



Independent
Living Fund

Single Equality Scheme 2014-15



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ILF equality statement

The Independent Living Fund (ILF) currently supports around 17,000 disabled people living in the UK by giving them choice and control to live independent, inclusive lives within their own communities, rather than in residential care.

We seek to ensure that our policies and processes are customer focused, and are designed to promote equity in service provision for ILF users based on:

- age;
- disability;
- gender reassignment;
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity;
- race;
- religion or belief;
- sex; and
- sexual orientation.

We also aim to provide a working environment in which employees are treated fairly and with respect.

The Trustees of the ILF are committed to the achievement of the outcomes described in this Single Equality Scheme. The scheme sets out the specific actions that we will carry out to:

- Ensure compliance with equality legislation.
- Raise standards in service delivery.
- Strengthen communications and engagement with our customers.
- Ensure fairness and consistency in the development.
- Implementation of our policies and processes.
- Ensure that we are a good and fair employer.

We will build on our strengths to create a culture that respects diversity and is based on the principles of fairness and equality of opportunity for all.

Foreword

On 6 March 2014 the Minister of State for disabled people announced that the ILF would close on 30 June 2015. Current ILF users will transfer to sole local authority support in England and to new arrangements in the devolved administrations of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

This Single Equality Scheme updates our previous scheme that was due to be completed by the 31 March 2015 in order to extend its operation until the closure of the organisation.

Our action plan is very much the same as it was with some minor changes in dates for actions to be completed. We remain resolutely committed to ensuring that we achieve the highest standards in relation to achieving equality outcomes for our employees and service users.

We are pleased to record that we have achieved the 'Gold Award' accreditation for the standard 'Committed2Equality' until the end of June 2015. This, together with the two tick 'Positive About Disabled People' accreditation, ensures we are well placed to achieve our ambitions, which are set out in our organisational Equality Statement.

I expect we will have many challenges as we progress towards the closure of the organisation. However, I am determined we will continue to meet our obligations to ensure we carry out our activity in line with our legislative responsibility and continue to support ILF recipients and our staff through the closure process.

Who we are and what we do

The Independent Living Fund (ILF) is an Executive Non-Departmental Public Body of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). Our role is to deliver discretionary payments direct to about 17,000 disabled people across the United Kingdom (UK), allowing them the choice and control to purchase personal care and other support services to live independently in their communities.

We provide this financial assistance under the terms of a single publicly financed Trust Deed overseen by a board of six Trustees. The Chief Executive and the Senior Management Board manage the strategic direction and day-to-day running of the organisation.

We employ 124 dedicated employees and operate from our office in Nottingham. We also engage self-employed health and social care professionals to visit users in their own homes and review their support needs.

We work in partnership with over 200 local authorities by jointly funding individually tailored care and support packages.

Our mission:

- We are committed to continue to provide our users with a high quality service that supports them to achieve positive independent living outcomes, with greater choice and control over their lives.
- We will continue to work with Government, local authority partners, the devolved administrations and other key stakeholders, to ensure an effective transfer of our users' support on 30 June 2015.
- We will ensure that our experience and the lived experience of our users are captured to inform the future development of independent living support.

Our strategic aims

Strategic aim 1: Maintain Service and complete the transfer programme

In order to deliver this aim we will:

- 1.1 Deliver service to our users in line with Ministerial commitment to maintain their packages of support until transfer on 1 July 2015.
- 1.2 Continue to deliver the Transfer programme, whilst achieve agreed key performance targets, to ensure programme delivery remains on-track for user transfer on 1 July 2015.
- 1.3 Deliver our Convergence Programme to those users who were visited between 18 November 2013 and the 6 March 2014, to provide them with the opportunity to discuss any practical concerns around transfer and to share this information with their local authority.
- 1.4 Work closely with stakeholders to design and deliver an engagement and communication programme, to provide regular information to assist and support our users, local authorities and the devolved administrations through the transfer.
- 1.5 Maintain our high standards in customer service excellence, grounded on user experience, and being responsive to individual needs.

