

## **Note of Meeting**

# **Northern Ireland Advisory Group**

Tuesday 4 March 2025, 1.00 pm to 3.00 pm

The Mount Conference Centre and via Zoom

### **Permanent Members Present**

David McDonald (Chairperson)

Niqi Rainey

### **Affiliate Members Present**

Amanda Paul

### **ILF Scotland Representatives in Attendance**

Peter Scott

Harvey Tilley

Emma O'Neill

Karen Burnett via Zoom

Lee House

### **Other**

Colin Dunlop

Aisling McHugh - observing

Greta Gurklyte - observing

June Best - observing

## **Permanent Members Apologies**

Frances McHugh

Michaela Hollywood

Robert Dallas

## **Affiliate Members Apologies**

None

## **ILF Scotland Representatives Apologies**

Linda Scott

### **List of Actions:**

1. Peter to write to the Minister of Health, inviting him to the Event (Done).
2. David to contact Danny Donnelly to check dates for the 10-year Celebration Event (Done).
3. Lee to schedule meeting to discuss 10-year Celebration Event (Done).
4. Niqi to discuss with Caroline the possibility of Incorporating ILF matters on the Direct Payments Users NI Facebook Group.
5. Communications Team to prepare Question and Answer insert for possible post to Direct Payments Users NI Facebook Group.
6. Peter to discuss with companies like CILNI about the possibility of cover arrangements for Award Managers if sick.

### **1. Housekeeping, Welcome, Apologies and Introductions**

Lee informed the Members of the fire exits and confirmed there were no fire drills planned for today.

David welcomed everyone to the Meeting and accepted apologies.

## **2. Minutes from Previous Meeting**

The Group approved the previous Meeting's minutes. ILF Scotland's Communications Team will upload to the website.

### **Actions from previous Meeting**

#### **List of Actions:**

1. David to write a letter to the Minister of Health asking him to meet with the Group. (Paused)
2. Sandra to produce practice note on Universal Credit. Lee to email out to Group. (Done)
3. Lee to contact Frances McHugh and ensure he includes her in any mail outs concerning the NI Advisory Group. (Done)

## **3. Matters Arising**

David informed the Group that he had been informed that IMNI are restructuring at the moment so cannot accept new applications as yet.

David advised the Group that he had sent a copy of instructions, issued by Revenue and Customs concerning the National Minimum Wage and the duties of employers in relation to it and sleepovers, to Colin, asking him to check its relevance to Northern Ireland. He added that the instructions also referenced handovers, travel during work and training. Colin confirmed he will check this for us. Members agreed to discuss this further at future meetings.

Lee confirmed that he has spoken with Frances McHugh to ensure she is included in all papers sent to the Group.

#### **4. Anniversary Celebrations in Northern Ireland**

Peter agreed to write to the Minister of Health, inviting him to the Event. It was agreed that potential dates for the event in June were 18 (preferred) or 11 or 25.

David agreed to contact Danny Donnelly, to check these dates with him.

Peter agreed to arrange a planning meeting with Communications and Senior Management on 1, 8, or 15 April.

#### **5. Re-Opening of ILF in Northern Ireland**

Harvey asked Colin when the best time would be to put forward the latest submission from ILF Scotland to the Department of Health.

Harvey explained that the submission has been updated to include relevant key learnings from the re-opening in Scotland but that a barrier at the moment is the first Programme for Government which was only released on the 3 March 2025.

Harvey added that this needs to be approved with budgets and then ILF Scotland would look to submit the re-opening plan.

Colin explained that the Department of Health budget is looking at a £400 million deficit for the coming year, that the ILF Scotland submission

will all be about timing and key to this is the learning from the first year of re-opening in Scotland.

Colin added that as it is a new policy decision there must be a consultation, which would last between 8-12 weeks.

Colin confirmed that an initial decision would be made by April this year to decide if the re-opening goes to this next stage, the consultation, and that he would inform the Group of the outcome.

David asked what if the decision was 'no' to re-opening?

Peter answered that the sustainability of currently funded Recipients would be hard to maintain but that ILF Scotland would look at the possibility of protecting Recipients if funding stops.

## **6. ILF Recipients NI**

David referred to the Direct Payments User Group NI established by Caroline Wheeler and proposed that a similar group be established for ILF in Northern Ireland to let the Group learn from and react to the views of Recipients and Award Managers and their family carers as well as those not receiving the Fund.

Niqi suggested posting on the Direct Payments User Group itself and agreed to discuss the possibility with Caroline in advance of our next meeting.

Harvey suggested that ILF Scotland's Communications Team could prepare a Question and Answer insert for the posting to help anyone new to ILF.

All agreed that Niqui's and Harvey's suggestions be followed up for the next meeting.

## **7. Wage Uplift**

Peter Informed Members that ILF Scotland and the Northern Ireland Sponsor Team are working on the next uplift in April to be in line with increases to the National Minimum Wage.

Colin confirmed that, from this financial year (2025 to 2026) onwards, the uplift of ILF would happen at the same time as the uplift of Direct Payments.

David asked - could ILF Funding match Direct Payments Funding?

Peter replied that ILF Scotland would require additional funding to enable it to match the Direct Payments rate for everyone.

## **8. Universal Credit Practice Note**

Emma agreed to liaise with Sandra Sweeney to develop a Universal Credit practice note.

## **9. Policy Update**

None.

## **10. Terms of Reference**

Deferred to Next Meeting.

## **11. Any Other Business**

David asked, on behalf of Caroline, what happens if Award Managers are sick, namely, who covers and how is it paid for?

Peter replied that in the past Social Work has taken this on but would no longer do this due to capacity but added that In Scotland there is financial management available, which could take over on a temporary basis and ILF Scotland could pay for this.

Peter agreed to have a discussion with companies like CILNI, to see what options could be available and added that ILF Scotland would make payment for this type of additional support if required.

Emma informed the Group that Linda and she were drafting a feedback strategy which will look at how people interact with ILF Scotland and will be seeking the Group's feedback.

## **12. Date & Time of Next Meeting**

Tuesday 3 June – The Mount Conference Centre