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Happy New Year  
2014

\*\*\*\*\* **The members of the Board and staff of CILNI would like to wish all our members, clients and friends a very healthy and prosperous New Year** \*\*\*\*\*

### NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of the Centre for Independent Living NI will take place at the CILNI Head Office at Linden House, Beechill Business Park, 96 Beechill Rd, Belfast BT8 7QN at 12 noon on Wednesday, 5 February 2014.

Registration with refreshments will be from 12 noon.

Please let us know by telephone on 028 9064 8546 or by e-mail to [info@cilni.org](mailto:info@cilni.org) if you can join us on the day. Thank you.

**N.B. Our infrared loop system will be available.**

### Reminder: National Minimum Wage rates changed in October 2013

New rates of national minimum wage came into effect on 1 October 2013, The main adult rate (for workers 21 and over) increased by 12p to **£6.31** an hour (previously £6.19 an hour). The rates for 18-20 year olds, 16-17 year olds and for apprentices also increased.

For more information and background, please see the info sheet **Paying Personal Assistants** under the heading **Being a Good Employer**. on the CILNI website (<http://www.cilni.org/node/41>).

## **Court of Appeal quashes government decision to close Independent Living Fund (ILF)**



Centre for Independent Living NI welcomes the decision of the Court of Appeal that the closure of ILF had not been pursued lawfully. This is an important decision not only for ILF claimants, who have been given fresh hope that they will not lose their funding, but also for the fact that it reinforces the responsibility of Government to promote equality and protect the human rights of all disabled people in the UK.

Following legal action brought by five disabled people, the High Court ruled in April that the government's decision to close the Independent Living Fund in 2015 and transfer its resources to local authorities in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland was lawful. However on 6 November 2013, the Court of Appeal overturned the Government's decision to close the ILF.

In a unanimous judgement, the Court of Appeal ruled that that the Government had breached its equality duty in failing to properly assess what one of the judges called the "very grave impact" of the closure on disabled people. The ruling found that there was no evidence that the Minister for Disabled People had taken account of the requirements set out in the public sector equality duties to eliminate discrimination and advance equality.

The Court also agreed that there was no evidence that the Minister had in any way considered the Government's obligations under the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (UNCRPD). This was ratified by the UK in June 2009 and includes a number of important provisions which must be taken into account in all Government decision-making that has a particular impact on disabled people. It includes Article 19 – 'Living independently and being included in the community'.

Lawyers acting for the five claimants said the judgment, quashing the ministerial decision to close the fund as unlawful, was "of major importance, not just for the claimants, but for all disabled people". They said the ruling made clear that legal requirements that ministers actively minimise the disadvantages suffered by disabled people and encourage their participation in public life, could not be treated as optional even in times of austerity.

At the time of writing there has not been any indication as to whether the Government will pursue the idea of closing the ILF. While there is no guarantee that this will not happen, any fresh decision would require the Government to go back to the drawing board, properly assess the impact the decision will have on the lives of ILF users with regard to the factors in the equality duty, and consider whether it is justified or a less damaging alternative is possible.

However the claimants are not just seeking to preserve the ILF for the existing users but are calling on the Government to recognise the vital and effective role the ILF plays, and to restore the previous level of funding so that ILF can be re-opened to applications from all those in need of this support.

## New staff members join the CILNI team in Armagh

Early in 2013, we received the very welcome news that the Southern Health and Social Care Trust had increased the funding for our Southern Area Office, bringing it in line with the funding levels of our Northern and Western Area Offices. This has enabled us to recruit 2 new members of staff to enhance the level of service and support provided to members, clients, family and carers within their catchment area.

The 2 new members of staff, who started work with us this summer, are: –

- Emma O'Neill who is working as an Independent Living Adviser for 2 ½ days a week alongside our existing Independent Living Adviser, Anne Mallon on a Job Share basis, each working 2 ½ days a week
- Claire Mohan who is working as the Administrator on 5 mornings a week.



*Anne, Emma and Clare together in Armagh (on a very cold day in December)*

These reinforcements are very welcome to Anne who has done a sterling job providing support to disabled people throughout the Southern Area region since we opened an office there in 2004. It is to her credit that she has been able to do this single-handedly in a part-time post, but it was high time that she received support with the administration and the large number of queries and requests for home visits that she has had to continue to deal with.

### Independent Living; Sharing your Stories

Have you seen the latest video and podcast on our website which shows real life examples of how disabled people are using Direct Payments to enable them to live independent lives? (<http://www.cilbelfast.org/content/videos-and-podcasts>). In the coming year we are planning to produce further videos and publications and we would like to hear from you if you have a story to tell that you would like to share with us? If so, please contact Deena on 028 9064 8546 for an informal chat about how you could help or email [deena@cilni.org](mailto:deena@cilni.org)

## Who Cares? The Future of Adult Care and Support in Northern Ireland Consultation Analysis Report published

On 21 September 2012 the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) launched an extensive public consultation on the discussion document “**Who Cares? The Future of Adult Care and Support in Northern Ireland**”. This was the first stage in a three stage process to review and reform adult care and support.

