



# Northern Ireland Stakeholder Group Meeting Minutes

**10 December 2024**



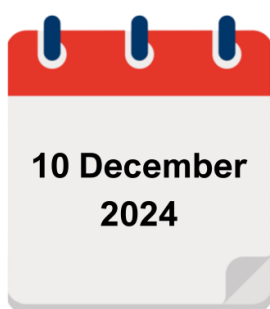
## What this document is about



This is an Easy Read document.

It is a set of Minutes to say what happened at a meeting.

In this document the Independent Living Fund Scotland is ILF Scotland for short.



The meeting was at The Mount Conference Centre and on Zoom.



It was on 10 December from 11 in the morning to 3 in the afternoon.

## Who was at the meeting?



David McDonald (Chairperson)

Caroline Wheeler

Charles Rainey

Niqi Rainey

Robert Dallas

Amanda Paul

Colin Dunlop

## **ILF Scotland Staff**

Peter Scott

Harvey Tilley

Linda Scott

Lee House

Robert White on Zoom

Karen Burnett on Zoom

Jackie Aitken on Zoom



## **Who was not at the meeting?**



Colette Jones

Michaela Hollywood

## **1. Welcome and introductions**



David welcomed everyone to the meeting.

## 2. Minutes from the last meeting



The minutes were checked and agreed.

ILF Scotland's Communications Team will put them on the website.

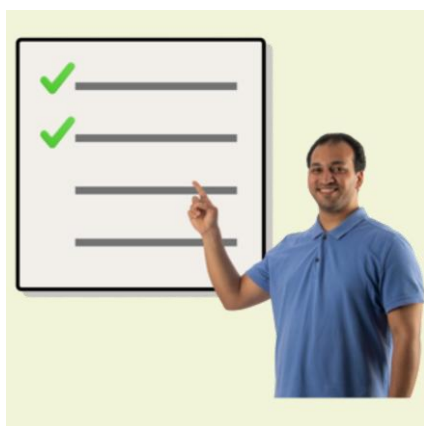
## Actions from the last meeting

**These actions have been done:**



- Lee or Linda will write to all Permanent Members who have not been at many meetings since 2020 to check they do not want to be in the Group

Our **Terms of Reference** say that we must do this – these explain the work of an organisation and how it will be done.



- David will confirm with Kieran that he has stopped being Vice Chairperson and a Permanent Member
- David will check IMNI membership



- Linda will email the Group with information about:
  - changes to the Terms of Reference for Permanent Members to review and agree
  - the Group name change
  - election of Chairperson and Vice Chairperson
- Lee will email out Christmas lunch arrangements



### **This action has still to be done:**

- Linda or Colin will ask an adviser on Universal Credit to come to a Stakeholder Meeting

## **3. What do we need to talk about?**



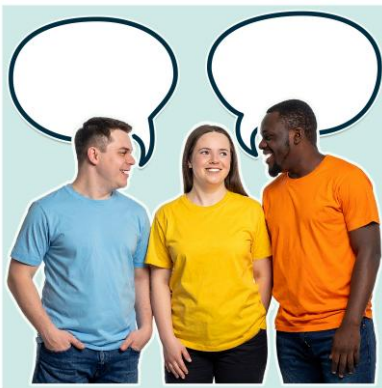
Caroline said Personal Assistants should be paid at least the National Minimum Wage at night.

David agreed and said that there is HMRC guidance about sleepover rates.



David said that:

- Collette wants to stay on the Advisory Group
- Kieran has stopped being a Permanent Member and Vice Chairperson



The Group will ask the Vice Chair of the Committee for Health for a chance to talk to the Committee.



The event planned for Parliament Buildings in December was postponed.

David was very ill so there was no time to plan the event.



David met Mike Nesbitt MLA, the Minister of Health, at a recent event at Belfast City Hall and asked for a meeting with him.



Colin said the information about re-opening ILF in Northern Ireland will be sent to the Minister before Christmas.

The Group agreed a letter should be sent to invite the Minister to meet the Advisory Group.

