

Independent Living Funds Corporate Plan 2008-11

Introduction and Context

The Independent Living Funds (ILF) have existed since 1988, having been created by the then Department of Social Security to provide targeted financial assistance to support disabled people in independent living. The status of the organisation was confirmed as an Executive Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) in a Cabinet Office 2004-05 review of Government sponsored bodies. The ILF is sponsored by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and delivers services to support the Work, Welfare and Equality Group objectives.

The ILF Plan is produced in the context of the 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review, and describes the general business objectives over the three years 2008-09, 2009-10 and 2010-11 in support of the ILF Strategic Plan "Creating choice for disabled people". This is a time of significant change for the ILF:

- The Strategy Unit produced a report in December 2005 entitled "Improving the Life Chances for Disabled People" which sets out an ambitious aspiration "*By 2025 disabled people in Britain should have full opportunities to improve their quality of life, and will be respected and included as equal members of society.*" DWP has taken a lead role in response to this report.
- The Office for Disability Issues was created by DWP to coordinate cross-Government action to realise the strategic vision, and is sponsoring pilots for individualised budgets. Additionally, over 50 local authorities have taken up an "In Control" initiative within which to consider care plans and resources.
- The ILF Strategic Review was published in March 2007. The Minister for Disabled People confirmed that the purpose of the ILF remains to provide support to severely disabled people, of working age, to enable them to live independently. The Minister did not accept those recommendations that significantly extend the ILF, and said that recommendations for the long term would be taken forward as part of the government's overall programme to support independent living for disabled people.
- ILF Grant in Aid moves from Annually Managed Expenditure to Departmental Expenditure Limits (DEL) under the 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review. This change away from "demand-led" estimates requires significant change in ILF planning, forecasting and partnership working with LAs. In the past the steady demand level meant that we could accept all qualifying applicants but recent higher demand in excess of funding provided means that , as a response to budgetary pressure we will have to prioritise applications for the

first time since the 1993 Fund began significantly reducing the capacity to take new applications .

- These new arrangements have required the development of a different approach to strategic financial planning with a refocus on prioritising support for new applications from those on the lowest level of incomes with the highest costs for independent living. This shift has affected all aspects of ILF processes and operational planning during 2007/08. The full effects of these changes will be closely monitored by the ILF in 2008/09 and may impact on this corporate plan.
- Planned dialogue with local authorities and other disability organisations in 2008/09 on both operational aspects and the future focus of the ILF may also contribute to the strategic development of the ILF which will be reflected in the review and possible revision of this plan.

Aims and objectives

We have reviewed our strategy to build on the achievements of previous years and update our aims in line with the broad direction of social care policy.

<p>Our purpose is: to provide financial assistance under the terms of the Trust Deed in an efficient cost-effective way that respects a disabled person's requirements for support and services which enable independent living.</p>		
		<p>Strategic Objectives 2008-11</p>
1	Promote better outcomes for users, by effectively listening and using their experiences to inform our practices.	<p>1 Achieve better outcomes for users, by effectively listening and using their experiences to inform our practices.</p>
2	Radically overhaul our administrative processes and further develop relationships with key stakeholders to drive forward significant user service improvement.	<p>2 Focus our administrative processes on effective and efficient delivery of service to Users.</p>
3	Increase our profile and being recognised as experts in making cash payments to disabled people, and make an effective contribution to social care policy development.	<p>3 As a key partner in the delivery of the social care agenda and support for disabled people, promote the development and implementation of self-directed support across the UK.</p>
4	Influence the outcome of other strategic reviews and lever an appropriate future role.	
5	Increase our capacity to achieve as an organisation.	<p>4 Increase our capacity to achieve as an organisation (fit for the present; fit for the future).</p>

The 2006 objectives reflected the priorities for the ILF at the beginning of a period of considerable evolution for the organisation. We have improved both stakeholder involvement and administrative efficiency over the last few years, and are now focusing on our contribution to the future of social care provision. Our strategy for delivering these objectives includes the following key plans:-

