

ILF Scotland Strategy 2025 to 2028

Realising Ambition – Re-opening and Beyond

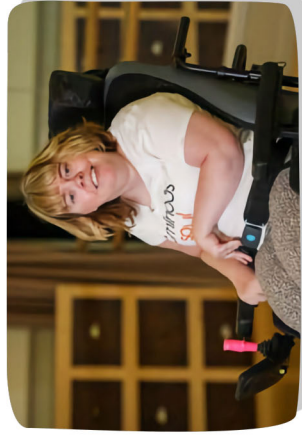


ILF Scotland Strategy 2025-2028

Realising Ambition – Re-opening and Beyond

Executive Summary

ILF Scotland is a key part of Scotland's Social Care and Support sector and plays a vital role in supporting disabled people to live independently. We work with key partners to support those facing the greatest barriers to independent living.



Our vision is that disabled people, and those with a long-term health condition, can access the assistance they need to lead an independent life and our mission is to empower and assist disabled people to lead their fullest lives.

As we launch our fourth strategy, there are challenges in public sector finances and delivery and a crisis in social care support. The disabled people we support tell us they are badly affected by, for example, difficulty recruiting Personal Assistants (PAs) and the growing pressures on unpaid carers.

ILF Scotland is a small public body but following an extraordinary 10 years of sustained performance and efficiency, we are in a period of controlled development. Against this current challenging backdrop, our strategy endeavours to cement our role as a key provider of human rights based assistance for disabled people with the aim of helping more disabled people to live independently and with dignity, choice, and control.

Contents

03	Executive Summary
06	Joint Statement from the Chairperson and Chief Executive Officer of ILF Scotland
08	Joint Statement from the Chairs of the Scotland and Northern Ireland Advisory Groups
10	Introduction
12	Developing this Strategy
13	Principles and Values
14	Vision and Mission
15	Strategic Aspiration for 2028
17	Priorities
21	Outcomes
23	Conclusion



Strategic Priorities

Over the next three years we aim to: Enable more disabled people to access our funds to live independently

Further funding made available by Scottish Ministers enabled our main Independent Living Fund to re-open in Scotland in April 2024 to new applicants. We are keen to build on this and plan to raise awareness of ILF and the additional support it can offer to extend the reach and impact of our funds for the benefit of more disabled people, so that more people are able to achieve the independent living outcomes important to them.

Support cultural change and capability across the sector through leadership and knowledge sharing

We hope by using our funds and expertise to build capacity across the sector, we can contribute to a cultural change in awareness and support for the rights of disabled people to live independently. We want to ensure our funds make the most difference to those facing the greatest barriers to independent living and we will continue to work with our partners in local authorities and third sector organisations including Disabled People's Organisations to identify unmet need.

Deliver a high quality, inclusive and sustainable service

We intend to develop our staff, systems, and operations to become a larger and influential component of the social care system in Scotland. We aim to be in a strong position to respond to how the social care landscape might look in 2028.

Conclusion

Our core principle is that disabled people have the same rights, freedoms, and abilities to lead the fullest lives they can, free from discrimination and on an equal basis as others. As ever, disabled people are at the heart of what we do and as we take our strategy forward in Scotland and Northern Ireland, we will do so by listening to them and providing the services they tell us they need in a way that works for them.



Joint Statement from the Chairperson and Chief Executive Officer of ILF Scotland

We are delighted to be launching ILF Scotland's fourth strategy - 'Realising Ambition – Re-opening and Beyond.'

We are operating in an ever-changing and uncertain world, and are experiencing an on-going cost of living crisis. The impact of the COVID 19 pandemic, which disproportionately impacted on disabled people, is still being felt today, not least in the reduced provision of local services being experienced by many disabled people. We are in the midst of a crisis in social care support, with the sector facing many challenges, including the significant pressures on public services and the difficulty in recruiting staff. The disabled

people we assist tell us how badly this affects them and their families, compounding the many other barriers they face on a daily basis.

Against this challenging backdrop, we are launching an optimistic and ambitious strategy that endeavours to cement our role as a key provider of human rights based assistance for disabled people. We truly hope that working towards achieving our strategy will help more disabled people to live independently and with dignity, choice, and control. We

revision of the planned approach and the revised legislation will now be known as the Care Reform (Scotland) Act 2025. This Act was passed by the Scottish Parliament on 10 June 2025. Maree Todd, then Minister for Social Care, Mental Wellbeing and Sport, created an interim NCS Advisory Board to develop proposals for improvement. We are delighted to have been invited to nominate an ILF Scotland representative to this Board. I, Anne-Marie, have taken up this position

and look forward to contributing to its critical work. It is our firm belief, as Feeley recognised, that ILF Scotland has much to offer in terms of best practice in social care support and working alongside disabled people.

