



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

WRITTEN STATEMENT BY THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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

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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. Last July, and following close working with the #SaveTheWILG campaign, I updated Members on the new arrangements I had introduced to provide independent care assessments for people who used to receive payments from the Welsh Independent Living Grant (WILG). These new arrangements were to aid any former WILG recipient who was unhappy with the outcome of their local authority care assessment. This statement is an update on those independent assessments.

Following my last update, ICS Assessment Services were appointed, through a competitive process, to organise and undertake the independent assessments for those who requested these, and 46 former recipients of payments from the WILG took up this opportunity. ICS has now undertaken all of these assessments.

All of the independent assessments completed have now been quality assured by ICS and passed to the respective local authority to consider. This was prior to a discussion between a social worker from ICS and a social worker from the respective local authority about the outcome of the independent assessment, and any effect its findings may have on the person's current care package. Subsequent to this, a joint meeting is held with the person to discuss the outcome of that discussion, talk through the implications for their care package and agree the future care and support they will receive as a result.

In around half of the independent assessments completed, the discussion between the ICS and local authority social workers has now taken place, with the remaining discussions taking place over the next few weeks. Following these, meetings with care recipients have begun, with outcomes for those people being agreed and starting to be put in place. While it is too soon to comment on the overall outcomes from these independent assessments, some important issues are coming to light.

In a number of cases ICS has found that individuals are currently receiving larger care packages than expected, potentially because those individuals are at the transition point for NHS Continuing Healthcare (CHC). This interface between CHC and direct payments, and

the challenges this can cause for care recipients, are issues that have also been highlighted to me at the National Social Care Partnership Board

Having reflected on this, I have instructed my officials to undertake a review of the direct payments and CHC interface. This is with a view to determining whether there are other mechanisms, for example independent users' trusts, that could be used to ensure people that need more support from the NHS are not put in a position of losing the team of personal assistants they have funded through direct payments and built up over a number of years. If a better more equitable way can be found, this would remove the apparent fear that some people feel about the prospect of CHC.

It is a complex area and I will not compromise the principle of an NHS that is in the public sector rather than in the hands of private individuals, but I want us to see if there is a better way and to do that work quickly.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Article 19, is clear that States must ensure disabled people have access to a range of home / residential and other community support services, including the personal assistance necessary to support living independently and inclusively within their community. The key principle regarding this human right is the ability to choose how you are supported in your everyday personal care.

As the outcomes across the span of independent assessments are confirmed, I would remind Members that the cost of the independent care assessments, and any additional social care 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 fair and consistent with supporting people's agreed wellbeing outcomes.