

WIRRAL COUNCIL

HEALTH AND WELLBEING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:
9 SEPTEMBER 2010

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF ADULT SOCIAL SERVICES

CHANGES TO INDEPENDENT LIVING FUND (ILF)

Executive Summary

This report highlights the recent changes made to the independent living fund, the impact this may have on supporting adults with complex needs to live independently and the possible related impact on the Department of Adult Social Services (DASS) budget.

This items falls within the Social Care and Inclusion portfolio.

1 Background

- 1.1 The Independent Living Fund (ILF) is a source of income administered through a national government charity to enable people to pay for a range of support services, or to provide access to other services such as individual support to go to college or leisure activities that are not statutory.
- 1.2 ILF is not a source of income to DASS. The funds have been predominantly used to support people with complex needs as part of wider packages of funding and support to allow them to live independently. Often, people may receive a combination of social care, health and ILF funding alongside other funding streams such as Supporting People. This enables them to be comprehensively supported to live independent lives. Often, people choose Supported Living tenancies as a direct alternative to residential placements. Over a number of years the fund has built a reputation of allowing people to achieve independence, maximise the quality of their lives and achieve their aspirations.
- 1.3 Demand for ILF funding has increased year on year, primarily as a reflection of the increasing numbers of people with complex needs being supported, particularly in the area of adult learning disabilities. However, due to this significant growth in demand and the incremental increase in costs, ILF advised in March 2010 that it would be changing its regulations. This change meant they would only accept new applications from people working 16 hours or more per week with effect from May 2010. However, the consequence of this was a significant rise in ILF applications. Thereafter, and in response to this unprecedented demand, the ILF issued a statement advising that they would not be in a position to process or honour any of these new applications. This decision was made without notice.

The advice ILF have given those that have recently applied, is that they must take further steps to manage within available funding and protect existing awards. As a result they are currently unable to commit any further funding to new applicants, except for those who have already received a formal offer of funding.

- 1.4 This more recent decision has created significant concern and anxiety for people who have been planning over a long period of time to move to independent living arrangements and have been expecting ILF to contribute to these support arrangements. In view of the very short notice given of this decision alongside the longer time frame of planning for these arrangements, people have been left stunned and distressed by these changes. The implication is that this change will significantly affect long-term decisions about independent living.
- 1.5 The ILF have taken steps to advise and reassure people of their commitment to continue funding for existing people but has indicated that they are unable to increase individual awards above the amount currently paid.
- 1.6 It is understood that ILF will make a further announcement in the near future; however, there is no further detail on their website www.ilf.org.uk.

2 Current Position

- 2.1 There are currently 118 people supported by DASS who also receive ILF funding. ILF funding for these people totals £37,143 per week (£1,931,436 per year). The average funding per person is £315 per week.
- 2.2 Information for the past 5 years shows an average of 12.8 new applications per year for people supported by DASS. At an average of £315 per week per application this equates to additional ILF funding of £209,664 in total per year.
- 2.3 There are currently 13 people supported by DASS who have outstanding applications for ILF funding and a further 3 where applications were in the process of being submitted. This is an increase on the previous year's average figures over a two month period when applications under the old regulations were being allowed. Based on the average funding this equates to a total of £5,040 per week and £262,080 in a full year. Some of these people were weeks away from moving into Supported Living accommodation with friendship groups, and this decision has severely disrupted financing of these schemes and has delayed "moving in dates" which in some cases were only weeks away.

3 Potential Impact

- 3.1 It is too early to say what impact the withdrawal of ILF will have. This may be small as DASS should meet the Fair Access to Care Services (FACS) eligible needs of people in receipt of ILF.

However, a review of the 16 people referred to in 2.3, will need to be undertaken to confirm that this is the case. However, there is an interdependence of funding arrangements across different funding streams, so matters are not simple. Clearly, the expectations of some people and their parents is that it should be the responsibility of the local authority to make up ILF shortfalls. From a support planning point of view and without alternative funding available, the local authority may need to reconsider the people where moves into Supported Living require additional ILF funding, the support coming from other less expensive FACS eligible services. These may not afford the same opportunity for independence, such as care placements. Additionally, this could increase cost pressures in DASS.

3.2 The speed of the changes to ILF have also left a number of issues unresolved which include the following:

- there appears to be no appeals procedure for those applications that have already been submitted
- there are tenancy agreements currently being processed that cannot be completed as the ILF funding was part of the support package
- there are some people that are in the process of moving into their new homes and were expecting payments to start
- the review process for ILF may further reduce the number of claimants in Wirral and impact on the ability of people with complex health and social care needs to live fully independent lives
- in light of the current position regarding public sector finances there is no indication that this decision will be reversed
- this unilateral decision will inevitably create pressures on local authorities to make good funding shortfalls, even though this may not be appropriate or lawful, and further reduce the opportunities for people to live independently

Further information is now being sought from other Councils in the North West to compare the of these ILF changes.

4 Financial Implications

To be determined.

5 Staffing Implications

None.

6 Equal Opportunities Implications/Health Impact Assessment

May reduce and restrict opportunities for adults with complex needs to live independently.

7 Community Safety Implications

None.

8 Local Agenda 21 Implications

None.

9 Planning Implications

None.

10 Anti Poverty Implications

None.

11 Social Inclusion Implications

May reduce and restrict opportunities for adults with complex needs to live independently.

12 Local Member Support Implications

None.

13 Health Implications

None.

14 Background Papers

None.

15 Recommendations

That;

- (1) Committee Members are requested to note the contents of this report and the possible impact of pressures on the community care budget in year.
- (2) It be noted that further direction may be required from Cabinet in addressing the impact of ILF changes.

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