

Note of Meeting

Northern Ireland Advisory Group Meeting

Tuesday 9 December 2025, 11:30 to 15:00

The Mount Conference Centre and via Zoom

Permanent Members Present

David McDonald (Chairperson)

Niqi Rainey

Charles Rainey

Collette Jones

Robert Dallas

Caroline Wheeler

Affiliate Members Present

Amanda Paul

Department of Health Representatives in attendance

Tina Price

ILF Scotland Representatives in Attendance

Peter Scott

Linda Scott

Emma O'Neill

Lee House

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Sandra Sweeney
Jill Fotheringham
Jackie Aitken via Zoom
Karen Burnett via Zoom
Anne Marie Monaghan via Zoom

Permanent Members Apologies

N / A

List of Actions:

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 warmly and asked everyone to introduce themselves before starting the meeting.

2. Minutes from Previous Meeting

The minutes from the previous meeting were reviewed and discussed. Members confirmed their accuracy.

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

Actions from previous Meeting

- Sandra, Emma, and Caroline to review the Facebook page content and assess issues raised to determine Group input. (Ongoing)
- David requested that the information about ILF is shared on the DP User Group Facebook page in January (pending)

- Follow-up regarding collaboration with local organisations (CILNI, ICMS) to offer Recipients the choice of additional support.
(Ongoing)
- David to manage correspondence about joining the Independent Mechanism Northern Ireland (IMNI) Group for reporting on United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities.
(Done)

3. Matters Arising

Sandra gave the Group an update on recent discussions with CILNI and ICMS, which is based in Scotland. These discussions have focused on whether these organisations could act as award managers for people in NI who receive funding.

The Group also discussed whether award managers should be paid. Caroline explained the pressure and challenges she experiences managing a DP, ILF Award and Guardianship. She expressed concerns about what might happen if she were unable to maintain this for her son and brother who both receive ILF funding. Peter explained that ILF Scotland cannot pay award managers and that this is a voluntary role – in the event that someone was unable to maintain their role of Award Manager alongside the other roles Caroline described, Emma explained that this in theory should be picked up by the Trust as they hold primary responsibility for a person's support needs. It was agreed that due to the complex nature of award management that a separate meeting would be scheduled in order to focus solely on this issue.

Finally, the group raised the issue of paying arrears in advance. This will continue to be looked at by all parties.

4. Minister Meeting

David talked about the recent parliamentary event where ILF Scotland was mentioned three times by speakers. Charles spoke about Independent Living, and David only had a minute or two to speak at the event. Amanda was also there and spoke about living independently. Unfortunately, the Minister was not present at that stage and missed the speeches. David said the event attracted media coverage and news appearances, with multiple views online. Amanda mentioned she was disappointed that the Minister did not acknowledge them.

Linda advised that the Minister would like to meet in the new year, in late January or early February. The meeting will be held in Castle Buildings at Stormont. Tina said she is pulling all the details together. The Group discussed days for the meeting, and Tina noted that Tuesday is an Assembly business day. The Group suggested that an afternoon meeting would work best to give people the best chance to attend.

Tina told the Group that the submission for reopening the fund is now with the Minister. She said the meeting will be an opportunity for the Group to express their views regarding reopening the fund in Northern Ireland and for the Minister to ask questions regarding this.

Charles, David, Amanda, and Caroline agreed they would meet before the Minister's meeting to prepare.

5. Board Update

Anne-Marie told the Group that they have been recruiting new members for the Board and have now identified two people to join. One of the new members is from Northern Ireland. Anne-Marie explained that there were

25 applicants for the two available roles. These appointments have now been agreed by the Minister.

Both new members will start their roles in 2026. Anne-Marie also said they are now looking to recruit an additional person who can link in with the Transition Fund and has experience and knowledge in this area.

6. Policy Update

Linda discussed the next increase in the PA rate, which will rise from £12.21 to £12.71 in April 2026. This change will be implemented automatically by ILF Scotland. Linda said she will provide an update on progress at the next meeting.

The DoH was asked previously to clarify the policy around overnight rates. Tina confirmed this is still being reviewed. There is ongoing research with the Trusts across Northern Ireland, and Tina confirmed that an update will be given at the next meeting.

Timing of Communications

In future, there should be a pre-meeting to discuss the agenda with the Chairperson and the Depute Chairperson, and all minutes should be completed shortly after each meeting for review.

DP User Group NI Facebook page

The Group discussed how best to manage ILF-related queries on the page. It was agreed that admins like Niqui and Caroline would flag any relevant posts or questions to ILF Scotland's communications team, who reply to any messages via the ILF Scotland Facebook account. There was also a proposal to feature ILF's introductory post prominently on the group page and encourage users to comment with questions. This would

allow ILF to respond directly and accurately, avoiding misinformation. The Group emphasised the importance of clear, accessible communication, especially given the frequent confusion between ILF and Trust-managed direct payments.

Terms of Reference (ToR)

Linda advised the ToR have been updated to reflect changes to pre-meeting processes. Due to time constraints group members were asked to review the ToR and let her know if there any further amendments were required.

7. Any Other Business

It was noted by the Group that a Wednesday or Thursday would be suitable for the meeting with the Minister, with a time of 12:00 to 3:00 PM. The suggested dates were 12th, 21st, and 28th January.

The Group also discussed the next Joint Advisory Group meeting and agreed to include a discussion on the Award Manager policy. Linda advised that Policy 26 is due for review in March 2026.

Finally, the Group asked for it to be noted in the minutes to thank Colin Dunlop for all his work in supporting the Group and ILF Scotland as he moves on to his new role.

8. Day, Date and Times of Next Meeting

Lee agreed to look at different food options for lunch at future meetings.

The next meeting dates proposed were 2 March or 10 March. Lee will check with The Mount to see if these dates are available. If not, other suggested dates were 11 March 25 March, and 31 March.