The first stage was intended to give people the opportunity to influence the reform agenda from the very beginning. It focused on raising awareness of how the current system of care and support works, issues relating to the future of care and support, and building consensus on the need to change the system. Issues covered included the challenges of an ageing population, increasing public expectations, and a very difficult economic climate.

Over 600 people attended public events or meetings and 185 responses to the consultation were submitted. DHSSPS has published a Consultation Report which provides a detailed analysis and summary of the comments made in response to the consultation. The details of the responses can be read on DHSSPS website at:

[http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/who\\_cares\\_consultation\\_analysis\\_report.pdf](http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/who_cares_consultation_analysis_report.pdf)

The comments made during the stage 1 consultation process and contained in this report will play an important role as the reform now moves to its second stage, which will see the development of proposals for change. These proposals will also be subject to full public consultation. Following the consideration of views at stage 2, the final stage will be the production of a strategic document, outlining the way forward for adult care and support in Northern Ireland.

### Personalisation and Self-Directed Support

There are plans to radically change the way social care in Northern Ireland is delivered in the coming years. Personalisation of services and the introduction of Self Directed Support (SDS) are central themes outlined in **Transforming Your Care**, which means every person, having choice and control over the shape of his or her support. Personalisation recognises that a person using support services is best placed to know what they need and how those needs could be met. It requires a shift in the culture of public bodies and professionals from viewing service users as passive recipients of care to genuine partners in making decisions over the services they need.

Self-Directed Support will establish a new way of working that empowers people to use a personal budget to obtain the support they want to enable them to live full and active lives. It will give them more choice and control over their support arrangements and more control over how their funding allocation is utilised to meet their assessed needs.

The Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) is leading a project to establish SDS, so that by 2015, all Health and Social Care Trusts in Northern Ireland will be expected to have made significant moves towards fundamental system wide change, so that SDS is available as a realistic alternative to traditional services.

An SDS pilot project has been running in the Southern Health & Social Care Trust and the evaluation has shown very positive outcomes for the participants, giving real choice, control and flexibility .

## Personalisation and Self-Directed Support continued

The findings also demonstrate the need for leadership, the importance of keeping the process simple, the need to develop brokerage and services from which to choose and the need to focus on outcomes rather than the mechanics of delivery.

CILNI is closely involved in the SDS project and will keep you informed about progress. We hope to organise a number of events in the coming year to discuss the issues fully with service users.

**Editor's note:** for more background information, why not have a look at the information sheet entitled "*A Guide to Personalisation, Self-Directed Support & Personal/Individual Budgets*" on the CILNI website.

## Free IT support for disabled people

Even after the Christmas period has ended, we still love getting presents, but for some disabled people the gadgets they were given may present them with some difficulties. To help reap the benefits a helping hand should come in useful. AbilityNet's free helpline offers expert advice and information about how disabled people can use computers and the internet. Their ITCanHelp home visit service ([www.itcanhelp.org.uk](http://www.itcanhelp.org.uk)) has a network of Access NI checked volunteers who offer free assistance to disabled people in their homes.



(Image by Stuart Miles)

If this is of interest to you or if you have a friend, relation or client that you think might like to hear of these services please note the contact details that follow.

Free helpline 0800 269 545

Free factsheets [www.abilitynet.org.uk/factsheets](http://www.abilitynet.org.uk/factsheets)

Home visits 0800 269 545

## Warm Homes Scheme: Are you missing out on Warm Homes?

Many people in Northern Ireland could be missing out with free help with insulation and heating through the Warm Homes Scheme. The Warm Homes Scheme is a grant which is funded by the Department for Social Development to make your home warmer healthier and more energy efficient.



The scheme provides free loft insulation, cavity wall insulation and hot water tank jacket. Loft top-ups are also available for houses that have not been insulated in the past ten years.

## Warm Homes Scheme continued

A new oil or gas central heating system may also be available for those in receipt of one of the Warm Homes Plus benefits and who have Economy 7, LPG, Solid Fuel or no heating system at all.



A Department for Social Development Scheme

To qualify for this scheme you must own or privately rent your home and be in receipt of one of the following benefits: Disability Living Allowance, Attendance Allowance, \*Income Support, \*Housing Benefit, \*Pension Credits, \*Working Tax Credits, Child Tax Credits with income below 15,910, \*Income related employment support allowance or \*Income based jobseeker allowance.

This is a fully funded scheme therefore there is no cost to homeowners, tenants or landlords. To find out if you qualify for the scheme call 0800 988 0559 or visit [www.warm-homes.com](http://www.warm-homes.com)

\* Warm Homes Plus benefits

## CILNI contact details

### Centre for Independent Living NI

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