Independent Living Fund Scotland

We also support independent living in Northern Ireland

Written Evidence to the Equality, Human Rights and Civil Justice of the Scottish Parliament

Independent Living Fund Scotland Coming Home Fund

Following the Committee's meeting on 5 November 2026, where Members showed considerable interest in the Coming Home Fund, and the Minister for Community Care noted that ILF Scotland could provide further information, we are pleased to submit the following evidence to assist the Committee's scrutiny of this important area of work.

ILF Scotland

ILF Scotland is a Scottish Non-Departmental Public Body wholly owned by Scottish Ministers. We are accountable to Ministers through a Board of publicly appointed Directors. Our role is to support our most disabled citizens to live independently, participate in their communities, and exercise choice and control over how their support is delivered.

Rather than providing services directly, ILF makes funding directly to disabled people to, in essence, commission their own services alongside statutory social care support to create personalised packages tailored to individual outcomes and aspirations.

The model is built around three key principles:

Choice and control: disabled people determine how support is arranged and delivered.

Independent living: support is focused on participation, relationships, employment, education and community life, not simply meeting basic care needs.

Prevention and value: by investing in personalised support, ILF helps avoid crises, delays more intensive interventions, and reduces pressure on health and social care services.

Today, ILF supports over 7,000 disabled people across Scotland and Northern Ireland, demonstrating that empowering people directly can deliver better outcomes while aligning closely with the ambitions of public service reform, self-directed support and community-based care.

Introduction

Independent Living Fund Scotland (ILF Scotland) welcomes the opportunity to provide evidence to the Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee regarding the implementation of the Coming Home Fund and its contribution to Scotland's wider ambitions for independent living, human rights and inclusion.

ILF Scotland is a public body with extensive experience of administering personalised funding that enables disabled people to live independently, exercise greater choice and control, and participate fully in their communities. Our approach is founded on the principle that disabled people should have the same opportunities as others to live ordinary lives, make decisions about their own support and remain connected to the people and places that matter most to them.

The Coming Home Fund forms part of the Scottish Government and COSLA Coming Home Programme. The programme seeks to support people with learning disabilities and complex support needs to move from hospital or inappropriate out-of-area placements back to communities close to family and friends, while also helping people remain in their communities where existing support arrangements are at risk of breaking down.

The Fund therefore contributes both to supporting people to leave institutional settings and to preventing their unnecessary admission. These objectives align closely with Article 19 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), which affirms the right of disabled people to live independently and to be included in the community.

Independent Living Fund Scotland

We also support independent living in Northern Ireland

Why ILF Scotland Was Chosen to Deliver the Fund

As Scotland's centre for excellence in independent living and personalised support, ILF Scotland has a long-standing track record of administering flexible, person-centred funding on behalf of Scottish Ministers. Our core expertise lies in supporting our most disabled citizens to achieve outcomes that matter to them through tailored funding arrangements rather than through standardised service models.

This experience is particularly relevant to the Coming Home Fund population. Individuals moving from hospital or long-stay placements often require highly personalised solutions involving housing, equipment, community supports, family reconnection and practical assistance that do not always fit easily within traditional funding mechanisms. The Coming Home Fund has therefore been designed to operate with an appropriate degree of flexibility whilst retaining robust governance, accountability and assurance arrangements.

ILF Scotland's experience of balancing person-centred decision making with strong public accountability and full financial transparency provides a sound foundation for delivering this national investment.

Purpose of the Coming Home Fund

The Coming Home Fund was established to help address practical barriers that prevent people with learning disabilities and complex support needs from living in their own communities. These barriers can delay discharge from hospital, prevent moves from inappropriate out-of-area placements or place existing community support arrangements at risk.

Although local authorities, health services and other statutory bodies have primary responsibilities for the provision of care and support, experience has shown that relatively modest but critical gaps in funding can often prevent otherwise viable transitions from progressing. The Fund is intended to address those gaps by providing targeted and flexible financial support that complements, rather than replaces, statutory provision.

Importantly, the Fund is not solely focussed on facilitating discharge from institutional settings. It also has a preventative function, supporting people whose current living arrangements are at risk of breakdown and helping to avoid crisis situations that could otherwise lead to hospital admission or inappropriate placements.

Supporting the Ambitions of the Coming Home Programme

The Committee's previous discussions highlighted the importance of ensuring that people are supported to live in homes and communities of their choosing, with the right support and connections around them. The Coming Home Fund is intended to make a practical contribution to that ambition.