Despite the current sectoral pressures, we will do our utmost to deliver on the aims and objectives set out in this strategy. Whilst recognising that it will never be enough, we hope that by extending the reach and impact of ILF Scotland, and by helping to build capacity across the sector, collectively

with our partners we can achieve better outcomes for disabled people, their families, carers and communities in Scotland and Northern Ireland. In putting the rights of disabled people at the heart of what we do, we will aim to retain our high levels of public trust and confidence despite the challenges across the sector. We will endeavour to make our role in the development of their independent living journey as smooth and simple as possible to protect our reputation

and credibility with those whom we support, and with our colleagues operating in these difficult times.

We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to all of the individuals and partner organisations who have given their time and expertise to help us develop this strategy. In particular, thanks go to our colleagues in the Scottish Government and the Department of Health in Northern Ireland and to members of the Co-production Working Group.

We would like to offer a special thanks to the ILF Scotland and Northern Ireland Advisory Groups, chaired respectively by Dr Jim Elder-Woodward OBE and David McDonald, who continue to collaborate closely with us to provide advice and wisdom based on their lived experience and the reality of life for disabled people who rely on social care support. This has been invaluable and instrumental to the success of ILF Scotland. We are very grateful to them

Best wishes



Anne-Marie Monaghan

Anne-Marie Monaghan
Chairperson,
ILF Scotland



Peter Scott OBE

Peter Scott OBE
Chief Executive
Officer, ILF
Scotland

Joint Statement from the Chairs of the Scotland and Northern Ireland Advisory Groups

The arrival of ILF Scotland on the scene in Scotland and Northern Ireland in 2015 has proven to be a continuous breath of fresh air for everyone involved: Recipients, Award Managers, the ILF Scotland Team, and both Governments.



Northern Ireland, we are heartily pleased and proud to endorse it.

The Independent Living Fund affords its severely disabled Recipients a rich sense of freedom, far beyond the continual, increasingly restrictive strictures of Direct Payments and Self-Directed Support. It opens up new horizons to us, allowing us to have personal control over purposeful lives. It makes our lives worth living.

In short and to paraphrase the words of one of us 'Direct Payments gets us up in the morning, the Independent Living Fund gives us reasons to get up.'

It must be protected and promoted by everyone involved.

Both of the two Advisory Groups comprise the experts of experts when it comes to the application and administration of the Independent Living Fund 24/7, namely its Recipients and Award Managers. The former are its most immediate beneficiaries, the latter its most intimate implementers. Our lived experiences are invaluable

What a difference a forward thinking, person centred, purpose-led organisation makes to those disabled people it is charged with serving!

Long may it last!

Certainly, its strategy, as described in this document, determines it will. Consequently, as Chairpersons of its Advisory Groups, in Scotland and

and unavailable anywhere but from us. Being able to share these experiences as well as our thoughts in an atmosphere of mutual respect and understanding with ILF Scotland and our Governments continuously shape the Fund and make it the best it can be.

We have nothing but the highest of praise for ILF Scotland's bold and brave initiative in establishing the Advisory Groups. It showed a willingness from its inception to work with those directly impacted

by its policies and practices. It allows a deep dive into the depths of our experiences, to learn what is going right and what is going wrong, determining together, what might be done better and to act to make it the gold standard that increasingly it is.

Long may it continue!

We recommend you read this strategy document to discover what it means to deliver for people in a meaningful and purpose-led manner.





Introduction

Welcome to the ILF Scotland Strategic Plan for 2025 to 2028.

ILF Scotland is a key part of Scotland's Social Care and Support landscape that enables disabled people to live independently. We work with key partners including Disabled People's Organisations, Scottish Government, the Department of Health Northern Ireland, local authorities, financial management organisations and the third sector to identify and support those facing the greatest barriers to independent living. Where possible, we will help build capacity across the sector to achieve better outcomes. We continue to build

our systems and services and train and develop our staff to deliver the best possible experience for those we support. We deliver our services around the needs of our recipients, striving to make sure they are accessible, inclusive, and sustainable.