Strategic aim 2: Prepare for closure

In order to deliver this aim we will:

- 2.1 Develop a closure programme that builds on the transfer review programme and from the individual programme work streams to ensure a fully managed and effective closure of the ILF on 30 June 2015.
- 2.2 Through our Universal Outcomes Programme, to provide each user with comprehensive information, including a revised support plan documenting their individual independent living outcomes, prior to transfer to their local authority.
- 2.3 Build and maintain internal and external relationships to support the ILF through the closure programme and the 'lights-out' period, these relationships will include our key stakeholders and regulators.
- 2.4 Put plans in place to deliver a legally compliant closure, liaising with key stakeholders to ensure that data and other assets are appropriately transferred to third parties.
- 2.5 Capture the ILF's intellectual capital including process, policies and good practice that have developed to support disabled people with high support needs over the past 27 years.

Strategic aim 3: Support our people

In order to deliver this aim we will:

- 3.1 Ensure we have developed a robust Human Resources (HR) plan that maintains sufficient staff resources and skills to deliver the transfer programme on 30 June 2015, and the “Lights-out” closure programme post June 2015.
- 3.2 Deliver a learning and development plan that alongside our performance management system, assists us to deliver our programme and equips and enables our staff to maximise their choices and options for the future.
- 3.3 Deliver an exit scheme for our people that supports the ILF Closure Programme, whilst providing support to our people via a Career Transition Service (CTS).
- 3.4 Continue to liaise closely with the Civil Service Local team and the East Midlands HR network to ensure that our people who would like to remain in the civil service are aware of the opportunities that are available locally and within the region.
- 3.5 Continue to deliver strong employee participation and engagement through a full communications programme for all staff.

Strategic aim 4: Deliver sound governance

In order to deliver this aim we will:

- 4.1 Ensure appropriate and robust governance and control systems are regularly monitored to identify and effectively manage risk.
- 4.2 Deliver robust, prudent and informative financial management, within agreed budgetary provisions that adhere with regulations and guidance.
- 4.3 Maintain our performance management systems and provide appropriate resilience and good value for money.
- 4.4 Undertake an internal and external audit programme that provides sufficient assurance levels to the Board of Trustees, the Accounting Officer and the DWP.
- 4.5 Ensure that an appropriate governance programme is established to deliver an effective closure of the ILF that is on time and delivers the proper closure in terms of financial, legal and administrative requirements.

Equality legislation

The general equality duty, set out in the Equality Act 2010, covers the following nine protected characteristics:

- age;
- disability;
- gender reassignment;
- marriage and civil partnership;
- pregnancy and maternity;
- race;
- religion or belief;
- sex; and
- sexual orientation.

As a public body, under this duty, we have a legal responsibility to have due regard (in the exercise of our functions) to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not.
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not.

Having due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity involves considering the need to:

- Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic.
- Take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it.
- Encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

Specific duties

As well as the general equality duty, public bodies are required to publish information about:

- How the public body has demonstrated compliance with the specific equality duty across its functions. This information must include, in particular, information relating to persons who share a relevant protected characteristic who are its employees and/or other persons affected by its policies and practices.
- Set and publish equality objectives, at least every four years.

All information must be published in a way that makes it easy for people to access.

About the Single Equality Scheme

The original scheme was developed through consultation with users at regional meetings, as well as our stakeholders in local authorities and our employees.

We first published our interim Single Equality Scheme in October 2009. This outlined our commitment to achieve a number of equality objectives and how we aimed to achieve them.

The scheme has evolved since its inception in 2009 and our Chief Executive and the Trustees have overall responsibility for the achievement of the Scheme. We allocate actions to the relevant Directors and Heads of Department within the ILF and they are responsible for completing actions and reporting on progress.

We have published Single Equality Schemes for 2011–2012, 2012–2013 and 2013–2015.

Although the Single Equality Scheme sets out some of the specific work actions for our organisation, detailing how we will meet the equality duty, it is not intended to limit our scope and ambition around equality and diversity.

The action plan that follows details the work we propose to undertake until our closure on 30 June 2015.