The Fund supports a wider vision in which:

- people live closer to family, friends and their communities
- people experience greater choice and control over their lives
- institutional settings are used only where clinically necessary;
- support arrangements are based on individual outcomes rather than organisational convenience
- community-based independent living solutions are the default solution.

The Fund is only one component within a broader programme of reform involving housing, health services, social care, advocacy and community supports.

What the Fund Can Support

The Committee was particularly interested in understanding the practical application of the Fund and the types of assistance that can be provided. Evidence presented to the Committee highlighted the importance of having sufficient flexibility to respond to individual circumstances.

Depending on individual need, ILF Scotland support may include:

- housing-related costs

- adaptations to enable a person to live safely and independently in their home
- furnishings and household setup costs
- specialist equipment
- assistive and sensory supports;
- transitional accommodation costs
- temporary rent liabilities and bridging arrangements
- temporary support service set-up costs
- community participation costs
- on-going care and support that helps establish or sustain successful community living arrangements.

The emphasis is on identifying barriers that prevent people living in the community and using the Fund to remove those barriers in a proportionate and person-centred way.

Engagement, Co-production and Lived Experience

Throughout the Committee's consideration of the Coming Home agenda, members emphasised the importance of lived experience and the need for people directly affected by services to influence their design and delivery.

ILF Scotland strongly supports this approach.

Ahead of implementation, ILF Scotland undertook engagement activity with people with learning disabilities and complex support needs, family members, carers and professionals working across health, housing and social care services. Dedicated engagement events were held to gather views on the development and operation of the Fund and to understand the barriers people experience when trying to move into or remain within community living arrangements.

The insights gained through these discussions informed our understanding of the challenges individuals and families face and

reinforced the importance of flexibility, responsiveness and partnership working in the design of the Fund.

ILF Scotland believes that people with lived experience should continue to play an active role in shaping future development of the Fund and the wider Coming Home Programme. We have already engaged with, and will continue to do so, the newly established Coming Home Lived Experience Hub being facilitated by the Scottish Commission for People with Learning Disabilities.

Relationship with Independent Living and Self-Directed Support

The objectives of the Coming Home Fund are closely aligned with the principles that underpin independent living and Self-directed Support. Both approaches seek to maximise choice, control and personal outcomes by placing the individual at the centre of decision making.

The goal is not simply to facilitate a move from one setting to another. Rather, it is to support people to establish sustainable lives within their communities, maintain meaningful relationships, participate in community life and access the support they require in ways that reflect their preferences and aspirations.

Success should therefore be measured not solely by the number of moves achieved but by the quality, sustainability and outcomes of those moves over time.

It is important to note that while the Coming Home Fund can help overcome specific financial and practical barriers to discharge, it is only one component of a wider system response. The primary responsibility for strategic planning, commissioning and development of community support, and its funding, continues to rest with local Integration Joint Boards and Health and Social Care Partnerships. Sustainable progress requires these local partners to continue to ensure sufficient housing, care and support infrastructure is available to meet the needs of their populations. Crudely put for context, the £20m Coming Home investment equates to approximately £600k per local authority area. Many areas will spend more than this on the care and support needs of one individual. This illustrates the supplementary but potentially enabling character of ILF support.

Independent Living Fund Scotland

We also support independent living in Northern Ireland

Emerging Learning and System Challenges

As discussion at the Committee reflected, there remain significant structural barriers to achieving the aspirations of the Coming Home Programme.

Several themes are particularly relevant:

Housing Availability

Access to suitable housing remains one of the most significant challenges facing individuals seeking to move from hospital or inappropriate placements into community settings. Delays in securing or adapting accommodation can affect timescales and create uncertainty for individuals and families.

Partnership Working

Successful transitions require close collaboration between local authorities, health and social care partnerships, housing providers, advocacy organisations, families and communities and indeed ILF Scotland. The most effective solutions are generally characterised by clear shared ownership and co-ordinated planning. Please refer to the joint ILF Scotland COSLA statement setting out our commitment to working together in the best interests of disabled people: Join COSLA ILF Scotland Statement - v02.0 - 20260825

Person-Centred Pace of Transition

A fundamental principle of the Coming Home Fund is that transitions should take place at the pace that is right for the individual rather than in pursuit of numerical targets or pre-determined timescales. Many of the people supported through the Fund have highly complex needs and may be moving from environments in which they have lived for extended periods of time. Successful transitions require appropriate housing, carefully

planned support arrangements, engagement with families and, most importantly, readiness on the part of the individual.