Better outcomes for Users	Conduct biennial User surveys, co-evaluate response and co-produce improvement plans
	Involve Users and their representatives in policy development and work towards a co-development and co-production approach
	Obtain User views on what difference we make to independent living and include this in our published annual reports
Effective Customer Service	Work together with local authorities to coordinate policy and processes where possible and pursue joint working agreements
	Continue active involvement in pilots with local authorities and consider ILF-led initiatives
	Reduce bureaucracy and improve efficiency, making best use of IT structure and systems
	Measure performance through our Performance Dashboard and seek areas for improvement
	Maintain Charter Mark accreditation and work towards to the new scheme and standard
Promote self-directed support across the UK	Develop our role and extend partnership working with local authorities, government departments, and organisations of and for disabled people
	Consult with our Users and disabled people to inform our development and contribution to the social care agenda across the UK
	Engage in appropriate research and information gathering to help us assess the impact of potential new policies and ways of working
Capacity to deliver	Support and develop managers to deliver business plans and provide exemplary leadership
	Continue to invest in skilled and experienced staff and maintain Investors in People accreditation
	Maintain Charter Mark accreditation and work towards to the new scheme and standard
	Maintain our IT assets and user administration systems via an up to date IT strategy

Department for Work and Pensions – Departmental Strategic Objectives

The ILF aims and objectives support the delivery of DWP strategic objectives. These are currently set out in a report responding to the 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR'07) "The new Performance Framework" available at <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/aboutus/PerformanceFramework2008-2011.pdf>.

CSR'07 set out thirty cross-departmental Public Service Agreements (PSAs) and DWP will contribute to PSA 15 "address the disadvantage that individuals experience because of their gender, race, disability, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief" which is directly relevant to the ILF service to disabled people. The ILF contribution to DWP strategic objectives is shown in the table below:

Departmental Strategic Objective	ILF contribution
2 Maximise employment opportunity for all and reduce the numbers on out-of-work benefits	ILF means assessments fully disregard a disabled person's earnings; priority is given to new applicants who are in work
5 Promote equality of opportunity for disabled people	ILF provides direct payments to enable choice and control and self-directed support for independent living
6 Pay our customers the right benefits at the right time	ILF Performance Dashboard reports on process times, accuracy and controls to minimise overpayments and losses
7 Make DWP an exemplar of effective service delivery to individuals and employers	ILF strategic objectives for better User outcomes and effective customer service set out in this Corporate Plan

Service Delivery Values and Targets

The ILF is committed to the delivery of a high quality service to users, and is working in harmony with DWP's Core Values as stated in its Business Plan:

- *achieving the best by using all our resources efficiently so that we provide high and consistent standards of service*

Our Performance Dashboard give a balanced series of performance reports against operational and strategic targets. Improvement targets are set in a number of key performance areas.

- *respecting people by treating our customers and each other with respect, by welcoming diversity and by valuing others' ideas and responding fairly to individual needs*

We are extending User involvement and working towards co-production of policies, co-development of processes and co-evaluation of performance. We have achieved Investors in People accreditation and will continue to invest in our skilled and experienced staff and managers.

- *making a difference by supporting, challenging and inspiring our customers to improve their lives and helping each other to make a difference*

We will conduct a biennial User survey, and obtain continuous feedback on our service to evaluate what difference we make to independent living. Our assisted self-assessment process encourages applicants to secure support to enable full citizenship and participation in the community.

- *looking outwards by working with others and learning how to get better at what we do*

We are engaged in Strategic Policy development in partnership with local authorities and taking a lead role in DWP pilots and In Control initiatives.

We have set ourselves a number of performance targets to drive forward service improvements for users:-

- Make a decision on new applications for assistance within 12 weeks, improving to 8 weeks by March 2009
- Deal with user requests promptly: within 12 weeks improving to 8 weeks by March 2010 where a visit is required; within 4 weeks if no visit is required
- Achieve an accuracy rate of 96% on payment awards improving to 97% over the next three years
- Answer 95% of user complaints within 3 weeks of receipt (In view of unknown volume of activity with application management request to retain at 3 weeks rather than say at this stage improvement to 2 weeks by 2010)
- 85% user satisfaction with customer service in biennial survey responses
- Minimise overpayments and losses: overpayments raised less than 1.7% of payments made per year; unrecoverable losses less than 1% of payments

User Outcomes and Expenditure Plans

The ILF produces medium term expenditure forecast in terms of numbers of users receiving payments and average weekly payments. ILF funding for the three years 2008-11 will be sufficient to continue to support existing Users and take on new applicants at a rate which will maintain the number of Users in payment over the three year period.

