

The Future of the Independent Living Fund Consultation

SLSDSN represent disabled people in Scotland and on the 17th September 2012 we held a consultation event in the Banqueting Hall South Lanarkshire. We also asked disabled people to respond directly to us to form the basis of this consultation response.

Question 1:

From 2015, the government wants disabled people's care and support needs to be paid for by local councils and will give councils extra money to meet the needs of Independent Living Fund users.

This would mean the end of the Independent Living Fund in 2015. Do you agree with this?

South Lanarkshire Self-Directed Support Network do not agree with the preferred option of central government, that from 2015, the Independent Living Fund should close and that extra monies should be given to local councils to meet the needs of the recipients of this Fund.

The network has consulted with both recipients of the Fund in our area and network members and their viewpoint is that:

- if the monies are transferred to local councils the fund would inevitably be lost
- budgets allocated to the service user via the review process would be reduced
- there would be a detrimental effect on both social work departments and recipients as social work departments are already working to maximum capacity
- entitlements may not be forthcoming from social work departments particularly if the monies are not ring-fenced for those already in receipt

Should the Fund close and the monies are re-directed, the network would look to the Scottish Government to explore other options with both local councils and those affected.

Question 2:

At the moment, people get some help from the Independent Living Fund and some help from local councils.

What big challenges would people have to deal with if only local councils are meeting their care and support needs?

How can we make this easier for people?

Network members and recipients of the Fund in South Lanarkshire believe that the big challenges that people would have to deal with if local councils are meeting their care and support needs are:

- difficulty in accessing services and support. This has already been found to be the case and will be heightened by transferring the monies to local councils
- expertise would also be lost if the Fund closes particularly in relation to the assessment process
- councils will also need to be more flexible and move away from task based to an outcome focussed approach which would make them fit in with current Independent Living Fund processes
- concerns have been raised that should re-assessment of needs take place recipients may have to fight for current and additional services from local councils
- timescales / delays regarding assessments being approved is already cumbersome in relation to local council processes in comparison to Independent Living Fund
- local councils have different policies on charging and therefore review of finances would be required for those in receipt
- different payment rates are also in operation which differ from local council payment rates; if different rates adopted there may be issues with employment aspects
- legislation in Scotland for direct payments differs in respect to appointee ship
- families are also looking after the “cared for” at home (this saves money) but if a large package of care is in operation local councils may suggest a placement within a nursing home / residential establishment as an alternative option.

Question 3:

If we closed the Independent Living Fund, how would this affect local councils and how will it affect care and support services?

How could we make this easier for local councils and care and support services?

The closure of the Independent Living Fund will affect local council by making them:

- less efficient, they are already under resourced and working under stress and will become overloaded and be unable to function effectively
- additional independent support and advocacy may be required to assist recipients with transition process

The Department of Work and Pensions could make it easier for local councils and care and support services in Scotland by

- giving the exact amount of money currently allocated for administration and for care and support costs for those in receipt of Independent Living Fund direct to the Scottish Government. These monies should be ringfenced and given to each local council based on what current allocation is at 2015.

Question 4:

Some people, who have been getting help from the Independent Living Fund since before 1993, do not get any help from their local council.

What will we find hard when trying to make sure that these people can use all the local council's services and get help with their care and support needs?

How can we make sure this happens?

Independent Living Fund will need to:

- engage with Group 1 users to ensure that permission is sought to transfer their data to local councils to enable a register of users to be established
- set up an Independent Living Fund transition helpline to assure good practice and ensure accurate information is provided
- ensure local councils move away from the preference to offer services rather than provide Direct Payments
- pressurise local authorities to fund gaps in service, current local service agreements may not meet the needs of the recipients
- ensure local councils review in-house training for local authority staff and that assessments/transition processes are outcome focussed

Question 5:

What is the best way for the Department for Work and Pensions, the Independent Living Fund and the local councils to work with and talk to the Independent Living Fund users between now and 2015?

How can the Independent Living Fund work with each local council if the government decides to close down the Independent Living Fund?

There requires a process of communication between the Department for Work and Pensions, Independent Living Fund, the Scottish Government, local authorities and recipients of the Fund regarding the outcome of the consultation and the changes that will take place beyond 2015.

Communication requires to take place as soon as possible after the outcome of the consultation is known. This would enable local authorities and recipients to be equipped for the changes ahead.

The Department of Work and Pensions and Independent Living Fund need to look at holding joint local events for recipients with local authority personnel and independent living fund assessors in attendance. The events would allow recipients to voice their concerns and to be kept up-to-date on how these changes will take place.

The Independent Living Fund would also require to seek permission from Group 1 recipients who are in receipt regarding the transfer of data to local authorities to enable both the Fund and local authorities to begin the transition process.

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