Early experience of the Fund has demonstrated that some proposed discharge timescales can be optimistic, particularly where accommodation has not yet been secured or essential elements of a support package remain under development. In these circumstances, ILF Scotland works collaboratively with partners to ensure that plans are realistic and that funding is deployed at the point it can best contribute to a safe and sustainable transition.

ILF Scotland does not approach delivery of the Fund as a mechanism for achieving discharge targets. Rather, the focus is on achieving outcomes that are sustainable, person-centred and consistent with the wishes and needs of the individual. A transition that takes longer but results in a stable and successful life in the community should be regarded as a better outcome than a rushed move that risks breakdown, distress, re-admission or a return to institutional care.

Workforce Capacity

A sustainable and skilled support workforce is essential to ensuring that people can move into and remain within their communities safely and successfully. Workforce challenges continue to affect parts of the health and social care system and can impact implementation of community-based solutions.

Prevention

The Committee rightly highlighted the importance of preventing people entering institutional settings rather than focusing exclusively on supporting people to leave them. This preventative approach is reflected in the Fund's design and is likely to be an increasingly important component of future delivery.

Measuring Success

The Committee placed significant emphasis on how the success of the Fund should be assessed and scrutinised. ILF Scotland agrees that robust monitoring and evaluation arrangements are essential.

Key measures have been agreed between Scottish Government and ILF Scotland, and include:

- number of applications received
- number and value of awards made
- geographical spread of support
- number of people enabled to move successfully from hospital settings
- number of people supported to successfully leave inappropriate placements
- number of community support arrangements sustained through preventative interventions
- sustainability of outcomes over time
- improvements in quality of life and personal outcomes
- feedback from supported individuals and families
- evidence of increased inclusion, participation and independence.

Quantitative measures are important, but qualitative evidence is equally significant. Ultimately, success should be judged by whether people are able to live the lives they choose, in the communities they value, with the support they require.

Delivery Progress and Early Learning

The Coming Home Fund opened to applications on 3 August 2026. As at 17 November 2026, ILF Scotland had received 46 submitted

applications from 21 local authority areas across Scotland, with a further 19 applications in development and progressing towards submission.

Applications have been received from a broad range of local authority areas, including Glasgow City, North Lanarkshire, Highland, Angus, City of Edinburgh, East Lothian, South Lanarkshire, Scottish Borders and others, demonstrating national engagement with the Fund in its early stages. Glasgow City has generated the highest number of applications to date, with eight submitted applications.

Of the 46 submitted applications:

- 8 are awaiting further information
- 22 are undergoing assessment
- 8 have progressed to offer stage
- 6 have entered payment
- 1 has been declined
- 1 has been withdrawn.

The applications received to date demonstrate the breadth of circumstances that the Fund is designed to address. 27 applications relate to individuals currently in NHS hospital settings or inappropriate out-of-area placements, and 17 involve people identified as being at risk of support breakdown within their communities.

This profile confirms that the Fund is supporting both elements of the Coming Home agenda: facilitating discharge from institutional settings while also helping to prevent community placements breaking down and leading to future admissions.

Applications can only be submitted by social Work professionals. Those submitted to date have generally been of high quality and reflect robust planning with individuals and good relationships between ILF Scotland and our statutory Social Work colleagues.

It is important to note the learning from the earlier opening our new ILF Scotland Funds. Our Transition Fund launched in 2017. In its first full year of operation we allocated £1.5m of awards, from a budgetary allocation of £5m. Applications then grew consistently over a number of years as awareness increased and local referral networks became

established until we reached our current position of spending our full allocation.

Similarly, we re-opened our main ILF in 2024 with a year one spend of £1.2m against a budgetary allocation of £7.8m. In year two we allocated £9.6m of awards against an allocation of £16.8m, and in the current year we project spend of £19m against an allocation or £26m. Next year, based on current trends and no new growth, we project spending around £32m.

Taken together, these experiences suggest that the Coming Home Fund could be expected to follow a similar growth trajectory, with impact and expenditure building progressively over a number of years rather than reaching full scale immediately.