We will introduce policies and procedures from April 2008 to manage the inflow of new applications and inform local authorities of our plans and results. We also plan to consult with local authorities in 2008 on the best way to maximise ILF support for disabled people within the level of funding provided.

Expenditure plans, user outcomes and targets are summarised in three tables on the next page. These show the main plans for the three-year period. The main factor that could affect these plans is the level of user demand from new applicants over the three years.

The ILF has historically produced demand-led estimates to meet the timetable for DWP funding allocations under annually managed expenditure (AME). In past years the actual demand from new applicants was within expected levels, but over the last two years there has been a significant increase in demand to the extent that forward plans now include a “managed take-on” of new cases with policies being introduced for the prioritisation of applications.

Levels of applications and new awards put into payment under the new policies will be regularly monitored to provide early alerts if the budget is threatened. Reports will be provided to Trustees on a monthly basis. If action is required to adjust the prioritisation and selection process, this will be done in accordance with contingency measures agreed in advance with DWP. The aim of any such measures is to maximise support to disabled people but ensuring expenditure remains within the cash-limited funding available in Grant in Aid.

ILF funding is now provided for the three-year period 2008-11 and we will seek to make best use of the increased certainty over the longer period to provide sustained support to disabled people year on year.

Fixed Asset Management

The ILF holds fixed assets in the form of IT hardware and bespoke software for the sole purpose of the administration of the ILF service to disabled people. A rolling replacement programme and an ongoing software development plan ensure that ILF assets remain fit for purpose. Fixed assets are depreciated over a three year estimated useful life. Disposals are normally related to assets with nil book value, and there are authorisation limits for exceptional disposal of items that have not reached the end of their useful life.

Summary of expenditure, outcomes and targets

Table 1 - expenditure	2005-06 Outturn (£,000)	2006-07 Outturn (£,000)	2007-08 Estimate (£,000)	2008-09 Plans (£,000)	2009-10 Plans (£,000)	2010-11 Plans (£,000)
User payments	232,005	270,035	298,363	334,711	345,786	353,560
Administration	7,262	7,826	8,656	9,073	9,051	9,253
Total	239,267	277,861	307,019	343,784	354,837	362,813
ACE ratio	3.04%	2.82%	2.82%	2.64%	2.55%	2.55%

Table 2 - user outcomes	2005-06 Outturn	2006-07 Outturn	2007-08 Estimate	2008-09 Plans	2009-10 Plans	2010-11 Plans
Users	19,391	21,163	20,655	21,418	21,398	21,376
Annual benefit	£11,960	£12,760	£14,450	£15,630	£16,160	£16,540
Weekly average	£230	£245	£278	£301	£311	£318
Unit Cost (annual)	£375	£370	£419	£424	£423	£433
ILF staff employed	148	151	157	152	152	152
ILF Assessors used	81	84	90	90	90	90

Table 3 - targets	2005-06 Outturn	2006-07 Outturn	2007-08 Estimate	2008-09 Plans	2009-10 * Plans	2010-11 * Plans
Application clearance	12.4 wks	13.0 wks	12.0 wks	12.0 wks	8.0 wks	8.0 wks
User work (visit)				12.0 wks	10.0 wks	8.0 wks
User work (other)				4 weeks	4 weeks	4 weeks
Award accuracy	92.0%	94.4%	95.0%	96.0%	96.5%	97.0%
Complaint response	5 weeks	5 weeks	4 weeks	3 weeks	3 weeks	3 weeks
User Survey - satisfaction				85.0%		85.0%
Overpayment level			1.5%	1.7%	1.7%	1.7%
OP losses level			0.9%	1.0%	1.0%	1.0%