marked the organisation's 10-year anniversary in supporting disabled people to live independent lives, with special celebration events in Edinburgh and Belfast. You can view videos and photographs of the events on our website <https://ilf.scot/news-post/celebrating-10-years-of-ilf-scotland/>

Event in Edinburgh

A celebratory event was held in Edinburgh on 25 June 2025 at the Novotel Edinburgh Park. ILF Scotland Advisory Group members, recipients, carers, personal assistants, and partners from

across government, public sector, and not-for-profit organisations gathered to mark the occasion.

Speeches were delivered from advocates of disability and human rights. There was also a brilliant performance from GDA's (Glasgow Disability Alliance) Purple Ponchos, heartfelt poetry, and inspiring stories from people sharing how ILF Scotland has helped them live with choice, dignity, and independence.

Attendees spoke enthusiastically about ILF re-opening in Scotland and overall, it was a day full of reflection and laughter and celebrated the amazing things disabled people achieved with their funding.



Peter Scott OBE, CEO of Independent Living Scotland said:

"We've celebrated 10 years of ILF. A decade of empowering disabled people to live independently, with dignity, with choice and with control."

"ILF Scotland was born from a moment of uncertainty. A period of anxiety. But also, of opportunity. It was created because disabled people raised their voices. And here in Scotland and in Northern Ireland, those voices were heard."

Dr Jim Elder-Woodward, Chairperson, ILF Scotland Advisory Group said:

"ILF Scotland enables people to wake up in the morning to a purposeful

day, be that, going to a football match, a college, or a job. A purposeful life is one in which the person can choose and organise what they do, where they go, and who they meet. But to have a purposeful life, people need to be supported by a purpose-led organisation. And that's what ILF Scotland is – an organisation in unison with disabled people and their right to independence and participative citizenship.

"It is a breath of fresh air to trust such a trustworthy organisation as ILF Scotland. As we celebrate its tenth anniversary, we should be proud of having such a purpose-led organisation. It is a bright beacon, shining the way to purposeful lives for disabled people."



Celebration Event in Stormont

On the evening of Thursday 3 July 2025, ILF Scotland's 10-year anniversary was marked with a special celebration event at Stormont entitled 'Life Worth Living'.

The evening featured powerful and impactful speeches from advocates for disability rights including ILF recipients, members of the ILF Scotland Northern Ireland Advisory Group, disabled people who receive ILF funding and those who do not. All shared personal stories about what independent living means to them and others.

It was a wonderful evening and one of the core messages was a renewed call for the re-opening of the Independent Living Fund in Northern Ireland, so that more disabled people can access the support they need to live full, independent lives.

Mike Nesbitt, Minister for Health in Northern Ireland said:

I want to acknowledge the significant contribution the Northern Ireland Advisory Group has made over the last 10 years in helping ensure the fund has been delivered so efficiently and effectively to recipients in Northern Ireland.

"I understand fully the importance of ILF to those who receive its support and the very positive contribution it makes to their daily lives, enabling them to live independently in the community."





**David McDonald, Chairperson,
ILF Scotland Northern Ireland
Advisory Group said:**

"The Independent Living Fund makes all the difference to disabled people. It makes life worth living. This cannot be expressed too strongly! We fought to keep it here in Northern Ireland and with the help of our politicians and Ministers we succeeded - but only for those already in receipt of it. It is a tragedy and a travesty that others like us are deprived of it and of lives worth living like ours. It is well beyond time for that to change."

ILF Scotland supports disabled people in Scotland and Northern Ireland to live independently. Living independently does not mean doing everything alone, it means having the support needed to make choices and take part in everyday life, just like anyone else.



ILF Scotland New Strategic Plan

ILF Scotland provides money to help people arrange the care and support that works best for them, giving them more freedom and control. The current strategic plan, called Hope & Ambition, sets out how ILF Scotland will continue to support independent living.

It focuses on listening to disabled people, working together with partners, and improving services. The plan highlights the importance of involving people in decisions that affect them, using flexible funding, and creating services that are easier to use.

In March this year, over seventy people came together at the Tollcross International Swimming Centre in Glasgow to take part in a Strategy Co-production event. Attendees included ILF recipients, award managers, local authorities, and organisations led by disabled people. Everyone worked together to review the draft strategy and make sure it reflects what matters most to those who use the fund.