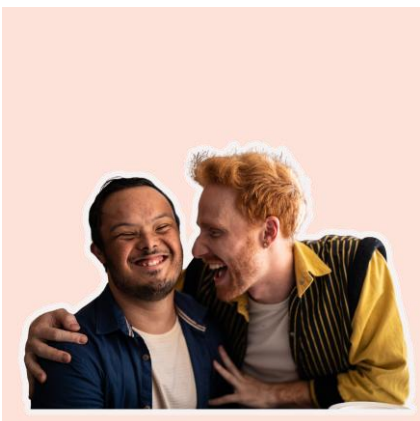


Sandra will make information called a practice note about Universal Credit.

The Group will check it at the next meeting before it is sent to all Award Managers.



Charles asked that ILF add examples and a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) part to its website.



Linda said that ILF Scotland are making blogs, case studies and information about being a Personal Assistant.

## 4. Hourly rate increase

David said:



- the ILF needs more money from the Department of Health Northern Ireland so that ILF Scotland can match the yearly increase in Direct Payments at the same time
- it is important to pay the increase from April each year so there is not a delay in increasing Personal Assistant wages.



Colin said that ILF increases happen when Direct Payments increase.

David thanked Colin for all his work on this.



David asked if Direct Payments and the Independent Living Fund could pay the same hourly rate.

Getting a lower rate from ILF Scotland makes it difficult for people to employ and keep Personal Assistants.



Members are worried about having enough money to make sure that as employers they are:

- acting legally
- paying the proper wage
- can employ and keep staff

Caroline asked if paying lower rates at night follows the law and HMRC guidance.



ILF Scotland said:

- they are following HMRC advice
- the Northern Ireland sponsor team would need to agree an hourly rate for sleepovers and it would need extra money



There is no law to stop employers paying PAs different wages but this can be difficult for Award Managers.

ILF assessors have always been allowed to pay the same as the Direct Payment rate.



ILF Scotland said there are not many Personal Assistants in Northern Ireland who are paid the minimum wage by ILF.

This is because wages have gone up to follow increases to the National Minimum Wage.



Colin agreed to the 9.8 per cent increase for Personal Assistants who support anyone who gets ILF Scotland money.



Any Personal Assistant already getting 14 pounds 10 pence an hour or higher will not get an increase this year.

This is because 14 pounds 10 pence matches the amount people on Direct Payments pay their Personal Assistants.



In January 2025 ILF Scotland will check every award against the amounts made by payroll companies.



ILF Scotland has asked for a meeting with CILNI - the Centre for Independent Living Northern Ireland –the largest company dealing with award management.

Linda said that ILF Scotland does not know which payroll company Award Managers are using unless they tell them.



Niqi asked if Award Managers could use money left over after Personal Assistants have been paid.

She asked if the money could be used to increase the amount a PA is paid an hour.

Her payroll company said this could not be done but Linda will check this.



David said employers National Insurance allowance will go up from 5 thousand pounds to 10 thousand pounds.

Caroline said that PA employers can claim back equipment and HMRC have a list of what they can claim back.

## 5. Membership

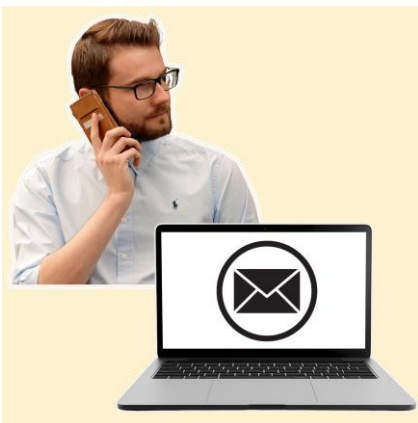


David said that:

- Kieran is no longer Vice Chairperson and is no longer in the Northern Ireland Advisory Group
- Colette wants to continue to be a Permanent Member



The Members agreed to this and hope that she gets well and comes back soon.



Lee said that Frances has not been in touch.

He will contact her and include her in any emails about the NI Advisory Group.