We intend to work over the course of this plan, between 2025 and 2028, to grow and develop our systems and processes to put us in a strong position to respond to how the social care landscape might look in 2028, ensuring we are digitally

enabled, agile, adaptable, and responsive to emerging provision.

The lived experience of disabled people has changed a lot since our last strategic plan and we find ourselves in uncertain times across many of our areas of support and operations. Nationally, there are significant pressures on public services combined with the economic crisis, and we can see directly the impact of this on a worsening social care crisis affecting, for example, the recruitment of Personal Assistants (PAs) and the growing pressures on unpaid carers. The impact of the COVID 19 pandemic was disproportionately felt by disabled people and is still affecting the provision of social care and support for disabled people and those with long term conditions. Young people too have been disproportionately impacted by a lack of national provision to support their transitions into adulthood and demand for our Transition Fund has never been higher.

We have stepped in to support as many young people as possible but would like to do more as resources allow. ILF Scotland plays a vital role in supporting many of our disabled citizens to live independently and we are now in a position to do more as a result of the main ILF re-opening in Scotland in April 2024 to new applicants. With eligibility from age 16, we can now give young people who meet the access

principles a new opportunity to access additional funding.

It will never be enough, but this strategy, despite the current economic and social pressures, aims to be bold and achieve more. For the first time since we opened in 2015, people can apply, at present via local authority social work, to our main independent living fund. This strategy is about doing more for more people and building capacity and capability across the sector are key features of this plan.

During the period of this strategy, we plan to raise awareness of ILF and the additional social care support it can offer to disabled people. We aim to extend the reach of our funds and encourage more people to apply, making it as easy as possible for them to do so.

We aim to continuously improve and develop over the period of this strategic plan, enhancing our systems, procedures, and services in an enduring and sustainable way. As part of our development, we will ensure we focus on our governance, accountability and efficiency as a public body, making sure we are fit for the future demands that may be placed on us. Core to this will be the upskilling and development of our staff team so that collectively they have the necessary skills and tools to support our efforts to ensure that disabled people can better achieve the independent living outcomes they seek.

Developing this Strategy

In developing this strategy, with the people we support, we have kept disabled people at the heart of our organisation with their needs, rights, and aspirations at the centre of everything we do.

During this period of growth, by working with others, we can together enable more disabled people to live their life with the meaning and purpose they want it to have.

On a day-to-day basis, our independent living assessors feed back to us how people are experiencing the social care crisis on the ground and the impact this is having on their families, their carers, and their support arrangements. We also operate three advisory groups – two for the Independent Living Fund, one in Scotland and one in Northern Ireland, and our Young Ambassadors Group, which relates to the Transition Fund. Through them, we discuss the issues people raise with us and co-produce solutions including policy changes and other measures to help address these. We do not act unilaterally and everything we do is discussed first with those who may be impacted by any decision we might take.

This strategy is also an example of how we operate as it has been co-produced with our key stakeholders after extensive engagement over several months. Our objectives described below are a direct result of what people tell us they need, and our approaches are aligned with the National Performance Framework and the aspirations of the broader social care policy intent of Scottish Ministers. A separate report on the findings and outcomes from our strategy engagement events is available on our website at www.ilf.scot/strategy2025. This demonstrates how this strategy is a direct reflection of what people have told us they need. Additionally, we facilitated further sessions with our Board, our management team and with all members of staff to involve them in co-producing the strategy.

Principles and Values

Our principles describe what we believe in, and these define how we work.

- These have been present from day one, and we continue to believe in them today. We are fully aligned to Article 19 from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities – “living independently and being included in the community”. We operate to the Scottish Human Rights Commission’s PANEL principles of Participation, Accountability, Non-Discrimination, Empowerment and Legality, aiming to ensure that we put people’s rights at the very centre of policies and practices. In delivering our services, we aim to incorporate the principles of Co-operation, Dignity, Informed Choice, Involvement and Participation, embedded in the Social Care (Self-Directed Support) (Scotland) Act 2013.
- The core principle of ILF Scotland is that disabled people have the same rights, freedoms, and abilities to lead the fullest lives they can, free from discrimination and on an equal basis as others.**
- When we act, we will:
- Listen to disabled people and put them at the heart of our decision-making processes
 - Treat everyone with dignity, trust, respect, and compassion based on their individual rights and freedoms
 - Understand that everyone’s circumstances are unique and people will face a range of different barriers to living independently
 - Endeavour to learn lessons from the impact of COVID on independent living
 - Be open, transparent, and accountable in everything we do
 - Work with those with lived experiences of disability to develop our plans, policies, and services
 - Act ethically, with empathy towards disabled people and the people who care for and support them
 - Operate in a manner that is cost effective, represents value for money and provides additionality to statutory provision
 - Be as agile and flexible as possible in the application of our discretionary powers to enable disabled people to achieve their independent living needs
 - Empower all our staff team to be leaders in their own activity and provide the conditions for them to be the best they can be
 - Play an active role in partnership with others to re-design a social care delivery system based on human rights, the social model of disability, and independent living