The atmosphere was positive and full of energy. Many people shared their views, and feedback from the event showed how important it is to involve people directly. One person said it was “inspiring to see the dedication and passion behind the work you all

are doing,” and another said, “it was nice to be consulted and heard.”

This event followed a series of earlier sessions held in 2024. All the input from these sessions helped shape the draft plan. ILF Scotland is now finalising the strategy, and we will publish it on our website soon.



In addition to the main fund, ILF Scotland also offers support to young disabled people aged 16 to 25 through the Transition Fund, helping them move on from school services and into adult life. We have also made a strong commitment to support care-experienced young people and to make sure equality, safety, and sustainability are central to everything we do.

ILF Scotland's goal is to keep improving the way support is delivered, making sure disabled people are always at the heart of the decisions that affect their lives.

You can read more about the strategy event in Glasgow at: <https://ilf.scot/blog-post/great-turnout-for-ilf-scotland-strategy-event/>





Re-opened Independent Living Fund

It has been more than a year since the Independent Living Fund (ILF) opened again in Scotland, so we wanted to share a short update on how things are going.

What We Have Been Doing?

We have been working closely with social work teams across Scotland to let more people know about the fund and how to apply. So far, we have run more than 80 information sessions with local teams, and the feedback has been incredibly positive. Applications are steadily increasing, with over 1,000 received to date..

Why People Are Applying

People are asking for help with:

- taking part in social and leisure activities
- reducing the strain on unpaid carers to help avoid family breakdown
- building or maintaining relationships
- dealing with loneliness and isolation
- avoiding the need to move into a care home or other non-community setting

Who Can Apply?

To apply to the reopened ILF, a person must:

- live in Scotland
- be aged 16 years or over at the time of application
- access Self-Directed Support (SDS)
- receive a social care support package / SDS of at least £800 per week
- Or the applicant's net weekly SDS budget is less than £800 but they have an unpaid carer living in the same home with them who provides a significant amount of unpaid care and who is eligible for a Carers Support Plan.

At the moment, local authorities complete the application for individuals, and ILF Scotland assesses and reviews each one.

What Can ILF Scotland Provide?

ILF Scotland can award up to £330 per week. This funding is for extra support and is meant to add to, not replace, the help people already get from their local authority.

Ongoing Work

We established a Co-Production Working Group in October 2023 before we re-opened. This advisory group includes disabled people, carers, disabled people's organisations (DPOs) and representatives of ILF Scotland, the Scottish Government, and health and social care statutory partners.

Our Co-Production Working Group, and its smaller teams, has met 18 times this past year. We are very thankful to everyone involved for their time and effort, which helped us re-open the fund on schedule. The group continues to meet as we look at how to improve things in future.

Right now, the group is focusing on two key areas:

- exploring different ways people can apply to the ILF
- reviewing the amount of social care support people need to receive from their local authority before they can access the ILF

To stay updated and see real examples of how the fund is helping people, visit our website:

<https://ilf.scot/independent-living-fund/re-opening-ilf/>

Social Care Wage Increase

Scotland - The Scottish Government increased the Scottish Living Wage from £12.00 to £12.60 per hour implemented from 1 April 2025. Northern Ireland – The Department of Health in Northern Ireland increased the minimum PA hourly rate from £11.44 to £12.56 per hour from 1 April 2025.

ILF Scotland applied these increases to the awards of all recipients who employ Personal Assistants (PAs). You should have received a letter from us advising you about this.

If you use a Payroll Agency, please make sure they are paying the new rate, effective from 1 April 2025.

If you get assistance from a provider instead of employing PAs directly,

they might increase their prices to reflect the wage rise. If they do, they must let you know in writing. Please send us a copy of the letter they send to you. Please note, we normally backdate for up to four weeks only.

If you have questions, please contact your caseworker on 0300 200 2022 or email enquiries@ilf.scot.





Employers National Insurance (NI) Contributions

In the 2024 Autumn Budget, Chancellor Rachel Reeves announced that the rate of employers' national insurance contributions would increase from 13.8% to 15%, from 6 April 2025.

In addition, the level at which employers start paying national insurance contributions (the secondary threshold) has been reduced from £9,100 to £5,000 per year.

To help small business employers offset the increased NI costs, the Employment Allowance, which helps eligible employers reduce their NIC liability, has risen from £5,000 to £10,500, and the 100,000 eligibility threshold has been removed.

