

Expression of Interest (Eoi): Disabled Peoples Organisation (DPO) - Supported Applications Pilot

1. Background

ILF Scotland is a Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) and Company Limited by Guarantee, wholly owned by Scottish Ministers. It was established in 2015 in response to the closure of ILF UK in June 2015 and continued to maintain the existing recipient fund in Scotland and Northern Ireland from July 2015, though it remained closed to new applications.

The Scottish Government agreed to re-open the fund to new applicants in Scotland in April 2024 to support more of Scotland's most disabled citizens to achieve independent living outcomes. Uptake to date has been good but there are some areas where progress is slower than anticipated, influenced in part by local authority capacity in presenting applications.

2. Co-Production

The re-opening of the ILF was developed through a process of co-production involving the following organisations:

- Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA)
- Social Work Scotland (SWS)
- Glasgow City Council (GCC)
- Glasgow Disability Alliance (GDA)
- Lothian Centre for Inclusive Learning (LCIL)
- Glasgow Centre for Inclusive Learning (GCIL)

- Inclusion Scotland
- Scottish Human Rights Commission (SHRC)
- Carers Scotland
- Scottish Commission for People with Learning Disabilities (SCLD)
- ILF Scotland Advisory Group
- Coalition of Care and Support Providers in Scotland (CCPS)
- Promoting a More Inclusive Society (PAMIS)
- Falkirk Council

The Co-Production Working Group, which continues to meet, is co-chaired by ILF Scotland and Scottish Government.

To access the fund, applicants must:

- live in Scotland
- be 16 years of age or above at the time of application
- have a Self-Directed Support (SDS) budget of at least £800 per week or a budget of not less than £485 where the applicant had an unpaid carer living in the same home who provides a significant amount of care
- have their application led by local authority (LA) Social Work professionals

The Co-Production Working Group recognised that there were necessary compromises to secure the early re-opening of the fund. It therefore set development priorities for the first 12 to 18 months post re-opening:

- To consider a threshold allowance in recognition of unpaid care. This was implemented in January 2025

- Exploring amendments / alternatives to the threshold sum.
Consideration is ongoing
- Developing a citizen led application process.
The Group has suggested that in addition to or in place of a citizen led application route, which has technical and implementation challenges, we could develop a route where applications are led by disabled people but supported and submitted by Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs) including Centres for Independent Living (CILs).

This option is more readily and technically feasible and could be implemented more quickly than the citizen led option. Advantages of the DPO led application option include the potential to:

- Relieve an element of re-opening related workload on local authority social work teams.
- Better align with and involve disabled people's organisations in the re-opened fund, making use of existing relationships between DPOs and disabled people.
- Help with targeting those facing the greatest barriers to independent living in areas where application numbers have been low since re-opening.

The capacity of DPOs to deliver is a significant challenge. Therefore, we would suggest a fully funded pilot with one or two DPOs. A DPO is defined as an organisation where at least 51% of the governing body are either disabled people or / and people who are eligible for social care support (Self Directed Support Scotland).

3. Proposal

One or two DPOs are selected to run a pilot scheme to identify appropriate disabled applicants and facilitate the application process on their behalf. The applicant would lead on identifying what additional independent living outcomes were important to them and the DPO would complete and submit the application.

Prior to the pilot starting, a Memorandum of Understanding / Service Level Agreement will be established between the DPO and ILF Scotland. A data sharing agreement will then be set up between the DPO and ILF Scotland, and the DPO will be given access to the ILF Scotland application portal, currently only available to Local Authority Social Work teams. Systems development work will be required to update the IT infrastructure for this purpose. The DPO will then submit applications via the portal to ILF Scotland who will then verify the access requirements with the local authority. For these applications only, the local authority's role will change from leading applications, to verifying applications, which should reduce the processing demands on them.

Social Work plays a critical role in existing ILF awards. The majority of recipients have a tripartite agreement in place between the recipient, ILF Scotland and Social Work. The assurances that this arrangement provides will continue to be crucial in a DPO supported application model. These reassurances include:

- Targeting of those facing the greatest barriers
- The fund access principles are met
- Additionality of ILF Scotland award
- Identity verification

- Access to key LA information around known issues including Protection, Fraud and Special Markers (potential risks to workers)

The proposal is to fund the DPO to employ a dedicated Independent Living Support Officer (or equivalent job title) who will take responsibility for identifying suitable applicants and completing their applications via the ILF portal. Training in use of the portal and in ILF policies, along with on-going support as required, will be provided by ILF Scotland. The successful post holder will be required to liaise with local authority social work teams. We would estimate that the Support Officer could complete around 100 applications per year.

