



Eich cyf/Your ref P-05-771  
Ein cyf/Our ref HID/00853/18

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Petitions Committee  
National Assembly for Wales  
Cardiff Bay  
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22 November 2018

Dear

*David,*

Thank you for your letter of 31 October in connection with Nathan Davies' petition to reconsider the closure of the Welsh Independent Living Grant (WILG).

Before I respond to your questions I think it is important to remind ourselves of the purpose of the transition process we are undertaking. We are introducing this change to ensure equality of access for all disabled people in Wales to support to live independently in the community. This is to remove the two-tier arrangement which existed previously, where some were able to access support from their local authority and payments from the Independent Living Fund (ILF), while others, because of the UK Government's decision to close the ILF to new applicants in 2010, have only been able to access support from their authority. Hence the objective of this transition, and of the support reviews being undertaken within it, is to ensure all disabled people are empowered in a consistent way to be able to live independently in a manner that is appropriate in their particular circumstances. This could be by support provided directly from their local authority, by support provided by direct payments from their authority, by support provided in other ways (such as from the third sector, family or friends) or by a mix of any of these. This is the ethos and cornerstone the social services legislation we introduced and something which every disabled person in Wales deserves access to irrespective of how they may have been supported in the past.

Given this objective, and as I outline below the support for the majority of the disabled people affected by this transition is now being provided through their local authority, it is difficult to see how this could now be unpicked to reinstate the WILG as Mr Davies' petitions without creating turmoil for those who have been through this transition.

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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.

As you say we have now completed our latest quarterly monitoring of local authorities' progress in transitioning people who used to receive WILG payments to receiving their support to live independently through their local authority. This latest monitoring covers the period up to the end of September this year and details of this are below. Overall this shows good progress in undertaking future support reviews with people affected, in agreeing with them their future support package to deliver their wellbeing outcomes and in putting these in place to provide that support.

The data provided by local authorities shows that of the 1,336 people who were originally in receipt of payments under the WILG, over 1,242 (93%) had by the end of September completed or were in the process of completing their support review with their local authority. As a result 717 people (54%) had now agreed their future support package with their local authority and were receiving this through their authority. In the majority of these cases (531 - 74% of the 717) people were receiving support of a similar level and nature to that they would have received if they had still been receiving payments under the WILG. In around 100 of the 717 cases (14%) the level of support being provided had increased due to the dependency of the person increasing since their last review. In around 86 of the 717 cases (12%) the support from the authority itself has reduced as it was thought more appropriate in those people's circumstances if the support they required was provided in a different manner than previously (such as support provided from a third party).

With a small number of people (20) their review identified it was no longer appropriate for them to receive community care from their local authority, either because the person had developed a need for healthcare or was now in need of some form of residential based care.

This left around 64 people who were at that time yet to begin their support review. This is due to a mixture of social worker capacity within a small number of authorities, where they had not by that time been able to engage with all people affected, and a number of people who to date have not themselves engaged with their authority despite authorities' approaches to them to do so. As a result we have sought, and received, assurances from the seven authorities concerned that these remaining reviews will be completed by the end of the year at the latest so as not to impact upon the future support they agree with their authority being place by the end of March next year when the period for this transition is due to end.

Out of all the reviews completed as at the end of September there were 17 people who were challenging the outcome of their support reviews. This is just under 2% of the people who had undergone their review with their authority.

Despite this good progress I am not complacent. You will have seen the recent media coverage of this transition which focussed heavily on those people who are to receive less direct support from their local authority, with little or no reference to the majority who to receive the similar support from their authority or indeed are to receive more. I have, therefore, to be assured of this position, asked local authorities to undertake a deep dive review of all cases where following a support review there is an intention to reduce the authority's direct support to the person. This is to identify the reasons for this decision and the exact scale of any reductions and to receive from each Director of Social Services a personal assurance that where such changes occur they are appropriate and do not impact on people's ability to live independently in the community. The results of this deep dive review are due to be received and analysed by the end of November.

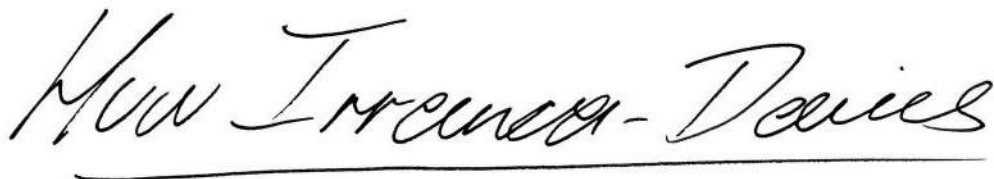
In addition to this I intend to undertake a series of regional meetings with Directors and Cabinet Members for Health and Social Services within authorities to discuss the outcome of these reviews to ensure that it is the case that any reduction in direct support from an authority is not impacting on people's ability to live independently. My officials are in the process of arranging these meetings, which I hope to have concluded by early December. That said, I have already visited both Wrexham County Borough Council and Powys County Council to meet their Directors and Cabinet Members and have received their assurance that people affected are genuinely being empowered to live independently to deliver their wellbeing outcomes.

You ask about the possibility of requiring local authorities to report the actual expenditure they incur on people who transition to local authority support. The level of expenditure on the support an individual requires is, of course, dependent on the level, nature and complexity of that support as identified by their support review. It is not determined by a standard amount per person and so the level of expenditure will vary from person to person as the support they require will vary. As a result the fact that one person may be having more or less expenditure on their support than another is not an indicator of the appropriateness of that support, but of the cost of the support they require.

Added to this it must be remembered that all people who received payments under the WILG would also have received a level of care and support from their local authority which it would have funded separately. This is because this was a qualifying condition originally set by the ILF for receiving payments. As such it is difficult to see how authorities could, if this request was made, separate out the cost of only one element of over 1,000 people's overall support package or indeed what value there would be in so doing.

What I can say is that the full funding of £27 million a year transferred from the UK Government to support people affected has been added from this year to the Revenue Support Grant on a recurrent basis. Not a single penny of this has been retained centrally. As a result no local authority has raised with me or my officials that a lack of funding is an issue with this transition or that this is adversely affecting the outcomes which they are able to receive for people affected.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Huw Irranca-Davies". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal line.

**Huw Irranca-Davies AC/AM**

Y Gweinidog Plant, Pobl Hŷn a Gofal Cymdeithasol  
Minister for Children, Older People and Social Care