This means that most of our recipients / award managers who employ

PAs will not be adversely affected by the changes to employers NI contributions providing you claim the Employment Allowance. For those recipients who employ a large team of PAs, there is a chance that you will exceed the £10,500 Employment Allowance threshold in respect of your total annual employer NI contribution. If this happens, please contact your ILF Scotland Caseworker on 03002002022 to discuss or email on enquiries@ILF.scot

For more information visit <https://tinyurl.com/2sn7cy9w>

Charter for Involvement

The Charter for Involvement was developed by the National Involvement Network, supported by ARC Scotland.

The Charter establishes how disabled people who use support services want to be involved and to have a say about the services they receive, the organisations that provide their services, and their wider communities.

ILF Scotland adopted its version of the Charter in 2018 and we have been working with our Advisory

Groups in Scotland and Northern Ireland since then to develop and deliver Charter priorities.

We are pleased to publish an update of progress against our Charter for Involvement Action Plan for 2024 to 2025 on our website: <https://ilf.scot/publication/charter-for-involvement-action-plan-2/>

Mainstreaming and Equality Outcomes Report

In April 2024, we were pleased to publish our third Mainstreaming and Equalities Outcome Report for 2024 to 2026.

This outlines what we aim to do to deliver our public sector equality duties. Equality is at the heart of what we do as an organisation and runs through all our activities, thoughts, behaviours, and plans.

'Our Equality outcomes are co-produced through the work we do to engage with and listen to our recipients. These equality outcomes guide our progress and direction.

We have developed action plans to implement our stated outcomes and we monitor and review these annually to ensure we remain on track.

We have now published an update of the progress we have made during 2024 to 2025. You can read more about this on our website <https://ilf.scot/publication/mainstreaming-and-equality-outcomes-report-update-on-progress-at-april-2025/>

Corporate Parenting Plan

ILF Scotland was delighted to introduce our Corporate Parenting Plan for 2024 to 2027 in April last year, our second plan. ILF Scotland's key purpose is to empower disabled people to live independently through our funds.

The Transition Fund specifically supports young disabled people aged 16 to 25 to help them move from school or children's services to be more independent, to continue spending time with other people, and to be active in their communities.

We work with other corporate parents and care experienced young people to identify how we can improve our plans, services, and processes. This is our second Corporate Parenting Plan and as a public body of the Scottish Government, we are committed to supporting Scottish Ministers in their role as corporate parents.

Young people aged 16 to 25 can also apply for ongoing funding now that ILF has re-opened, providing they meet the access principles set out above under the 'Re-opened Independent Living Fund' article above.

You can read the Corporate Parenting Action Plan 2024 to 2027 – Update of Progress at April 2025 on the ILF Scotland website <https://ilf.scot/publication/ilf-scotlands-corporate-parenting-action-plan-2024-to-2027/>

ILF Awards



Working Families Best Practice Award Winner

We are immensely proud to share that Aileen McNiven, our Head of Business Services at ILF Scotland, has won the Family Friendly Champion of the Year award at the 2025 Working Families Best Practice Awards.

This national award celebrates people and organisations that make the workplace better for parents and carers.

Aileen was recognised for her outstanding work creating a supportive and flexible workplace, where staff can balance their jobs with family or caring responsibilities. Her leadership has helped make this approach a key part of ILF Scotland's values.

Aileen said she was delighted to win and thanked her colleagues for their teamwork and dedication over the past 10 years. Her win puts ILF Scotland among other top UK organisations showing how to create better ways of working for everyone.

Read more about this on our website:

<https://ilf.scot/news-post/aileen-mcniven-wins-uk-wide-family-friendly-champion-of-the-year-at-the-2025-working-families-awards/>

Employing Personal Assistants

Many people who receive support from ILF Scotland choose to employ a Personal Assistant, often called a PA.

A PA is someone you can hire to help with everyday tasks and activities, such as personal care, household chores, or going out. Employing a PA can give you greater independence and flexibility in managing your daily life.

If you are interested in employing a Personal Assistant, there is helpful information available online to support you.

For more details, please visit the ILF Scotland webpage:

<https://ilf.scot/independent-living-fund/advice-for-award-managers/employing-a-personal-assistant/>



New Free E-Learning Modules Launched for Employers of Personal Assistants

Are you looking for training to help you be a good PA employer?

Free e-learning training aimed at Personal Assistants and their Employers is now available on Self Directed Support Scotland's Learning Hub.

