

User/Representative Q&As regarding changes from 1 July 2008 for Users in NI.

These questions and answers provided below relate to the threshold sum, backdating of awards and Trust Fund policy changes that will be implemented from 1 July 2008. Any questions you receive about our policy before 1 July 2008 should be answered in the usual way.

It is very important that you do not deviate from the answers provided to the questions below. If you receive any questions that are not detailed below please refer them upwards to your line manager.

Threshold and Maximum Sums

Q Will the maximum that ILF can pay increase?

A No, the maximum that ILF can pay will not change and it will remain to be £455 per week.

Q Will the combined maximum amount of funding between ILF and the Health and Social Care Trust (HSCT) increase?

A No this will not be the case, the overall funding maximum will remain at £785 per week for the first six months of ILF payments.

Q Isn't it unfair to increase the Local Authority contribution by such a large amount?

A We do not feel the increase is unfair. It is important to note that 53% of Local Authority contributions already meet the new minimum contribution of £320 per week. Also the average HSCT contribution towards care packages is already £300 per week. The amount HSCTs must pay has not been increased for 15 years and this change brings the amount in line with rises in inflation since 1993.

Q Why have you had to increase the threshold sum that HSCTs have to pay?

A Since summer 2006 we have had a 27% increase in applications. The money that the government has given us for next year is not enough for us to be able to carry on accepting that level of applications. These changes will help the ILF to make sure that you carry on receiving support, whilst also continuing to enable new users to apply to the ILF.

- Q** What happens if you continue to get the same level of applications from 1 July?
- A** We will give priority to applicants who are on the lowest incomes and those who are in work. This means prioritising those applicants who are paid to work 16 hours or more every week and also applicants who receive Income Support, Job Seekers Allowance and Pension Guarantee Credit or income at a similar level to these benefits
- Q** I have already applied to ILF so will my HSCT have to increase their contribution to £320 per week?
- A** No, the new threshold sum for HSCTs will change from 1 July 2008 so if we have already accepted your application your HSCTs contribution needs to be at least £200 per week. If your care needs go up after 1 July and you need an increase in funding your Local Authority will have to contribute at least £320 per week for ILF to consider increased funding.
- Q** My HSCT is paying above £320 per week so could they reduce their contribution when funding is reviewed?
- A** No this will not be the case, the rules about HSCTs reducing their contribution remain unchanged. The ILF is not in a position to take over the cost of care that HSCTs have previously funded.

Changes in my care need or costs

- Q** Can I ask for an increase in my ILF money if the cost of my care goes up?
- A** Yes, the ILF can still consider an increase in your money if the cost of the care that we already pay for goes up. For example, if we already pay for 30 hours of care at an hourly rate of £8 per hour and the hourly rate increases to £9 per hour we will be able to consider the increase. In this situation your HSCT does not have to meet the £320 per week contribution.
- Q** Can I ask for an increase in my ILF money if the amount of care I need goes up?
- A** We will only be able to consider paying towards more care if your HSCTs contribution is worth at least £320 per week. If your Local Authority is not meeting the £320 per week contribution you will need to ask them to consider your increased care needs.

Paying Awards

Q Will you be able to backdate payments from the date my increased care costs started?

A For any valid applications or requests for an increase we receive on or after 1 July 2008 the following will apply once we have received your Agreement form at the ILF office in Nottingham: -

- If the date you ask us to pay your money from is less than four weeks before the date we receive your Agreement form we will ask you why. We will need to know why you did not send us the Agreement form before you had to start paying for care or more money for your care. If we are happy with the reason you give us we will pay from the date you asked us to.
- If the date you ask us to pay your money from is more than 4 weeks before the date we receive your Agreement form we will ask you why. We will need to know why you did not send us the Agreement form before you had to start paying for your care or more money for your care. If we are happy with the reason you give us we will ask you to send us evidence. This means sending us copies of your Personal Assistants' timesheets or your agency invoices. Once you send us the evidence we will then be able to consider paying you from the date you asked us to.
- If the date you ask us to pay your money or more money from is on or after the date we receive your Agreement form we will pay you from that date.

Trust Funds

Q What happens if I become the beneficiary of a Trust Fund?

A If you become the beneficiary of A Trust Fund or payments from the Office of Care and Protection or similar payment structure from 1 July 2008 we would need to know more information. If the value of the capital or money held in the Trust Fund or by OCP is more than our capital limit (currently £18,500) we will not be able to make payments to you. Once the value of the Trust Fund or monies held by OCP fell below £18,500 we may be able to consider paying you again.

Q Why have you changed your rules about Trust Funds and similar payment structures?

A This change to our rules is in line with our commitment to help supporting those users and applicants with the lowest incomes. The change also simplifies our Trust Fund policy and therefore will help us to be more efficient.

Q I am already the beneficiary of a Trust Fund/have money held by the OCP. How does this affect my ILF payments or my application to ILF?

A If you have already receive payments from or apply to ILF before 1 July 2008 our current rules will apply. This means if you have already told us about your Trust Fund or OCP monies and we have made a decision to continue with your payments or application this will still apply.

General

Q Are the ILF going to be closing down?

A There is no such plan. The money that the government gives ILF is a fixed amount over the next three years. The changes in our rules relate to the fact that the growth in application rates has increased by 27% since summer 2006 and we cannot continue to sustain that level of applications with the money the government has given us.

Q Will you still continue to review my funding every two years?

A We are currently in the process of deciding how these changes might affect how and when we review your funding. If there are any changes we will continue to let you know.

6 March 2008