The Action Plan

	Aims	Actions
1	We will continue to support people through the Transfer Review and Support Programme by producing easy read guides and materials in other formats on request.	Our communications team will ensure easy read versions of support materials are produced as standard. People can have materials produced in their preferred language and format.
2	We will continue to co-produce our materials, policy, and process changes with disabled people and their organisations to ensure our practice is informed by them. Our funding is flexible and gives our users choice and control up to 30 June 2015.	To continue to consult with users, the ILF advisory group, user-led organisations and stakeholders about how to increase flexibility and ensure that their experience informs practice. To align our funding where possible with local authorities and to assist users in the transfer process
3	To send each user an outcome-focused support plan by 30 June 2015.	To ensure ILF users and local authority partners have a comprehensive outcome-focused support plan stating desired outcomes, local authority financial support, and how we will align packages prior to the transfer of support in 2015.
4	We will address user equality and diversity issues through the Transfer Review and Support Programme.	To continue to use the Independent Assessor's quality assurance system to ensure that user equality and diversity issues are identified and addressed.

The action plan

	Aims	Actions
5	Publish information about how the Public Sector Equality duty is met.	<p>To ensure that information about our Single Equality Scheme and equality monitoring data is published in accordance with the guidance available to public bodies.</p> <p>To ensure that the Equality Impact Assessment Board is provided with quarterly updates to confirm how we are meeting our Public Sector Equality Duty through the Transfer Review and Support Programme.</p>
6	Publish a Code of Practice.	<p>To publish a Code of Practice with our central and local government partners setting out 10 key principles of how we will work together to ensure good practice is followed during the transfer of ILF users to sole local authority support in England and the systems adopted by the devolved administrations.</p> <p>UPDATE – The Code of Practice for England has been updated in October 2014. We will update it in the devolved administrations when we know the body we will be transferring support to.</p>

	Aims	Actions
7	We will promote and monitor the take up of Direct Payments within the Transfer Review and Support Programme visits through our assessors.	We will ensure that Direct Payments are addressed at review meetings with users and their Local Authority representatives. We will share the Equalities National Council (ENC) DVD with Assessors so they are aware of where ILF users can get specialist support if needed. We will also signpost people to ENC through information contained in our User Guide.
8	Produce Equality Impact Assessments on all new or revised user and staff policies and procedures.	The Equality Impact Assessment Board to continue its work to review the equality impact assessments to ensure that they meet our responsibilities in line with the Equality Act. To publish all equality impact assessments on the ILF equality web pages.
9	Maintain the 'Committed2Equality' (C2E) accreditation.	To undertake the work required in order to retain this accreditation and to confirm our commitment to equality. UPDATE – In October 2013 we retained the Gold standard C2E accreditation and we will retain this standard until our closure on 30 June 2015.
10	Maintain the 'positive about disabled people' accreditation.	To conduct an annual review of progress against commitments and take actions to improve as necessary.

The action plan

	Aims	Actions
11	Promote good employment practice.	<p>All new employees will receive training on equality and diversity. All existing employees will undertake mandatory Equality and Diversity refresher training. The members of the Equality Impact Assessment Board and other identified employees will receive training in respect of the Public Sector Equality Duty to raise awareness of our responsibilities. The Senior Management members have also received training to develop their knowledge of the protected characteristic 'gender reassignment'</p> <p>We will produce a guide for users with ACAS and a number of partners supporting disabled people.</p>

	Aims	Actions
12	We will provide support to all employees throughout the ILF closure process.	<p>Provide 1:1 support to understand what individuals' needs are. Engage a specialist organisation to provide career transition advice, which will include help with CV writing, interview skills and education options. Invite Job Centre Plus to talk to people about benefits and training opportunities. Invite local recruitment agencies to speak to people about the job market and employer expectations. Ensure people are aware of Civil Service vacancies. Run pre-retirement courses.</p> <p>UPDATE – We have appointed Working Transitions from June 2014 who will run a 3-phase programme plus 1:1 career coaching for all staff. A list of Civil Service vacancies is published weekly on our Horizon intranet pages. Job Centre plus talks, inviting local recruiting agencies and running pre-retirement courses are all planned to take place from January 2015.</p>

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