

CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

Question 1

What aspects of the current ILF worked well and what elements did not work so well?

What worked well was a) the identification of need for and use of appropriate funding, b) the regular delivery of funds via bank accounts and c) the monitoring of bank accounts, with flexibility when seemingly large personal balances were allowed to cater for bills coming in. There were no problems with ILF; the people employed were helpful and empathetic. Any new provider must be certified to be the same.

Question 2

Should the money that becomes available after existing ILF recipients no longer need it be used in the same way for others in the future? If so, why? If not, how else might the money be used?

The money needs to be targeted to each individual's specific needs; for some it may be getting out to socialise with peers, with others it may be support to achieve meaningful employment. As with the current ILF, one size does not suit all. The new fund manager needs to review the rationale behind the disbursement of funds to current users to understand this. All monies which are released by the death or other reasons must be returned to the total funding 'pot'.

Question 3

If the available resource is simply that which is transferred from the Treasury, how would you like to see it used if it was not to be a continuation of the existing approach?

Given that the conditions that the current ILF funding supporting are lifelong, the current ILF funding cannot arbitrarily be withdrawn from current users - for one thing it would be an almost impossible task to identify which users can manage with fewer or no funds, potentially leading to more inequity depending on who manages the fund, and for another it would almost inevitably lead to distress and increased long term health issues – (see 4 below). Therefore funding for new 'entrants' into the scheme would need to be sourced separately. Whoever takes collection of this fund must ensure that the current ILF administration monies are also transferred, for at least 2 years.

Question 4

What innovative ways might there be for increasing the overall amount of money in the pot?

There are two ways:

1. The first is to use some of the money saved (in the 'back office') from the merger of NHS and Social Services organisations across Scotland.
2. The second is to improve the lifestyle and therefore wellbeing of both

ILF users and their carers by providing funds. In this way there will be a lighter burden on the NHS (from GP's surgeries dispensing pills for depression through to specialised hospitals for mental illnesses) and money can be taken from the NHS frontline budget.

Question 5

With any available resource, where is the most effective area to target resources which can have the biggest impact on an individual's ability to live more independently?

The same answer as to Question 2: The money needs to be targeted to each individual's specific needs; for some it may be getting out to socialise with peers, with others it may be support to achieve meaningful employment. As with the current ILF, one size does not suit all.

Question 6

Once funding has been devolved to the Scottish Government, which option do you think will be most appropriate for Scotland?

If we look at the 4 options:

Option 1 – Local Authorities – There are a number of problems associated with devolving the funds to Local Authorities:

1. Each Local Authority will decide its own criteria for the type and extent of funding, leading to inequalities between LA's.
2. The nominal hourly rate charged by different LA's would feed through to the fund and users could find themselves worse off in one LA compared to another.
3. Flexibility for those wishing to live in one LA and work in another would be unnecessarily complex (e.g. who pays for transport from Fife to Angus to go to work).
4. Flexibility for those moving from LA to another would be curtailed and administratively complex.
5. Inevitably each LA would top slice the funds to cover its own admin costs, and we all know from experience that rates charged by LA's for this type of activity are excessive.
6. There is no guarantee that each and every LA will be structured in a way to minimise administrative and clerical handling of the workload, potentially leading to duplication between departments, e.g. Social Service and Housing.
7. The major fear is that the devolved fund will disappear into a general Social Services budget unless there was a statutory requirement for it to be maintained separately. There is no mention of this in the option, apart from an 'aim for security' in one sentence in the consultation document.

Option 2 – Central Government – There are fewer issues but they are just as fundamental:

1. It is an acknowledged fact that Central Government is not and has never been set up to be a paymaster, and where it attempts this it (in

the UK arena) has proved inept – for example cold winter payments to farmers, and Universal Credits. There is no reason to expect why the Scottish Government – independent or still merely devolved – would be any better.

2. The fund will be administered by faceless officers who are unlikely to have any knowledge or experience of allocating funds for, as seen above, many different types of support, each one tailored to the specific user. It is likely that they would end up with a 'rule book' using a tick list to decide the amount each user would be entitled to, similar to the 'fitness for work' form used by ATOS, unlike the current ILF fund, employees of which meet and understand the needs of each potential and current user. This would be impossible across the entire country of Scotland, with 3200 current users and an expected growth rate of 15-20% per year.

Options 3 – Existing agency or NDPB organisation – Again fewer issues, (and more positives) but each is as important as those mentioned so far:

1. Whilst the negative effects of LA managing the funds would be minimised (a cross-country fund management would increase flexibility of travel and moving house), I can think of no one organisation which has the breadth of coverage both in terms of geography or expertise. Most organisations supporting typical current ILF users are by definition local and specialised.
2. There would be a massive learning curve for any existing organisation to understand the needs of other types of clients in other geographies. For example an organisation supporting the visually impaired/blind in Glasgow would have little concept how to support Autistic people in the Orkneys.
3. Even where the organisation is currently nationwide (such as the Scottish Consortium for Learning Difficulties) they are focused on one, not many, types of difficulty.
4. However they are used to dealing with local and central Government and their knowledge and expertise in this area could be useful.

Option 4 – A new body – Whilst this seems the least logical it is actually the best in terms of supporting the interests of the current and intended users of the fund:

1. From the start there would be equality of identification, measurement, and fund deployment.
2. If the managers of the fund are selected responsibly and carefully they will bring with them an understanding of the differing needs of individuals. It would be sensible to include in the potential managers the existing, Scottish, employees of the UK-wide ILF, who presumably will be made redundant by that organisation in 2015.
3. There will be a learning curve but with the right mix of fund managers – some sort of Board or Steering Group – each of the different interests and specialities (the blind in Glasgow and the Autistic in Stromness) will be represented and treated fairly.
4. There would be minimal administration costs, and certainly no top slicing, as the fund would be devolved in its entirety, either by the UK

or Scottish Governments, to this fund manager.

5. There will be little bureaucracy and certainly no individuals working to a any sort of political agenda either nationally or locally.
6. Finally it will put the users of the fund, or their representatives, in charge of managing their own fund – a massive leap forward in terms of independence.

Therefore my recommendation would be for Option 4.

Question 7

To assist with our partial Equality Impact Assessment in relation to the future development of a sustainable Fund to support disabled people in Scotland to live independently, please describe any equality issues (in relation to age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender re-assignment, race, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity and marriage and civil partnership) that you feel may arise and suggest ways in which these could be addressed.

As the funds are used to improve the life of users regardless of any 'orientation', if they are allocated as before by ILF, given that there were none of these issues then, there should be none with the new funding arrangements.