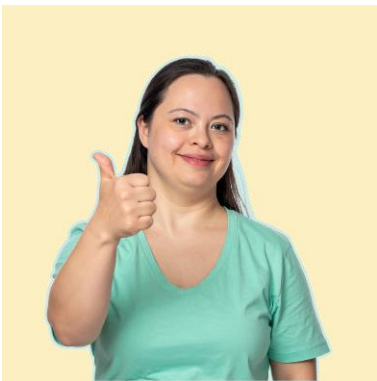
Lee sends the draft minutes to:



- Amanda
- Caroline Wheeler
- Colette
- David
- Frances
- Michaela



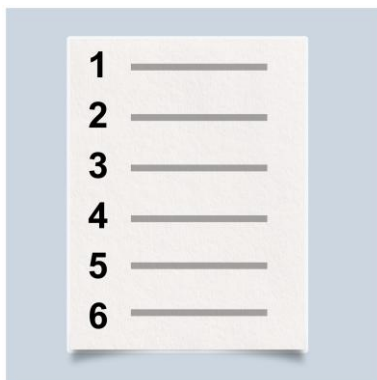
- Niqi
- Robert
- relevant members of ILF Scotland and the NI sponsor team



Members said well done to Michaela on getting a job with CILNI.

This does not affect her membership of this Group.

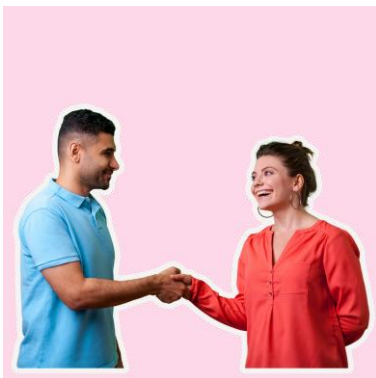
## 6. Terms of Reference



The Group talked about the changes to the Terms of Reference and agreed them.

Lee will send them to the Group before the next meeting.

## 7. Election of Chairperson and Vice Chairperson



David was elected as Chairperson.

Caroline was elected as Vice Chairperson.

## 8. Policy Update



Linda said there were no new updates on policy.

She said the Group should read the email sent by Lee about changes to Policy 41.

## 9. Any other business –anything else we need to talk about?



Peter said the ILF Scotland Strategy runs out at the end of March 2025.

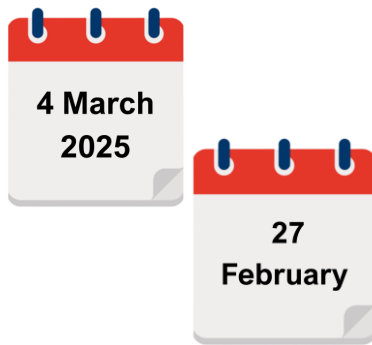
A new strategy will be made and engagement events went well.

Harvey said all feedback will be made into a report that Linda will send to the Group.



An event is planned for February or March 2025.

Peter suggested there could be an event in Scotland and one in Northern Ireland.



## **A note after the meeting**

The Northern Ireland event will be on 4 March at the same time as the next NI Advisory Group Meeting.

The Scottish event will be on 27 February.



Harvey said the draft Strategy should be agreed in March and put online in April 2025.

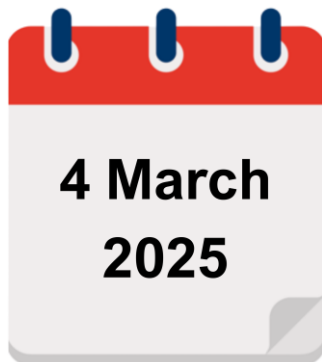
Harvey said that ILF Scotland are organising a 10th birthday event in June 2026.

## **Actions from today's meeting**



1. David will write a letter to the Minister of Health asking him to meet with the Group.
2. Sandra will make a practice note about Universal Credit and Lee will email it to the Group.
3. Lee will contact Frances McHugh and include her in any emails about the NI Advisory Group.

## 10. Next meeting and arrangements



Lee will email all dates for 2025.

The next meeting will be on 4 March 2025.



This is the end of the Minutes.

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