The secondment of a current ILF Scotland Assessor to a DPO can be considered.

Although the proposal is focused around identifying those most in need and supporting their applications, there will be additional benefit in DPOs supporting disabled people at the initial stages of receiving ILF funding, for example, connecting individuals with peer support to be an employer or contractor of a Care Provider. It could also help to foster closer working relationships between DPOs and public sectors organisations, beyond ILF Scotland.

4. Summary

ILF Scotland (ILF) re-opened to new applications in April 2024 to support people with the most complex needs to apply for additional funding to achieve independent living outcomes important to them.

Currently, applications can only be led and submitted by Local Authority (LA) Social Work departments.

A Co-Production Working Group was established prior to re-opening, to make recommendations on the policy framework for the re-opened fund. The group has recommended a pilot to test a DPO-supported application route to increase applications and improve the reach to people facing the greatest barriers to independent living in different parts of Scotland. The pilot would fund one DPO (or possibly a shared post between two DPOs) to employ a dedicated Independent Living Support Officer to identify eligible applicants, complete and submit applications via the ILF portal, and work with Local Authorities to verify key information and safeguards.

Note that ILF Scotland is open to the secondment of an ILF Scotland Assessor to a DPO for the duration of this pilot.

The duration of the pilot will be for 12 months starting in January 2026.

5. What the Pilot Will Test

- DPO access to the ILF application portal following a data-sharing agreement and IT updates.
- A model where the DPO, working alongside the applicant, completes and submits applications and the local authority verifies to ILF Scotland, the identity, eligibility, additionality, protection / Special Markers, and other assurances.
- The role and capacity of a DPO-employed Independent Living Support Officer to identify disabled people who meet the access principles for the re-opened fund, complete and progress applications on their behalf, and provide initial post-award peer support and connections.

- Practical service delivery arrangements, costs, legal and technical arrangements, employment, governance, data sharing, and safeguarding arrangements.

6. What ILF Scotland Will Provide

- Funding for a dedicated post and associated recurring costs for the pilot.
- Support to set up data-sharing arrangements and agree verification processes with participating local authorities.
- One-off funding for systems development, equipment, and training on the ILF portal.
- Recruitment, induction, and training on ILF policies along with ongoing support and liaison with local authorities.

7. Who Should Express Interest

- Established DPOs with existing relationships with disabled people in Scotland.
- Capacity and willingness to host a funded Independent Living Support Officer.
- Organisations able to collaborate with local authority Social Work teams and comply with data protection and safeguarding requirements.

8. Considerations

Responders should consider their:

- Ability to reach people facing the greatest barriers to independent living.
- Capacity to deliver and meet governance and data protection requirements.

- Geographic spread and potential to scale the model.
- Strength of proposed collaboration with local authorities.

9. Submission and Timeline

Deadline for EoI Response:

12 noon, Monday 8 December 2025

Interested organisations will be invited to an online discussion with ILF Scotland and Scottish Government representatives:

Week commencing 15 December 2025

Target start for pilot activity:

Early January 2026

Preparation and implementation

0 to 3 months (subject to technical and legal set up)

10. Responses to Expression of Interest

All information provided will be used for analysis and research purposes. Responses may be shared with ILF Scotland staff and Scottish Government representatives to allow the pilot to be developed. Subject to the provisions in relation to Freedom of Information, they will not be shared more widely.

No information provided in response to this EoI will be used to form judgements regarding supplier performance, capacity or capability under any current or future procurement process. No supplier will be disadvantaged by not submitting a response to this EoI or by submitting a partial response.

Nothing in this document shall be taken as constituting or indicating a contract or representation with or by the Independent Living Fund Scotland (ILF). By issuing this Eol, ILF does not make any commitment to procure any of the stated services. Furthermore, receipt of this Eol should not be construed as authorisation to incur any costs for which reimbursement could be sought.

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11. Contact

For questions or to submit your Eol, contact: Linda Scott, Director of Policy, Improvement and Engagement, ILF Scotland, by email at linda.scott@ilf.scot or by phone on 07910 806 694.