Vision and Mission

Our vision is one for the near future, where the rights and freedoms of all disabled people to be included and participate in normal life just happens - it should not be a struggle or a fight for disabled people or those living with long term conditions or impairments to have an equal voice, choice and control over how they lead their lives.

Dignity, trust, and respect for each other as citizens in our society should be the same for everyone and the way services are delivered should be as equitable as possible to take account of individual needs. Whilst we are a small organisation with an important part to play, we cannot do it on our own. This is a matter for everyone - all public bodies, support providers, carers, governments and society at large but ILF Scotland can play a key role in helping to raise awareness. It can enable others to do more thereby helping to grow and build our collective capability and capacity to ensure full and meaningful involvement in day-to-day living for disabled people.

Our vision is that:

Disabled people, and those with a long-term health condition, can access the assistance they need to lead an independent life.

To make progress, and to make best use of our funds and maximise our impact, we will need to identify those who face the greatest barriers to independent living.

Our mission is to:

Empower and assist disabled people to lead their fullest lives.

In doing this, we will work with disabled people, their organisations, families and carers to understand the barriers they face to independent living, aiming to support as many people as we can within our allocated funding.



Strategic Aspiration for 2028

As can be seen from the opening statement from our Chairperson and Chief Executive Officer, we are operating in a complex landscape at a very uncertain time for the future of nationally consistent social care provision.

The sector is operating during a social care staffing and recruitment crisis, a tight economic environment, and a possible rationalisation of the public bodies landscape. In developing this strategy with disabled people, it is clear that they would like us to do a lot more and take a greater role in both direct and indirect support across the sector. We remain a small public body with limited funding resources, but we do have a significant amount of data and knowledge of what makes a difference to those we currently support. Critically, we believe that disabled people and their organisations have trust and confidence in ILF Scotland as an organisation to deliver.

Our aspiration for 2028 is to effectively grow the fund as much as we can with the current additional funding, and simultaneously to develop our staff, our systems, and our operations to become a larger and influential component of the social care system in Scotland. This will involve collecting feedback from all those who use our services on the challenges they face and, by adapting our ways of working and sharing this information with others, being agile

and responsive. We are a trusted public body with discretionary powers and we will be poised to respond and develop our operations to maximise our already significant impact.

"...ILF Scotland can serve as a model delivery organisation. It has consistently shown that, even within restricted budgets, its clarity of purpose as an organisation and in its service delivery, as well as its openness and inclusivity, have made purpose-led lives among its recipients possible. ILF Scotland has also grounded this sense of purpose in the participation of the recipients of its support in the organisation's leadership and management." (Jim Elder-Woodward Nov 24).

From our co-production work to date we already know many of the key themes and issues disabled people are facing, and this strategy will endeavour to address as many as we are able to within our funding model and terms of reference from Scottish Ministers. Themes and issues identified by disabled people throughout our strategic engagement include:

- Widening our reach and impact
- Growing the fund to 2028 and beyond
- More usable, inclusive, and accessible systems
- Explore the potential for a new model to access ILF and develop ways of identifying those facing the greatest barriers to independent living
- Adopting a rights-based approach
- Making ILF award management easier
- Improving communication tools and ways of keeping in contact with people
- Support for applicants and advice on better applications
- Flexible funding and more creative use of funds to achieve better outcomes
- Keep doing more of what ILF does best – listening to people and helping to develop the best possible package of care to support genuine independent living outcomes
- Humanistic not bureaucratic
- Working with others to build capacity and capability across the sector
- Support with employing PAs especially in rural and remote areas
- Advocacy
- Extending the age range and purpose of the Transition Fund for supporting transitions at key life stages
- Overcoming barriers to independent living

Whilst it is not in our ability to grow the funds and widen access as these are matters for wider policy decisions, we can help drive change and do things better. Through our leadership and fundamental approach of co-production, we can work towards a wider cultural change where disabled people are at the heart of joined up services, preventative interventions, and efficient delivery of the services that support them. Through our partnership working, digitisation and automation of information sharing where appropriate, we will aim to harness the full potential of joined up services to achieve better outcomes via person centred delivery.



