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Date 03 October 2012
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Dear Sir / Madam

The Future of the Independent Living Fund (ILF)

The following is the response to the Department of Work & Pension's request for written evidence regarding The Future of the Independent Living Fund (ILF). The response is submitted on behalf of Alex McMahan, Director of Strategic Planning & Primary Care NHS Lothian and collated from comments across the organisation.

Question 1

Do you agree with the Government's proposal that the care and support needs of current ILF users should be met within the mainstream care and support system, with funding devolved to local government in England and the devolved administrations in Scotland and Wales? This would mean the closure of the ILF in 2015.

This would only be acceptable where there is no detriment to the individual and their families. And reassurance would have to be provided that this would be the case. However if the funding is devolved consideration must be given as to how we will ensure consistency in relation to access and support through this funding and how the money will be managed?

There maybe an opportunity in Scotland, through the lens of the proposed Integration agenda for this funding to be managed in a more integrated way through the proposed health and social care partnerships, to ensure effective use of resource to meet needs locally based on agreed outcomes with the individual, their carers/family the statutory agencies.



Question 2

What are the key challenges that ILF users would face in moving from joint ILF/Local Authority to sole Local Authority funding of their care and support needs? How can any impacts be mitigated?

Uncertainty regarding future levels of funding will be the main issue facing ILF users in the transition from ILF/Local Authority to sole Local Authority funding. To alleviate these as much as possible eligibility criteria and transparent processes must be agreed nationally before these changes are put in place.

Users will particularly need support where ILF funding ceases, including the agreement of a transitional process rather than the support simply being removed immediately. Transitional arrangements may be required.

Demand for future needs may add pressure to the local authority budgets, key to mitigating this is forward planning to determine capacity and demand, and redesign of support services in order that appropriate demand can be met, perhaps in more creative ways through different providers commissioned by the local authorities

Question 3

What impact would the closure of the ILF have on Local Authorities and the provision of care and support services more widely? How could any impacts be mitigated?

The proposed requirement on Local Authorities to administer the ILF will increase demand on their already stretched capacity unless this is supported by additional funding to the Local Authority to take on this role.

In addition Scottish Government must start planning now for the devolution of ILF to ensure processes are in place by 2015, to ensure that Local Authorities are prepared to take on this role, understand the key risks and are able to mitigate these. It should be for partnerships in Scotland to agree the best way of utilising the funding.

Key to the devolution of ILF from central government is the need for Local Authorities to be provided with information by central government regarding the number and needs of potential applicants for the devolved funds. This would ensure that support and information are offered to these individuals and that their needs are proactively reviewed in advance so that there may be an opportunity for

adjustment before any funding might cease, and must be conducted in an open & transparent manner.

We know that the closure of the ILF will be more difficult for those Group 1 users who are not currently receiving any Local Authority funding, and who in some cases have little experience of the mainstream care and support system. It is important that those users engage with the local authority care and support services for which they are eligible.

Question 4

What are the specific challenges in relation to Group 1 users? How can the Government ensure this group is able to access the full range of Local Authority care and support services for which they are eligible?

See response to Q3 in addition to the following.

Clarity is required in respect of the care and support needs of Group 1 individuals, to enable Local Authorities to meet potential future demand on services, where the individual is not currently accessing these services.

Group 1 individuals will require additional support regarding the transition from existing ILF criteria to the new criteria for the devolved funding.

We note that the Government remains committed to funding current ILF care packages until 2015 but we know that it will take some time to manage the move to sole local authority funding. It would be necessary to start such a process well in advance of 2015. This consultation is only the start of a process of working with users, Local Authorities and the Governments of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Question 5

How can DWP, the ILF and Local Authorities best continue to work with ILF users between now and 2015? How can the ILF best work with individual Local Authorities if the decision to close the ILF is taken?

The DWP must confirm the funding that will be transferred and what the criteria should be. Any transition from one scheme to the other should be proactively

managed with individuals being offered an assessment and a predictive estimate of funding. The Scottish system may provide an opportunity for health and social care partnerships to work collectively.

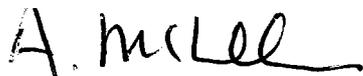
The DWP should engage in knowledge transfer regarding ILF to Local Authorities / Scottish Government to support the transition.

The DWP must ensure that ILF users are given the opportunity to inform the decision making process, and that the process is open & transparent to all stakeholders, including Local Authorities and service users

Is there anything else you would like to tell us about in response to this consultation?

Central government must allow sufficient time to be built in to allow processes to be agreed and for any adjustments to be made.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'A. McMahon'.

Alex McMahon
Director of Strategic Planning & Primary Care