

Information sheet 30 – closure of the Independent Living Fund

At the end of June 2015, the Independent Living Fund (ILF) will be closed. This information sheet explains how adult social care services will take over responsibility for ILF users in Northumberland. Because a number of other changes are also taking place at the same time, the information in the sheet is provisional. We will give people currently supported by the ILF further information as it becomes available.

■ Who is affected?

In Northumberland about 70 people have been getting funding from the ILF. Most of them have also been getting support from adult social care, arranged by a care manager. A smaller group of people, who have been supported by the ILF since before April 1993, get ILF funding for all the care and support that they have been assessed by the Fund as needing. From July 2015, all public funding for care and support for ILF users in both groups will usually come from adult social care.

■ Why is the ILF being closed?

The closure of the ILF is a national decision. The Government has explained that in its view it is no longer sensible to have two different systems for funding care and support for disabled people, and that it is unfair for there to be different rules applying to different groups of people depending on when they applied to support and who they applied to.

■ Didn't the Government lose a court case about this?

Yes, in November 2013, the Court of Appeal decided that the Government had not considered all the issues which it should have done before deciding to close the ILF. As a result, the Government reconsidered the decision, after first making sure that it had all the information which the Court had said it should take into account. In March 2014, the Government again decided to close the ILF. Because of the delay, the date for the closure of the fund was changed from the end of March 2015 to the end of June 2015.

■ How will the handover of responsibility take place?

Between April 2013 and June 2015, all current ILF users in Northumberland will have a joint visit from an ILF assessor, a care manager from adult social care and a specialist worker from adult social care with detailed knowledge of how the ILF works and of the direct payments arrangements in Northumberland. This will be an opportunity for an individual discussion about planning the transition to the new arrangements.

This meeting is to make sure that we understand your current arrangements and any concerns that you have. We will not be making decisions about your future support until shortly before July 2015, since your circumstances may change before then, and there may also be other national and local changes which affect the support available.

People who do not currently get any support from adult social care will be asked by the ILF whether they agree to a joint meeting, and to the ILF sharing information with us. If you are in this group, you do not have to agree to that, but we would strongly encourage you to do so, so that we can begin discussions about your support needs as early as possible.

■ What will be the effect on the amount of support that I get?

We cannot give a firm answer to this question at present. One reason for this is that the Government has announced that it intends to change the law about eligibility for support from adult social care, to introduce standard national rules about eligibility from 2015. We do not yet know what these standard rules will say. At present, different local authorities can set rules in different ways.

As things stand, the County Council's policy is that it will provide the support that people need to protect their health, dignity and independence. We cannot guarantee that we will continue to provide all ILF users with the same level of funding as they are receiving now, but we will not make any change to your support arrangements without first fully discussing this with you, and with any carers or family members who you agree should be involved.

■ Will I still be able to manage the money myself?

One reason why the ILF was originally very important to disabled people was that it made payments directly to them, and they were able to manage the money, and use it to employ their own personal assistants or to make their own arrangements with support agencies. The County Council now has similar arrangements to enable people to manage the funding for their care and support through "direct payments" – so ILF users will still, if they choose, be able to control the money themselves.

■ What about charges?

Once again, there may be changes in the law or in the County Council's financial situation before 2015, so we can only give a provisional answer to this question.

As things stand at present, people usually pay less in charges for support from adult social care than for support from ILF. If the change was made now, many ILF users would see a reduction in the charges they pay, and it is unlikely that anyone would have to pay more. The reason for this is that the ILF expects people to pay more towards their support out of their disability benefits than anyone would be expected to pay from those benefits for adult social care support.

■ Contacts for further information

We expect to write to everyone in Northumberland currently supported by the ILF to keep them up to date as future arrangements become clearer. In the meantime, if you have immediate issues about your support arrangements, and you are already getting some support from adult social care, you should contact your care manager. If you do not have direct contact details for your care manager, phone **01670 536 400** and ask to speak to them or leave a message.

If you have more general queries about the transition process please contact our Direct Payments Team on 01670 62 9086. If you have queries about your ILF support, you can contact the Fund on their usual helpline numbers, 0845 601 8815 or 0115 9450 700, or by textphone on 0845 601 8816, or by email at funds@ilf.org.uk.