Priorities

We are operating in a challenging environment at a time of economic uncertainty and a social care crisis, which are placing increasing pressures on our recipients, including in the recruitment and retention of staff and the demands on family carers.

In this context it can be difficult to talk about priorities for growth, however, despite ILF Scotland being a small public body with a staff team of around 80 currently supporting in the region of 7,000 individuals per year, we firmly believe we can be part of a longer-term solution and support many more people to live independently. We can only do this through the support of Scottish Government,

the Department of Health Northern Ireland, and the collaboration with the organisations and agencies that support disabled people across Scotland and Northern Ireland.

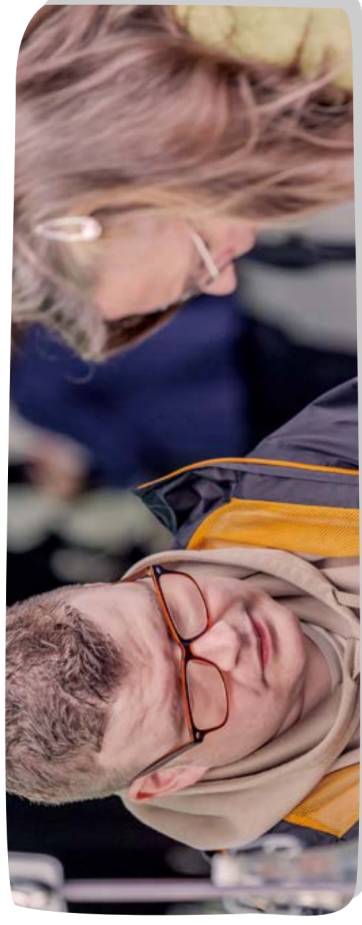
The re-opening of ILF in 2024 has enabled us to provide more disabled people with financial support for social care, in addition to the statutory support from local authorities.

"We are overjoyed at the continuing commitment to the Independent Living Fund (ILF). The ILF has always been a lifeline, enabling disabled people to live with dignity, choice, and control over their own lives. Our hope is that this lifeline continues to support independent living for disabled people." (Inclusion Scotland Nov 24)

Our fund recipients and their families have told us about the significant difference our funding makes to their lives. It is a strategic priority to make sure our funds make the most difference to those facing the greatest barriers to independent living. We appreciate there is no single solution to this but to help achieve

it, we will continue to work with our partners in local authorities and third sector organisations including Disabled People's Organisations to identify unmet need.

This is a challenge, but we have seen from our young person's Transition Fund that individuals know the barriers they face to living independently and what assistance they need to be active and participating in their communities, as identified by them. We want to put the rights of disabled people squarely front and centre in this approach, and through their voice, choice, and self-identification of needs, give them the control to manage their lives as they want to.



Our strategic priorities over the next period are:

- 1. Enable more disabled people to access our funds to live independently**
- 2. Support cultural change and capability across the sector through leadership and knowledge sharing**
- 3. Deliver a high quality, inclusive and sustainable service**

These priorities sit comfortably within the Scottish Government's National Performance Framework <https://nationalperformance.gov.scot> and the Programme for Government Northern Ireland <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/programme-government>.

Both performance frameworks adopt a rights-based approach to creating a society founded on fairness, equality, and respect where all people can live free from discrimination and participate in their communities on an equal basis.

As a public body, we are also driven to provide high-quality services that represent good value for money and to be good employers for our workforce.

We believe that this strategy, and our core operation, aligns strongly with the Human Rights and Communities Outcomes under the National Performance Framework. We focus on autonomy, inclusion and dignity and ensure that those we support have voice, choice and control in how their needs are met. By listening to the needs of those we support, we better understand the outcomes they are trying to achieve and in enabling them to achieve these, we are contributing directly to the following national outcomes:

- a. Human Rights
- b. Communities
- c. Economy
- d. Education
- e. Fair Work and Business
- f. Health
- g. Poverty

This strategy also aligns to the four strategic priorities of the First Minister to:

- Eradicate child poverty - via the Transition Fund and the re-opened ILF
- Growing the economy - evidenced in our Social Return on Investment evaluation
- Tackling the climate emergency - via our climate action plan
- Ensuring high quality and sustainable public services

Taken collectively, these key drivers will allow ILF Scotland to support the development of a society that is fair, inclusive, reduces inequalities, and contributes to sustainable economic growth, whilst delivering high quality value for money services.