Types of Support Requested

Applications received to date demonstrate the highly individualised nature of the barriers faced by people seeking to move into or remain within their communities. Funding requests have included:

- enhanced social support arrangements, including additional 2:1 support
- housing adaptations
- robust furniture and sensory equipment
- vehicle hire while awaiting longer-term transport arrangements
- transitional staffing costs, training and familiarisation support
- temporary rent and void-period costs
- preparation of accommodation where alternative sources of support have been exhausted
- security measures
- activity costs forming part of an individual's support plan
- additional respite support for families.

This range of requests illustrates the need for a flexible funding approach capable of responding to individual circumstances that do not fit easily within existing statutory funding arrangements, but can however supplement them.

Early Learning

Initial experience suggests that successful transitions require detailed planning and realistic timescales. In some instances, proposed discharge timescales have proven optimistic, particularly where accommodation has not yet been secured or substantial preparatory work remains outstanding. ILF Scotland has therefore worked with partners to ensure that transition plans are sufficiently developed and that funding can be deployed effectively to support sustainable outcomes.

A key lesson emerging from early delivery is that the quality and sustainability of transitions is more important than the speed at which they occur. Effective planning can help minimise the risk of placement breakdown and avoid the possibility of re-admission or further institutional care.

The complexity of applications has also highlighted the importance of partnership working. Assessments frequently involve engagement with local authorities, Health and Social Care Partnerships, families and other stakeholders. Early experience suggests that ILF Scotland will often be required to remain involved over an extended period as discharge planning develops and individuals settle into new community arrangements. Current applications have required significantly increased ILF Assessor input as part of the assessment and planning process relative to other ILF Scotland Funds.

Funding Levels

As the Fund remains in the early stages of delivery, it is too soon to draw definitive conclusions regarding average award values. The first approved award included transitional costs of approximately £5,300, with ongoing costs still to be finalised following discharge. Applications currently under assessment suggest significant variation in individual circumstances, with indicative one-off transition costs ranging from approximately £4,000 to £60,000 and potential ongoing support costs ranging from around £400 to £4,000 per week.

This variation reflects the complexity of the circumstances being addressed and reinforces the importance of maintaining a flexible, person-centred approach to funding decisions.

Of the 44 applications to date received, 17 relate to people at risk of support breakdown in the community, demonstrating that almost 40% of demand is preventative rather than focused only on discharge. This highlights the importance of early intervention in preventing unnecessary admissions and sustaining independent living, supporting the wider public policy position that preventing crises in the first place is as important as helping people leave hospital.

Conclusion

The Coming Home Fund represents an important practical investment in advancing Scotland's commitment to independent living and human rights. By providing flexible, person-centred funding, it helps remove barriers that prevent people with learning disabilities and complex support needs from living in their communities and supports efforts to reduce reliance on institutional care.

The Fund should be viewed as part of a wider system of change, as reflected in the wider governance arrangements for Coming Home, rather than as a standalone intervention. While it will help unlock and sustain individual transitions, long-term success will also depend upon effective local planning, commissioning and service development by Health and Social Care Partnerships and Integration Joint Boards, alongside strong partnership working across housing, health, social care, advocacy and community organisations.

ILF Scotland's experience of establishing both the Transition Fund and the re-opened Independent Living Fund demonstrates that new national funds take time to achieve scale and impact. Awareness, confidence, referral pathways and local delivery arrangements develop progressively, and growth is typically realised over a number of years rather than within a single financial cycle.

ILF Scotland is committed to supporting progress towards the ambitions of the Coming Home programme and considers that success should be judged primarily by the quality, sustainability and personal outcomes of

transitions rather than by the speed with which they occur. The pace of change must always be determined by the needs, wishes and circumstances of the individual.

Looking ahead, there may be scope to build on the Fund's initial success through developments such as a rapid response mechanism for people facing imminent breakdown of existing community placements, a role in supporting nationally commissioned solutions for individuals with highly complex needs, and the introduction of direct applications from individuals and families. Such developments would require careful consideration and agreement with partners but could further strengthen the Fund's contribution to Scotland's Coming Home ambitions while complementing, rather than replacing, local commissioning responsibilities.

ILF Scotland remains committed to working with the Scottish Government, COSLA, local partners, disabled people and their families to support the delivery of the Coming Home vision: enabling people to live in homes and communities of their choosing, close to the people and places that matter most to them, with the right support in place to live full and meaningful lives.

ILF Scotland

17 November 2026