The modules include:

- Understanding the Value of a Personal Assistant
- Healthy Working Relationships
- Managing Changes and Endings
- Navigating Disagreements

You can visit the Learning Hub here <https://learning.handbook.scot/>

Pension Age Disability Payment

Pension Age Disability Payment is now open for applications across Scotland.

The national rollout follows successful pilots in 18 local authority areas, which began in October 2024.

It is replacing the UK Government's Attendance Allowance, delivered by the Department for Work and Pensions.

Pension Age Disability Payment is for disabled people or those with a long-term health condition or terminal illness, who need help with activities of daily living and / or support to stay safe. It is available to people of State Pension age. People currently getting Attendance Allowance do not need to take any action; the transfer will happen automatically in phases throughout 2025. Everyone will continue to receive their payments on time and in the right amount.

You can find more information on Social Security Scotland's website <https://www.socialsecurity.gov.scot/guidance-resources/resources/pension-age-disability-payment-factsheet-easy-read>

Family Fund Dedicated Grants Programme



Family Fund
Helping disabled children

The Family Fund has launched the Your Opportunity grants programme, which aims to enhance the life of disabled, or seriously ill, young adults, aged 18 to 24 years old, living at home.

Young people cannot apply on their own but applications should come from parents or carers.

Funding for Your Opportunity is limited, and applications are accepted from families on a first-come, first-served basis, until funding is fully allocated.

This is available for those living anywhere in the UK.

For more information visit the Family Fund website:

<https://www.familyfund.org.uk/grants/schemes/your-opportunity>

Scotland

PVG Scheme

Changes to PVG Legislation – Effective 1 April 2025

From 1 April 2025, under the Disclosure (Scotland) Act 2020, anyone in a regulated role, including Personal Assistants (PAs) must be a member of the Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG) Scheme.

It is a legal requirement for the PA, rather than the employer, to make sure they are a member. We strongly recommend that PAs do not delay in submitting their application. If a PA is already a member of the scheme, no action is required.

Whilst employers have no legal obligations, it is recommended that they check PVG membership



and request a copy of the certificate from their PA.

For more information on the changes and applicable fees, please visit:

<https://ilf.scot/blog-post/disclosure-scotland-pvg-changes/>

<https://www.sdsscotland.org.uk/news/upcoming-changes-to-pvg-for-personal-assistants-what-you-need-to-know/>

If your PA is self-employed, they can find out more information here

<https://www.mygov.scot/apply-to-pvg-scheme/self-employed>

<https://www.mygov.scot/organisations/disclosure-scotland>

National Care Service Update

The Scottish Government has established an interim Advisory Board to support the development of the National Care Service (NCS). The Board will develop an approach to ensure that real life experience helps to shape social care, social work, and community health reform. Ministers

expect it to take several months for the Board to develop into its final form.

Susan Douglas-Scott CBE has been appointed as Interim Chair. Susan is a previous chair of ILF Scotland's Board. The current Chair of our Board, Anne-Marie Monaghan was also nominated

as a member of the NCS Advisory Board representing ILF Scotland.

The Interim Chair has emphasised the importance of lived experience in shaping social care reform and said:

"The Board will play a key role in our work to improve social care, social work and community health services by making sure they are consistent, fair and high quality."

ILF Scotland Board Chair, Anne-Marie Monaghan said:

"The National Care Service is a big opportunity to make things better for people who need care and support.

"It is important that we listen to those with lived experience and make sure their voices shape the services.

"Everyone should have the right to live with dignity, choice and control and this new service must help make that happen."

The first meeting of the interim Advisory Board took place on 21 May 2025.

The full information around this is available on the Scottish Government website:

<https://www.gov.scot/groups/national-care-service-interim-advisory-board/>

At ILF Scotland, we will monitor how the NCS development progresses and provide updates as appropriate in future newsletters.

Save the Date: Scottish Carers Parliament

The Carers Parliament is an annual event for unpaid carers in Scotland, giving them the opportunity to address their concerns and questions on caring, directly to national and local Government decision-makers.

This year, the event will take place at the Apex Grassmarket Hotel in Edinburgh and online, on Thursday 30 October 2025.

With a new Scottish Parliament to be elected next year, this year will be looking at 2026 and beyond to address the main priorities for unpaid carers and how their lives can be improved.

