



Eich cyf/Your ref Petition P-05-771  
Ein cyf/Our ref RE/00766/17

David J Rowlands AM  
Chair  
Petitions Committee  
National Assembly for Wales

[SeneddPetitions@assembly.wales](mailto:SeneddPetitions@assembly.wales)

21 August 2017

Dear David,

Thank you for your letter seeking my views on a petition submitted to the Petitions Committee by Nathan Lee Davies in relation to the closure of the Welsh Independent Living Grant.

As Mr Davies outlines in his petition, the Welsh Government put in place in 2015 the Welsh Independent Living Grant (WILG) with local authorities to enable them to maintain payments to recipients in Wales of the Independent Living Fund (ILF). This was following the closure at that time of the ILF by the UK Government. We introduced this grant to ensure continuity of support in the short-term for recipients. This was to help them meet the additional costs of living independently in the community in a similar manner to the financial support they received from the ILF. This arrangement was to provide time for us to consider the most appropriate way to provide support to recipients in the longer-term, so as continue their ability to live independently.

As Mr Davies indicates, to assist with our consideration of what that longer-term support should be a stakeholder advisory group had been established. This had representation from the organisations which represent and act for disabled people in Wales (such as Disability Wales and the Dewis Centre for Independent Living), representation from local authorities and some recipients themselves. The majority of the representatives on the advisory group were, as Mr Davies says, from the third sector or had themselves received payments from the ILF. This was because we wanted advice from those who fully appreciated the outcomes disabled people seek and what they required from the arrangements we were to put in place to support their independent living.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

The advisory group considered a number of potential options to provide support in future to those who used to receive payments from the ILF. These ranged from perpetuating the WILG indefinitely, or for a set period of time, to establishing similar arrangements in Wales to that of the ILF outside of local authorities' provision, to having support provided in future through local authorities' social care. The advisory group considered the advantages and disadvantages of each option in terms of its effectiveness to support former recipients and its fit with supporting the larger group of disabled people in Wales who had been excluded by the UK Government from receiving support from the ILF (as it had in 2010 closed the ILF to new entrants).

I am not sure why Mr Davies thinks the advisory group wished to keep the WILG. On the contrary, overall it accepted that the arrangements we had put in place through the WILG could only ever be temporary while a longer-term solution was found. After considering the potential options in the light of the issues I set out above, the advisory group on balance favoured the option of future support being provided by local authorities as part of their social care provision. None of the members of the advisory group opposed this recommendation.

The advisory group favoured this option as it matched the future support former recipients would receive with that being provided generally to disabled and older people in Wales. This is through our new person-centred ethos for social care being delivered through the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. The Act came into effect from April last year and changes the way people's needs are assessed and the way support is delivered. People now have more of a say in the well-being outcomes they wish to achieve and the care and support they require to deliver those outcomes. This is similar to the ethos behind the original establishment of the ILF. The Act also contains stronger powers to keep people safe from abuse and neglect.

The advisory group also saw this option as the way forward as it removed the inequitable two-tier approach which currently exists to supporting disabled people in Wales, with some receiving only support from their local authority, while others can receive this as well as dedicated payments from the WILG.

It is also important to note that prior to the advisory group's considerations we undertook a public consultation on a number of possible options to provide support in future. While it is true that the majority of those who responded favoured arrangements in Wales similar to those of the ILF, this was not the option favoured by all recipients who responded. Indeed the vast majority of recipients did not respond to the consultation at all. Nevertheless, my officials did contact those in the Scottish Government to establish the basis of the dedicated support arrangements for former ILF recipients in Scotland and the possibility of those arrangements being extended to Wales.

While ILF Scotland could administer and make payments on behalf of the Welsh Government, it became clear it would not be in a position to do this for a considerable period of time. In addition, it required significant set-up and operating funding to administer our payments, totalling in the first year of operation well over £1 million with annual operating funding in excess of £0.750 million. Such funding would have needed to be top-sliced from the overall funding available to support former recipients in Wales, thereby substantially reducing the funding available for their support itself. On this basis we did not believe that these arrangements would be acceptable given the reduction in support to which it would lead, or that they provided good value for money. Overall the advisory group shared this view and was keen that already limited funds were not used disproportionately on establishing and maintaining separate arrangements to provide support.

Consequently, I accepted the stakeholder advisory group's advice to have support to former ILF recipients in Wales provided in future by local authorities as part of their social care provision. To put this into place the advisory group also recommended that there should be a two year transitional period, whereby in the first year authorities establish all recipients' desired well-being outcomes and agree with them the support they require to achieve these. In the second year recipients would transfer over to receiving all of their support from their local authority, with their payments under the WILG ceasing at the point at which this occurred. I also accepted this recommendation in full, with as a result the transitional period commencing from 1 April this year and due to conclude on 31 March 2019.

Clearly those who wished to see a different option chosen will be disappointed with the decision taken. However, that decision did not ignore the advice of the representatives of disabled people in Wales on the stakeholder advisory group but was fully in accordance with it.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rebecca". The script is cursive and fluid.

**Rebecca Evans AC/AM**

Gweinidog Iechyd y Cyhoedd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol  
Minister for Social Services and Public Health