Outcomes

We have set out below, how we will work to achieve each of our strategic priorities, identifying specific outcomes under each priority.

These outcomes are based on our co-production work, which sought ideas on what disabled people and others think we should be prioritising. We will develop a more detailed business plan to articulate the supporting activities and performance criteria to help ensure we achieve our objectives by 2028.

From what people have told us, we believe the following outcomes when taken together can help us achieve the three strategic priorities.

Strategic Priority 1 – Enable more disabled people to access our funds to live independently

We will have done this if by 2028, the number of disabled people accessing our funds grows year on year over the course of this plan.

We will aim to:

- Play a key role in delivering independent living support in Scotland and Northern Ireland
- Prioritise the rights of disabled people to live independently
- Identify and support those in greatest need
- Explore the potential for citizen led applications
- Ensure our policies and funding are as flexible as possible
- Maximise use of our Transition Fund



Strategic Priority 2 – Support cultural change and capability across the sector through leadership and knowledge sharing

We will have done this if by 2028 ILF Scotland has: assisted in implementing the delivery plan of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities either directly or indirectly, helped to ensure that national policy, provision and practice is informed and co-produced with disabled people and their organisations, and played an enabling role, increasing the support available to disabled people and their carers to live independently based on a robust evidence base.

We will aim to:

- Monitor the difference our funding makes to the lives of disabled people, their families, carers, and society
- Ask for feedback from the people we support to improve our services
- Raise awareness of and promote independent living to influence national groups/policy
- Work with our partners in social care to ensure better outcomes for disabled people
- Support Disabled People's Organisations to support disabled people in local communities
- Explore the potential for Disabled People's Organisations to support applications from disabled people to the re-opened fund.

Strategic Priority 3 – Deliver a high quality, inclusive and sustainable service

We will have done this if by 2028 we are a fully sustainable and digitally enabled public service that is inclusive and accessible by all and offers a high quality of working life for all our staff.

We will aim to:

- Provide high quality working life and job satisfaction for our staff to enable them to provide the best possible services
- Maintain and enhance the rights of disabled people through our approach to Equality and Human Rights
- Ensure our sustainability through robust financial planning, audit, and adhering to the principles of Best Value
- Ensure our operation and our people are resilient and capable of recovery in adverse circumstances
- Develop a sustainable operation and support climate change reductions to achieve Net Zero by 2040 by embracing digital technologies where appropriate

Conclusion

We will always put disabled people at the heart of everything we do and develop the services they tell us they need. As part of developing this strategy, we engaged widely with disabled people, their supporters, our staff, and stakeholders from the third and public sectors.

We are extremely grateful for everyone's time, wisdom, and support and for the many ideas and positive feedback that we consistently received, which we found very uplifting. Your voices and your ideas have defined our vision and our way forward together.

As we launch our fourth organisational strategy, we are working towards a future where disabled people have better quality information to make informed choices, receive services that are accessible to them in the formats they need and are able to access available assistance when they need it.

We cannot do this on our own and will be asking for help and support from others including those with lived experience. Working together, we would like to develop a model of support that is person led, co-ordinated and appropriately supported so that everyone can lead their fullest lives on an equal basis.

We aim to use this bold strategy to help make a substantial and sustainable change towards developing a more inclusive society with reduced inequalities and

improved equality of opportunity. We commit to doing our best to provide better public services for disabled people and to help protect our natural environment for future generations.

Thank you to the many individuals and organisations that have worked with us since 2015 and who have contributed to the development of this strategy. A special thank you to our Northern Ireland Advisory Group, chaired by David McDonald, and our Scotland Advisory Group, chaired by Jim Elder-Woodward. These groups have been instrumental in ILF Scotland's success, providing us with real insight into the reality of life for disabled people and honest feedback and constructive criticism about our performance as an organisation. We are very grateful to them.

**Keep in
Touch**

Follow us



@IndependentLivingFundScotland



@ILFScotland



@ILFScotland



**Independent
Living Fund
Scotland**

Ground Floor,
Denholm House,
Almondvale Way,
Livingston EH54 6GA.

T: 0300 200 2022

E: enquiries@ILF.scot