The Minister for Social Care and Mental Wellbeing, Tom Arthur MSP, and the Health and Social Care Spokesperson for COSLA, Councillor Paul Kelly, have confirmed their attendance.

If you are attending in person, Carers Scotland offer expenses to carers for the costs of travel and where required, replacement care, accommodation (for those travelling further) and subsistence.

To find out more and book your place visit: <https://ilf.scot/go/carers-parliament>.

Northern Ireland



Northern Ireland Advisory Group Recruitment

The Northern Ireland Advisory Group (previously called the Northern Ireland Stakeholder Group) is looking for new members, especially from our current ILF recipients.

As a member of the group, you can:

- share your thoughts on how the fund is working
- talk about your own experiences using the fund
- help shape future policies and improvements

We would love to hear from you if you would like to help shape the way we deliver services to our disabled recipients in Northern Ireland.

David McDonald, Northern Ireland Advisory Group Chair, said:

"As Chair of the ILF Scotland Northern Ireland Advisory Group, I am inviting new members, especially current ILF recipients, to join us and have their voices heard.

"Being part of the group means you can share your experiences, offer valuable feedback on how the fund is working, and help shape policies

that improve support for disabled people across Northern Ireland.

"If you want to play a role in shaping the future of these vital services, we would love to hear from you."

Niqi Rainey, Northern Ireland Advisory Group Member and award manager for her sister in law said:

"We warmly invite passionate individuals to join us in shaping a future where independent living is accessible to all.

"Your voice and experience can make a real difference in driving positive change for our communities across Northern Ireland.

"Together, we can build a stronger, more inclusive society, come and be part of this important journey with us."

Caroline Wheeler, Northern Ireland Advisory Group Depute Chair, and award manager for her son said:



"Being part of the Northern Ireland Advisory Group has given me the opportunity to share my personal experience and that of my son as an ILF recipient and help shape the way support is delivered.

"It is empowering to know that my voice contributes to making real improvements for disabled people across Northern Ireland.

"I encourage others who use the fund to get involved and help influence positive change."

Robert Dallas, Northern Ireland Advisory Group Member, and award manager for his son said:

"Joining the Northern Ireland Advisory Group has been a rewarding experience; it is a chance to speak up about what works well and what could be better in the fund's services.

"I have found it really valuable to connect with others who share similar experiences and to contribute towards building a more inclusive future for all disabled people in Northern Ireland."

If you are interested in joining or just want to find out more, please contact Linda Scott, Director for Policy, Improvement, and Engagement at ILF Scotland by email at Linda.Scott@ILF.scot. Linda will be happy to chat with you about how to get involved.



Joanne aged 39 from Co Antrim has received ILF for over 20 years. Joanne has Hypo-Melanosis of ITO, narrowing of the pulmonary artery along with other health complications.

Joanne uses her funding to pay for a Personal Assistant, and this enables her to live a very sociable independent life.

View Joanne's case study on the ILF Scotland website: <https://ilf.scot/case-study/joannes-story/>

We believe that sharing your stories is the most powerful way to show others how our funding positively impacts people with disabilities. You can view lots of other stories on our website

<https://ilf.scot/all-case-studies/>

We would be thrilled to hear from our recipients about how ILF Scotland's support has helped you reach your independent living goals, just as Joanne's has.

Email: communications@ilf.scot or call our main number on 0300 200 2022.

Complaints

The team at ILF Scotland is committed to providing a high-quality service. However, we understand that sometimes things might not go as planned. If our service does not meet your expectations, please let us know so we can work to resolve the issue.

We value all feedback, including complaints, as it helps us improve the way we do things. For more information, please see our Complaints Handling Procedure at <https://ilf.scot/go/complaints-handling>

You can also view how to make a complaint and our current complaint statistics at <https://ilf.scot/how-to-make-a-complaint>

To make it easier for you to share any concerns, we now have a new email address: complaints@ilf.scot. Please contact us directly so we can address your concerns as quickly as possible.

Have Your Say!

During a recent audit of our communications and engagement activity, we received a 'good' rating, however we are always striving to improve and would love to hear from you to know what we can do better.

If you have any ideas or would like to make any suggestions for what you want to see in future newsletters, please let us know.

We are also keen to ensure that all recipients and award managers receive communication in a way that suits their needs. If you want to receive updates in a different way, please tell us.

Thanks for reading this newsletter. We hope you found it interesting.



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