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## **Carers UK ILF consultation response**

Carers UK welcomes the opportunity to respond to the proposed closure of the Independent Living Fund (ILF). We have a number of deep concerns about how this will work in practice in the current local authority spending environment and about what implementation of the change will mean for families.

With local authorities facing a 27% cut to their budgets, and adult social care representing the largest area of discretionary spending, there is already huge pressure on social care budgets. The Association of Directors of Adult Social Services reports that, from 2011-2013 spending will have fallen by £1.9 billion from efficiencies and service reductions<sup>1</sup>. Demand was already outstripping funding, with figures from Department of Health showing expenditure falling 9% behind demand over the last four years<sup>2</sup>.

In this environment, with insufficient funding levels now being further reduced, it is difficult to see the transfer of un-ringfenced funds from ILF maintaining provision for existing users, rather than simply acting to plug gaps or slow the reduction in services.

In addition, funding pressures have forced local authorities to disinvest in lower-level, preventative services in order to fulfil duties to provide services to growing numbers of disabled and older people with higher level needs. ILF funding is often used to deliver preventative services which enable older and disabled people to live independently, giving them quality of life and often preventing or reducing the need for more intensive support. These kind of services also often contribute to carers' quality of life and ability to lead lives, work and remain socially included, alongside caring.

As ILF users are assessed through local authorities, it is likely that substantial numbers will find that local authorities eligibility criteria mean that preventative services they receive through ILF are not available from the social care system.

As a result, whilst rationalizing funding for disabled people across the system may seem logical, in the current local authority spending environment Carers UK is deeply concerned that existing users are likely to see significant reduction in the support they receive, particularly preventative services – with serious consequences for the dignity and independence of older and disabled people and further pressure falling on their carers.

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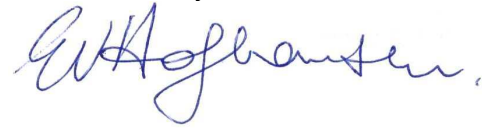
<sup>1</sup> ADASS Budget Survey (2012)

<sup>2</sup> Fairer Funding for All (2011) Commission on Funding of Care and Support

Even for families who do meet eligibility criteria we are concerned that there may be considerable disruption to their care packages as they are transferred to local authority services. Many carers are only just managing to cope with limited support and any changes to services during transition periods, whilst waiting for assessments or appealing decisions, could result in families being forced out of work to care or being pushed to breaking point as they lose essential support.

In addition, whilst local authorities will have a duty to assess the 6% of ILF users not currently part of the care and support system, we are concerned that, unfamiliar with local authority systems and processes, these users may be significantly disadvantaged – not knowing how to approach local authority assessments or challenge decisions. It will be essential for all ILF users, and this group in particular, to be given additional support, signposted to information and advice and support from local groups and advocates.

Yours sincerely,



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