



Carers Scotland's respond to the public consultation on The future of the Independent Living Fund.

Carers Scotland is a charity set up to support the thousands of people who care for an elderly partner, sick friend or disabled family member. Carers Scotland is the Scottish nation office of Carers UK. Caring is part of life. Three in five of us will provide unpaid care for someone at some point in our lives. However, without the right support the personal cost of caring can be high with many carers experiencing poor health, poverty and disadvantage. Carers Scotland helps carers and campaigns to make their lives better.

Background

- There are 660,000 carers in Scotland - 1 in 8 of the population
- Every day almost 500 people take on a caring responsibility - that's 178,000 people each year
- 110,000 people provide over 50 hours of care per week
- Over 250,000 people juggle caring with holding down a job
- By 2037 the number of carers in Scotland will have increased to around 1 million
- Carers save the Scottish economy £10.3 billion - the cost of providing NHS services in Scotland.
- The main carers' benefit is worth just £58.45 for a minimum of 35 hours.
- Three quarters of carers are struggling to pay utility bills and more than half are cutting back on food and heating to make ends meet.
- Three quarters of carers say their health is worse because of their caring responsibilities.

Carers Scotland welcomes the opportunity to respond to this consultation. This response aims to provide a succinct response focusing on key areas of concern.

Carers Scotland has concerns over the proposals outlined to meet the needs of current ILF users within the mainstream care and support system and devolve funding to local and devolved governments.

In the first instance, we believe that the plans to close the Independent Living Fund in 2015 will create uncertainty to vulnerable individuals and their carers who have in place arrangements that meet their needs and circumstances. This sits alongside significant concerns for individuals and their carers over changes to welfare and major changes to the ways in which services are delivered, including service reductions. Carers Scotland is concerned at the pace and level of changes affected these individuals and their carers.

Furthermore, whilst some Group 1 users receive support from the local authority, others may have chosen to use their ILF to arrange their care in other ways. These may be small numbers but we believe that closure of ILF will reduce their choice. Whilst the proposals indicate that it is “important that those users engage with the local authority care and support services for which they are eligible” it should be recognised that some Group 1 users and their carers may have made a legitimate choice **not** to utilise local authority services, including assessment. These proposals must recognise the key principles of personalisation that individuals should have **choice** and **control** over their lives and the support they need.

However, if the proposals are progressed, it is vital that all users of ILF, whether Group 1 or Group 2 and their carers receive a range of **clear information** from the UK Government on what this will mean to them and what support they can expect from their local authority. This should include information on obtaining **independent advocacy** and **assistance with direct payments and self directed support** to help them in making choices about their care.

Moreover, all carers who are supporting a person with ILF should be provided with information on their rights and the support available, including the right to a **Carers**

Assessment. These changes must ensure that these carers have the right information to access to the support they need to continue to care without detriment to their health and wellbeing.

Secondly, the consultation is unspecific over the level of funding to be devolved and the ways in which it will be used. At present, funding is secured and individuals can have confidence that they can retain their current services, although they may choose in future to organise these in different ways through, for example, self directed support or personalised budgets. The consultation does not specify whether these devolved funds will be ring fenced to continue to support all individuals who are currently supported either in full or partly by ILF funds.

Carers Scotland believes that all devolved funding in relation to ILF should be ring fenced within local and devolved government

Finally, we are concerned about the impact of the proposals on local authority services and support. There are many demands placed on local authority services, with service cuts, tightening eligibility criteria and new legislation and policy including changes such as self directed support and personalisation. With some 4,000 individuals in Scotland that may require assessment or reassessment and additional services and support, we are concerned that local authorities may find it difficult to meet this demand alongside existing and other new activities. **We would recommend considering the timescales for change and extending these to reflect the considerable demands that will arise.**

Conclusion

In conclusion, we have concerns over the proposals and the uncertainty this is creating for individuals and their carers. It is essential that they are fully involved and informed at all stages. Funds devolved must be ring fenced to ensure that individuals and their carers will have confidence that they will receive the right levels and type of support for the future.

Carers Scotland

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About Carers Scotland

Carers Scotland is a charity set up to support people who care for an elderly relative, a sick friend or a disabled family member. We are part of Carers UK.

Carers Scotland:

- campaigns for the changes that make a real difference to carers' lives.
- provides information and advice to carers about their rights and how to get support
- mobilise carers and supporters to influence decision-makers at local and national levels
- gather hard evidence about what needs to change and disseminating this to policymakers and services providers
- aims to transform the understanding of caring so that carers are valued and not discriminated against
- provides training for staff in health, social care, voluntary and private sectors
- promotes training for carers to maximise their skills and experience

Most of us will look after an elderly relative, sick partner or a disabled family member. Caring is part of life but without the right support the personal costs of caring can be high. When caring affects carers and their families Carers Scotland is here to provide the support and advice they need.

We help carers:

- get the best for the person they care for
- make the most of their income
- stay in paid work
- juggle their busy lives
- keep healthy
- find a listening ear
- campaign for change.

CARERS Scotland
the voice of carers

The Cottage
21 Pearce Street
Glasgow G51 3UT
Tel: 0141 445 3070
Email: fiona.collie@carerscotland.org
Web: www.carerscotland.org

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Registered office 20 Great Dover Street, London, SE1 4LX