



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

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## **WRITTEN STATEMENT BY THE WELSH GOVERNMENT**

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**TITLE**        **Welsh Independent Living Grant – Update**

**DATE**        **23 May 2018**

**BY**            **Huw Irranca-Davies, Minister for Children, Older People and Social Care**

As the first year of the two year Welsh Independent Living Grant (WILG) transition period has just ended, I thought it would be an opportune time to update Members on progress.

The Welsh Government is committed to independent living so that disabled people, wherever they live in Wales, are appropriately supported to achieve their wellbeing outcomes within their communities. As a result the majority of disabled people are supported to do this by their local authority who, under our social services legislation, have a legal duty to help them achieve their wellbeing outcomes. This will include their desire to live as independently as possible. Local authorities are funded in part to do this through the Revenue Support Grant we provide to local government.

This has been the case since 2010 when the UK Government closed the Independent Living Fund (ILF) to new applicants. Consequently, disabled people were no longer able to receive payments from the ILF to help with the cost of independent living in addition to receiving separate support from their local authority, which was a condition of receiving ILF payments. As a result a two tier system was created where some disabled people in Wales were still being able to access both avenues of support, while the majority of disabled people could now only receive this from their local authority.

In 2015 the UK Government closed the ILF altogether believing disabled people's needs were best met locally by support provided by their local authority and as a result, in England the responsibility for providing this transferred to local authorities. In Wales, responsibility was transferred to the Welsh Government, with fixed funding of £27 million a year. There were around 1,600 people in Wales in receipt of payments from the ILF at that time. This compares with the 60,000 or so who now receive community based care and support from their local authority.

There was clearly a need at this time to make sure people in Wales who had received payments from the ILF were not left without support as a consequence of this decision. In response the Welsh Government introduced, as an interim measure, the WILG for local authorities. This was to provide the funding authorities would need to make payments uninterrupted to people who had been in receipt of ILF payments whilst we considered the most appropriate way to support this discreet group in future.

Prior to this a public consultation was held in 2014 on the principle of four alternative options to provide future support to this group. This was followed by detailed consideration by an ILF stakeholder advisory group of the viability of implementing a refined set of options based on the comments received. This stakeholder advisory group included organisations which represent disabled people in Wales, including Disability Wales and the All Wales Forum of Parents and Carers of People with Learning Disabilities.

I understand that on balance the stakeholder advisory group recommended providing future support through local authorities so that all disabled people in Wales, both those who were able to receive ILF payments and those who were not, were provided with support in an equal, consistent manner. It was also to ensure the fixed funding transferred from the UK Government was used to maximum effect by being used directly for that purpose and not on the administration costs of separate arrangements for those who used to receive payments from the ILF. The Minister at the time, Rebecca Evans AM, confirmed this in her Written Statement of 3 November 2016.

Unlike in England, where the responsibility for support was passed immediately to local authorities without guidance, we have been careful to undertake this in a managed approach. As a result we introduced in April last year a two year transition period during which local authorities will agree with people who used to receive ILF payments the wellbeing outcomes they wish to achieve, how they will be delivered and what support they require. This can be by received direct from their local authority, or direct payments can be made by the authority to enable people to arrange support themselves. We have provided local authorities with clear guidance on how to undertake this process, stressing the need for this to be done in partnership with people who need care and support.

In the second year of this period people have been transferring over to receive their future support from their authority, with the WILG ceasing in March this year and the full funding of £27 million a year transferring into the RSG from this financial year onwards to enable authorities to provide that support. Since the start of the transition period we have carefully monitored local authorities' performance and will continue to do so throughout. The latest data, which covers the first year of this period, shows over 75% of people who used to receive ILF payments have now either completed the review of their future support with their local authority, or are in the process of doing so. Consequently over a third of all people who received payments (around 400 of the current total of 1,300) are now receiving their support from their local authority, in the same way as the majority of disabled people in Wales. In addition, authorities are reporting that most people are receiving support similar to that they received using their ILF payments, with no significant issues being raised. The remaining people are to have completed the review of their future support by the end of September and to be receiving support from their local authority by the end of March next year.

This position reaffirms that our decision to introduce this change in a phased approach was the right one, with the two year transition period providing the much needed time people affected and local authorities alike require to agree the correct level and form of support people require to maintain their ability to live independently. It is understandable, however, some people affected will be apprehensive about this change and I have previously met the

leaders of a campaign to retain the WILG to explain the reasons for the change taking place. That said I am not complacent and have recently commissioned the All Wales Forum, working with Disability Wales, to produce a questionnaire for people going through this process to let us have their views on their experiences and where any improvements in the process may be made. In addition, I am writing to local authorities to reinforce the importance of this transition and of the conversations they are holding with people in ensuring they receive the future support particular to them to deliver their wellbeing outcome of living independently in the community.