



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

WRITTEN STATEMENT BY THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

TITLE: Welsh Independent Living Grant (WILG) - Update on Independent Care Assessments

DATE: 18 July 2019

BY: Julie Morgan AM, Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services

In February I announced a change of approach in the way that people who used to receive payments under the Welsh Independent Living Grant (WILG) were in future to access their support from their local authority's social services. This is an update on the arrangements I am introducing.

It is paramount that people's ability to live independently is not compromised by changes to the way their care and support is arranged and provided. It was for this reason that I decided that those people who used to receive payments under the WILG should have the opportunity of an independent care and support assessment if they are unhappy with the outcome of their local authority care and support assessment. Those assessments are being undertaken to agree with people the wellbeing outcomes they wish to achieve to live independently and to agree how these would be met.

While the majority of people who used to receive WILG payments are content with the care and support they are now receiving, where people are unhappy with the outcome of care assessment the ability to have an independent care assessment would provide for a second opinion. It also restores for them the tripartite decision making arrangement that existed under the Independent Living Fund (ILF) of recipient, independent ILF social worker and local authority social worker. This was something that the "#Save the WILG campaign" was very keen to have restored.

I am pleased to report that we have made good progress in putting in place the arrangements for these independent care assessments. I wrote in April to all former WILG recipients informing them of their ability to have an independent care assessment and explained my reasons for providing this opportunity. If people wanted an independent assessment, I asked them to contact their local authority by 14 June to request this, so we could gauge the level of interest. By that date 55 requests had been made across 14 local authorities. This is out of approaching 1,400 people in Wales who received payments from the WILG. This would seem to confirm our understanding that the vast majority of former WILG recipients are content with the outcome of the care assessment they had and the subsequent care and support they are receiving. However, it does also confirm that I was right to introduce this change of approach

for what is a significant number of people who have concerns about the outcome of their care assessment.

We have in addition completed a procurement exercise to secure an organisation to recruit and manage the independent social workers required to undertake these assessments. These social workers will be suitability qualified and experienced to perform this task, being registered as such on the relevant register maintained by Social Care Wales. They would consequently be well versed in the ethos and requirements of our Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and the regulations and code of practice we have made under this in relation to care assessments and meeting care needs. They would not, however, be employed by a local authority in Wales so as to maintain their independence.

Following evaluation of the bids received for this contract, ICS Assessment Services Ltd. has now been appointed to organise and undertake the independent care and support assessments requested. ICS has significant experience in both social care and undertaking assessments, having worked previously with a range of local authorities across Wales and England. Officials have met with representatives of ICS, the Association of Directors of Social Services Cymru and the Welsh Local Government Association, to agree the process that will be followed to complete the independent assessments and to work through the practicalities associated with this. This is well advanced so that the arrangements to begin to undertake ICS assessments should be in place by the end of this month. I will be writing shortly to those former WILG recipients who have requested an independent care and support assessment to update them in more detail on this and to confirm what they need to do to pursue their assessment.

I would remind Members that the cost of these independent care assessments, and any additional support for people that might be identified from them, will be met by the Welsh Government. This is so that there can be no question of changes being made to people's care and support as a cost cutting measure. The under-pinning principle of my approach is to ensure that outcomes reached are consistent with supporting people's agreed wellbeing outcomes.

I appreciate that establishing these arrangements has taken some time. However, it is imperative that we put in place properly considered arrangements. The "#Save the WILG Campaign" has been supportive of the approach I am taking, as we share a common interest in seeing changes implemented properly.

I will update Members as further progress is made.